

Operating Manual for all  
Sadowsky MasterBuilt Models

**Sadowsky**<sup>®</sup>  
*MasterBuilt*

ENGLISH

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## Introduction

Dear Customer,

Thank you for purchasing a Sadowsky MasterBuilt bass guitar. For 40 years I have raised the bar on a traditional design and made it one of the most sought-after basses in the world.

I spent my early years working for all the top professional players in and passing through New York City and learned firsthand what worked and did not work in the studio and in live performances. I was one of the first to introduce players to active tone circuits which enhanced the bassist's ability to „cut through the mix“. The Sadowsky FET transistor preamp is still considered the best for a true „plug and play“ experience.

Today, I am very excited about my partnership with Warwick. They have the finest factory and wood inventory I have ever seen, anywhere in the world. Their carbon neutral technology will enable Sadowsky basses to be available to players worldwide, at a price point for every budget.

The satisfaction of my players is what makes my day, every day of the year. Enjoy your new Sadowsky bass!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Sadowsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of "Roger" being a large, prominent capital 'R'.

Roger Sadowsky

## Instrument Components



- |  |   |                           |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| ① <i>Strap button</i>                  | ⑨ <i>Magnetic polepieces</i>                | ⑰ <i>Fret</i>             |
| ② <i>Bridge</i>                        | ⑩ <i>Pickguard</i>                          | ⑱ <i>Just-A-Nut (nut)</i> |
| ③ <i>Saddles</i>                       | ⑪ <i>Truss rod access</i>                   | ⑲ <i>String post</i>      |
| ④ <i>Output jack</i>                   | ⑫ <i>Strap button</i>                       | ⑳ <i>String retainer</i>  |
| ⑤ <i>Volume and Tone control knobs</i> | ⑬ <i>Fret markers</i>                       | ㉑ <i>Tuning machine</i>   |
| ⑥ <i>Body</i>                          | ⑭ <i>Fret marker (12<sup>th</sup> fret)</i> | ㉒ <i>Headstock</i>        |
| ⑦ <i>Pickup (bridge position)</i>      | ⑮ <i>Neck</i>                               |                           |
| ⑧ <i>Pickup (neck position)</i>        | ⑯ <i>Fingerboard</i>                        |                           |

## Headstock

All Sadowsky basses come standard with high-quality precision tuning machines (24:1 gear ratio). Sadowsky tuning machines have open gear heads. Lubrication of the worm gear is not necessary for normal use. Should the tuning mechanism be unusually difficult to turn, a small amount of petroleum jelly or grease can be applied with the tip of a tooth pick. Please use petroleum jelly or grease very sparingly and take care not to contaminate the headstock or other parts of the instrument.

The string retainer on the headstock guides the strings at the correct angle to their string posts and provides for precise string alignment. For the best possible tuning stability, perfect sustain and to prevent unwanted buzzing or rattling of the strings in the slots of the Just-A-Nut (nut), please make sure that all strings run through the correct retainer slots every time you change strings.



## Changing the strings and tuning the instrument

For a perfect sound and the best possible playing experience, we recommend changing the strings on your instrument periodically. The way you change the strings and wind them around the string posts has a significant impact on the tuning stability and the string tension. Make sure you follow the directions below exactly. You can obtain replacement strings for your bass from your Sadowsky dealer.



*Pull the string through the holes provided in the bridge towards the pickups. Make sure that the ball end is seated securely in the recess and place the string in the saddle groove.*



*Pull the string past the string post. Keep the strings long enough to allow at least three windings around the post and use a string cutter to cut the string approximately three tuners beyond the one the string will be inserted (approx. 14 cm / 5.5").*



*The string posts have a hole in the center of the slot. Insert the end of the string into the hole and bend the string in the slot. This prevents the shortened string from protruding sideways from the string slot and at the same time stabilizes the winding and improves the tuning stability.*



