Replacing Frets is easier and far more affordable than you ever thought.

Often times it is easier to replace frets than it is to level them. And, when frets are .024” tall and shorter they are done. And for many playing styles, frets that are something approaching .03" tall are too short.

Most people are reluctant to tackle replacing frets, yet it is very straight forward and simple.

Google “cost of refret guitar including fret level, nut and saddle and full setup”
Shops charge up to $800 plus parts. All for a job that when done right takes a first timer perhaps 4 hours. And, beware, shops charge for leveling new frets… you will know why this is criminal as you read on.

Benefits of following SixStringers’ steps:
No need to level new frets, every fret will be within +/- .0005” tolerance, every fret will perfectly match the fretboard radius, and that means for the first time ever for 99% of guitars, having True Level Frets that allow the lowest buzz free action without or perhaps with absolute minimal neck relief.
Crystal clear intonation, bell tone vibrance, deepest easiest bends, and sustain for days even on guitars not recognized for sustain dominance. Playability is the fastest easiest possible that no shop that installs and then levels those brand-new frets can ever achieve. But you can, and it’s easy.

FIRST: The Tools:
1. Notched Straight Edge matching the scale length.
2. Digital Gauge with Fret Measure Adapter.
3. Pivoting Neck Support (for the most secure stable support Vs not pivot types)
4. Soldering Iron with broad tip, and solder.
5. Fret Pulling Pliers
6. Fret Cutters having 61 to 65 HRC (hardness). Less is not good for stainless steel frets, and no good for longevity on any fret no matter the material.
7. Side Cutters for clipping right up to the edge of the neck. (again 61 to 65 HRC)
8. Fret Press Full Kit for all eventualities.
9. Masking tape.
10. Fret Bender.
11. Fret Slot Saw.
12. Smooth flat diamond file for detailing fret ends.
13. Torque Screwdriver for bolt necks
14. Optional, sometimes necessary: CA Glue (crazy or super glue thin version)
15. Optional, Rubbing Alcohol to clean excess CA glue off fretboard.

STEPS:
1. Remove Strings.

2. For Bolt on Necks: Use inch pound torque screwdriver, check every neck bolt/screw to ensure all click the same. Start with 15-inch pounds, if all click, go to 16, if one does not click, click all to 16 pounds, or if 17 then 17 and so on to no more than 20-inch pounds.

3. Flatten the neck using Notched Straight edge making sure to read the wood along the bridge side of the fret, not between the frets where wear can show daylight between the rule and the fretboard. Make sure the neck support is closest to the body so the weight of the guitar does not flex the neck.

4. Apply solder to top of first fret, (heat softens the glue if any to prevent the wood from chunking out when pulling a fret). Gently test pulling the fret, it should move easily albeit with some initial resistance. Take no chances with hard to pull frets, apply more heat until the fret pulls relatively easily.

5. Inspect the fretboard, there may be some old glue crust, scrape off in the direction of the wood grain with a razor, go easy to avoid scraping off wood.

6. When you buy frets keep note of the specifications such as tang length, crown height, tang width at narrow, and width including the barbs, and the radius if they are pre-bent. Make a notebook so you will always have it and not have to relearn at some future date.

7. Measure fret crown (fret wire) using Calipers and SixStringers' Fret Adapter. The goal is that no fret variance is greater than .0005". You must first measure several frets, (or fret wire when bought in longer sticks), to identify the nominal crown height.
The factory says for example .054", but this is seldom accurate. When you know the nominal, for example .0535" Vs .054" you are looking for frets to measure .053, .0535, and .054 and weed out those that do not. Cut the first new fret to meet the criterion. *Almost all Shops do not do this and instead charge for leveling frets… how do you feel about that?*
8. Fret Slot Saw: SixStringers' fret slot saw comes in 8 precision depths of cut based on the fret tang length. It will not slot too deep or too shallow, no other fret slot saw does this. And even when the slots are already deep enough it is necessary to clean them of debris and residue glue. A shallow or glue clogged slot causes a fret to seat high which then requires leveling, which is ridiculous when the fret is not fully seated, but an all-too-common practice by many shops.
NOTE: Pressing or hammering a fret into a clogged or shallow slot can impact a hard to see hairline crack or worse, a nasty crack in the neck. Don't risk it.

9. Fret Bender: Know the fretboard radius. For example, at 12"R we want to bend the fret to 11"R to ensure the ends of the fret lay in tight. Using a 12"R bend on a 12"R fretboard results in the fret ends eventually popping up. The rule is to bend the fret an inch or so sharper, 11" for 12", 15" for 16" and so on.

SixStringers' Fret Bender includes 10 built-in radii checks, no other fret bender does. Furthermore, SixStringers crank is fixed, it is not the up/down adjustable all others thoughtlessly copied from each other and that causes the crank to warble which in turn distorts fret wire out of true linear shape. SixStringers adjusts the idler bearings, not the crank, far more stable and efficient. Distorted frets degrade fret slots, play and tone. All bad things.

10. Install new fret flush to one side of the fretboard, press down with thumb to begin the install, tap the edge with wood or similar material block to ensure it is flush to the edge of the fretboard. Use the fret press to fully seat the fret. Test the fret for any looseness, if any, apply CA glue along one side of the fret, let it seep in, quickly use rubbing alcohol to clean off excess glue from the fretboard and clamp with SixStringers Complete Fret Press.

11. Use Side Cutters to close cut the end of the fret flush to the edge of the fretboard, apply masking tape to protect the wood and with a fine file (300 grit), dress both ends of the fret to a nice finish. Alternatively, cut fret wire long enough to extend beyond the width of the neck and use the side cutters to flush cut both ends. Be sure that the cutters you use are 62-65 HRC hardness, if the seller does not disclose HRC, do not buy from them. See www.SixStringers.com/3rd-party

Okay, that's it, repeat for every fret.

Don't pay a shop for their crude 19th Century tools and methods, and their criminal scam of leveling brand new frets. Truth be known, there are very few honest shops, ask just about anyone, you will hear horror stories. Don't shoot me, I'm just the messenger.

Once the frets are replaced, they are taller than before, this means replacing the nut, and if an acoustic, then also the saddle. Nut and Saddle work is another How To Topic.

That said, you now have True Level Symmetrical Frets without unnecessarily grinding down brand-new frets into an uneven mess, wasting perfectly good fret material, you skip all that mayhem and wasted time. With True Level Symmetrical Frets the nut slots and saddle can be precision set, and chances are you will not need neck relief, because neck relief is more often than not the cheap trick of shops to hide and compensate for crude 19th century inaccurate work.

Where to get SixStringers' and all the other tools:
www.SixStringers.com and for 3rd party tools www.SixStringers.com/3rd-party where we have done the shopping for best quality and price.

Customer Support: https://sixstringers.com/contact/

We encourage every customer to use Customer Support because your success is our success. SixStringers is the innovator of 21st Century Precision Guitar Tools and How To's.