

SLIPPING THE BLOCK—WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO SPOT IT

“Slipping the block,” also known as a “California neck reset” was a technique used by some guitar repairmen to change the neck/body angle on vintage acoustic guitars. This was done before the current technique for neck resets became common practice. For corrections or additions to the information below, please email me at fingerstyletwo@gmail.com.

The technique (not necessarily in this order):

- the back is separated from the sides in the area on either side of the neck heel, with binding and purfling removed as needed.
- the segment of the inside back strip nearest the block is removed
- the neck block is unglued from the back of the guitar
- the neck (along with the neck block and the sides on either side of the heel) is tilted back, which slides the bottom of the neck block in the direction of the soundhole
- extra wood is trimmed from the upper edge of the back (because the edge of the sides along the back is now indented, so the back overhangs the sides)
- the neck block is reglued to the back
- the inside back strip is trimmed (because the distance from the block to the first back brace is now shorter) and reinstalled
- sides and back are reattached, and binding and purfling reinstalled.

Possible signs that the block was slipped

Interior of the guitar:

- glue residue around the bottom of the neck block.
- glue residue where the back meets the sides on either side of the neck block.
- signs that the end of the back strip, which should rest flush against the neck block, was trimmed to accommodate moving the block in the direction of the soundhole.

Exterior of the guitar:

- short cracks at the upper end of the back.
- distortion in the outer surface of the upper end of the back.

- breaks in the back purfling near the neck heel.
- the top edge of the back is flat instead of being slightly rounded.
- signs of missing finish or finish touch-up along the top edge of the back near the neck heel.
- placing a square on the guitar, with one edge on the top and the other on the side alongside the neck, shows that the side is at less than a 90 degree angle to the top due to the neck being pulled back.

The picture below is of a '35 D-28 that had had the block slipped. The Martin factory reversed the procedure in 2010/2011. It illustrates the amount of back wood that is removed when the block is slipped.