*Use the tuning machine to tighten the string to the correct pitch. Use your other hand to hold the loose string in the correct position until the required tension is achieved.*



*3-4 windings on the post are ideal for easy tuning and tuning stability. Make sure the windings do not overlap and run down from the top of the post.*



*To make sure the string is firmly seated and is properly wrapped around the post, you should lightly pull on the strings when you tune. Grab the middle of the string and pull it up to tighten the winding. Then re-tune.*

## Just-A-Nut

Since 2020, the innovative Just-A-Nut III design has become the standard nut for all Sadowsky MasterBuilt basses. The Just-A-Nut III can be adjusted in height and is suitable for all fretted and fretless instruments. Use the supplied 0.9 mm Allen key to adjust the height of the strings on the nut according to your preferences.

As a tip for a good setup, we recommend pressing down the string on the third fret. Now check the distance between the first fret and the string. This distance should be between 0.1 mm and 0.3 mm (.004" – .012"), which is roughly the thickness of a business card.



## Neck & Fingerboard

As with all components made of wood, temperature and humidity have a major impact on the neck and the fingerboard of your instrument. The wood can expand or contract depending on external circumstances and this may affect the string height and playability of the instrument over time. In order to be able to play your Sadowsky bass in the best possible way at all times, we recommend that you routinely check the setup several times a year and make corrections if necessary.

*Note: All factory settings mentioned in this manual serve as guidelines only and do not represent fixed rules. The string action can be set and changed according to your personal preferences. Please keep in mind however, that strings that are set up too high will be harder to play, while strings that are set too low may cause unwanted noises, depending on the playing style.*

## Adjusting the truss rod

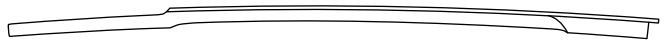
The string tension exerts a permanent pulling force on the neck. To counteract this pulling force, your Sadowsky MasterBuilt Bass is equipped with an adjustable truss rod. The neck is perfectly adjusted when it has a slight bow forward (up-bow). At the 7th fret, the distance between the top of the fret and the lowest string should be approx. 0.4 mm ( $\frac{1}{64}$ "), depending on the setup and the desired string action. If you get more fret buzz in the first position than you would like, loosen the truss rod a little more.

To check whether you need to readjust the truss rod, you should always evaluate the current relief on the instrument first. The bass must be properly tuned for precise measurements. Then put a capo on the first fret and press the lowest string down on the last fret. Then use a feeler gauge to measure the distance between the fret and the underside of the string at the 7th fret. If you need to adjust the truss rod, start by loosening the strings to take the tension off the neck. The instrument must of course be tuned again before you take the next measurement.

Use the supplied 3 mm hex wrench to turn the spokewheel in the desired direction. If the neck is too concave (too much up-bow), turn the nut to the right (clockwise, looking from the body to the neck). This will correct the bow backwards. If the neck is too convex (too much back-bow), turn the nut to the left (counterclockwise, looking from the body to the neck). This will correct the bow forward. You should make adjustments in small steps only (1/4 to 1/2 turn per day).



If the truss rod can only be adjusted using great force, if the neck needs to be readjusted very frequently, or if you are not confident enough to adjust it yourself, we strongly recommend that the adjustment is carried out by a professional guitar technician or at your Sadowsky dealer.



*Tight truss rod with back-bow in the neck (convex), low string action.*



*Loose truss rod with up-bow in the neck (concave), high string action.*

## Strings

All Sadowsky MasterBuilt instruments come with Sadowsky Blue Label Stainless Steel Bass Strings.

**4-string models (045-105 Set):** .045", .065", .085", .105" (SAC STR SBS 45)

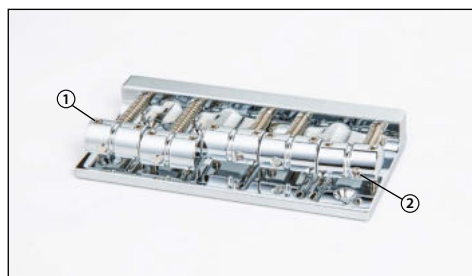
**5-string models (045-130 Set):** .045", .065", .085", .105", .130T" (SAC STR SBS 45B)

## Body

Sadowsky MasterBuilt basses are available in different versions with different pickups, body designs, electronics layouts and pickguard configurations. However, some basic features for setup, fine-tuning and tone control are identical for all models and knowledge of these features ensures that you can enjoy playing a perfectly set up instrument for a long time.

## Bridge

The Sadowsky bridge enables you to move the individual saddles in order to adapt the instrument as best as possible to your preferences. The fingerboard radius can be compensated for example, the overall height of the strings can be adjusted or the intonation can be corrected. First of all, your bass should always be in tune to make precise measurements possible.



- ① String height adjustment screws
- ② Intonation screws



- ③ Recesses for ball-ends
- ④ Quick-release opening

### Adjusting the string height and string action

You can adjust the saddle height by using the 1.5 mm Allen key and turning the adjustment screws (1) clockwise or counterclockwise. You will achieve the perfect setup if the strings follow the fingerboard radius. Press down on the strings on the first fret and use a ruler to measure the space between the bottom of the strings and the top of the 12<sup>th</sup> fret.

#### Low string action

G string: 1.59 mm (.062")  
B string: 2.38 mm (.094")

#### Medium string action

G string: 1.98 mm (.078")  
B string: 2.78 mm (.109")

#### High string action

G string: 2.38 mm (.094")  
B string: 3.17 mm (.125")

We recommend experimenting a little with the height setup until you have found a setting that suits you perfectly. If you play the bass with a relatively light attack, the strings can be positioned little lower. If you play the bass harder, it is recommended to set the string action a little higher in order to avoid buzzing at the frets.



## Adjusting the intonation

You can adjust the intonation screws (2) with a #1 Phillips screwdriver. Hold the bass in a normal playing position and with the bass plugged into a tuner, tune the entire bass. Starting with the lowest string, retune to either the open string or the 12th fret harmonic and then press the string at the 12th fret using normal playing pressure. If the fretted note is flat, turn the screw counterclockwise to shorten the length of the string until both notes play in tune. After the adjustment of the saddle, double check that the open string is still in tune and repeat the process for each string. By changing the actively oscillating string length between the Just-A-Nut and the saddle (bridge), you can precisely compensate for the scale of the instrument. Besides ambient climatic conditions, the wear of the strings, string changes and changes in the neck relief also have a direct influence on the intonation. We therefore recommend that you check the intonation of your Sadowsky MasterBuilt bass periodically and correct it if necessary.

***Note:** A bass guitar with incorrectly set intonation will always sound out of tune across the entire neck. A correct setup is therefore essential for your instrument. If you are not confident to perform the periodic checks and adjustments yourself, we strongly recommend that the setup is carried out by a professional guitar technician or at your Sadowsky dealer.*

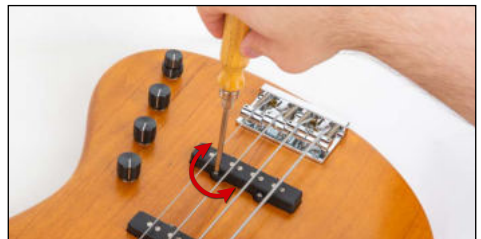
## Adjusting the pickups

A proper setup of the pickup height is imperative for a perfect sound. Pickups that are set too low reduce the output power; pickups that are set too high could affect the pitch with their magnetic field. In the worst case the strings could hit the polepieces and cause unwanted noises. Adjustments to the string height should therefore always be combined with a verification of the pickup height in order to achieve the best possible results. Press down on the two outer strings on the last fret and use a ruler to measure the distance between the bottom of the string and the top of the corresponding polepieces. For pickups without open polepieces, measure to the top of the pickup cover. The ideal height of the pickup may vary slightly depending on the string gauge and type of pickup. The height can be adjusted with a Phillips screwdriver.

The factory set-up uses the following spacing:

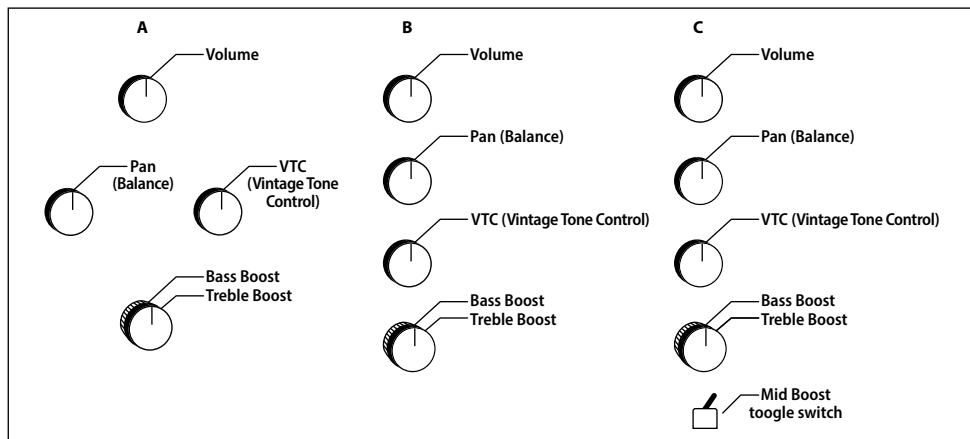
B or E string: 3.17 mm (.125")

G string: 2.38 mm (.094")



## Electronics variations

The unique Sadowsky bass electronics are one of the many reasons why the instruments are among the most sought-after basses in the world. All Sadowsky MasterBuilt basses use the same electronic circuit and only differ in the configuration of the potentiometers. The only exception is the Will Lee Signature model, which features a switchable Mid Boost in addition to the classic design.



**A:** Four controls in a diamond-shaped arrangement with a preamp bypass using the push/pull feature of the VTC control

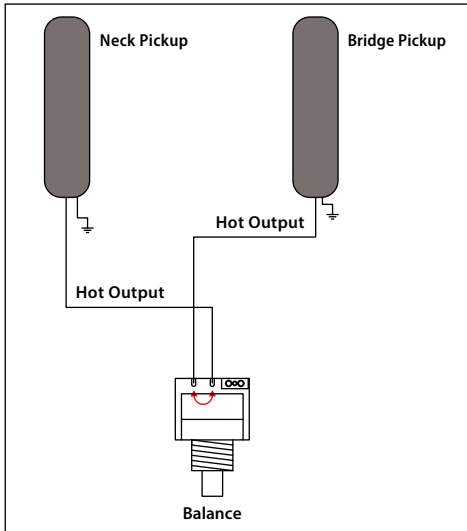
**B:** Four controls in a straight arrangement with a preamp bypass using the push/pull feature of the VTC control.

**C:** Four controls in a straight arrangement with a preamp bypass using the push/pull feature of the VTC control and a switchable Mid Boost (Will Lee Signature).

## Features

The preamp is powered by a 9V battery and activated as soon as the instrument cable is plugged in. The average life of a battery in this circuit is 6 to 12 months. The battery is discharged as soon as a cable is plugged into the output socket. To extend the battery life, the instrument cable should always be disconnected from the bass when the instrument is not in use. Switching to bypass does not extend the battery life. The bass and treble controls can only boost – there is no boost when you turn the controls all the way to the left. Don't use full treble and bass boost right away; start on the far left and then boost treble and bass as desired. The VTC control is a passive circuit; the maximum setting is a flat EQ. When you turn the control back, the treble components in the signal will be more and more attenuated. Turn the balance (pan) control counterclockwise to select the pickup in the neck position and clockwise to select the pickup in the bridge position.

**Note:** Since there is no 'right' or 'wrong' direction for the adjustment of the balance control and tastes are different, you can swap the pickup connections on the balance control. All that needs to be done is switching the two pickup inputs on the potentiometer. This way you can select the pickup in the bridge position by turning the control counter-clockwise and the pickup in the neck position by turning it clockwise. For this modification you will need a soldering iron and solder. If you are unfamiliar with soldering or not confident to perform the modifications yourself, we strongly recommend that the job is carried out by a professional guitar technician or at your Sadowsky dealer.



Switch the indicated connections on the balance control in order to reverse the balance adjustment



Pickup selection using the factory setting of the balance control.

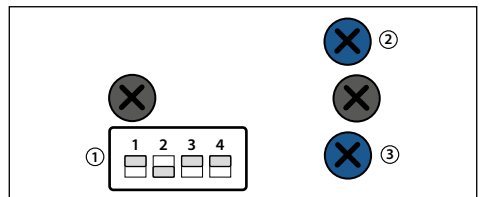
### Specifications

Frequency range:	5 Hz - 50 kHz
Bass control:	+ 18 dB boost at 40 Hz
Treble control:	+ 18 dB boost at 4 kHz
Total harmonic distortion:	0.18% at 1 kHz

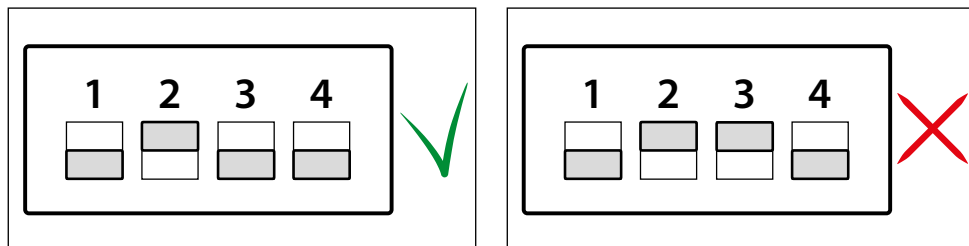
### Mid boost preamp

Instruments with integrated mid boost have a toggle switch next to the potentiometers and an additional control panel on the back of the instrument. The toggle switch activates the mid boost – the boost is activated if the switch points towards the neck; the boost is deactivated if the switch points towards the output socket. Frequency and bandwidth of the mid boost can be adjusted with the DIP switches (1) on the control panel.

- 1: 500 Hz, Q factor: 1 (narrow band)
- 2: 500 Hz, Q factor: 1.7 (broad band)
- 3: 800 Hz, Q factor: 1 (narrow band)
- 4: 800 Hz, Q factor: 1.7 (broad band)



The factory setting is 2. In order to be able to use the mid boost feature without problems, only one DIP switch should be in the ON position at a time.



In addition to the DIP switches, there are two trimmer potentiometers on the control panel. Trim-pot A (2) changes the gain of the mid boost; trim-Pot B (3) controls the output volume of the instrument when the boost is activated. The factory setting has trim-pot A at maximum and trim-pot B is set in a way that the output volume is the same in both modes (active / inactive). This way, the tonal difference of the boost section can be used in the best possible way without affecting the volume.

We recommend that you take the time to find the perfect setting for your sound. Changing the settings will no longer be necessary after you have adjusted the sound to your preferences.

**Note:** Further information and the complete circuit diagrams for Sadowsky bass electronics can be found at [www.sadowskybass.de](http://www.sadowskybass.de)

## Electronics compartment and battery change

The electronics compartment of your Sadowsky MasterBuilt Bass can be opened with a screwdriver. Remove all screws from the cover and carefully lift the cover off. The battery is connected to the circuit with a cable. If you want to change the battery, simply unplug the old battery and plug in the new battery.



## Installing and using the Security Locks



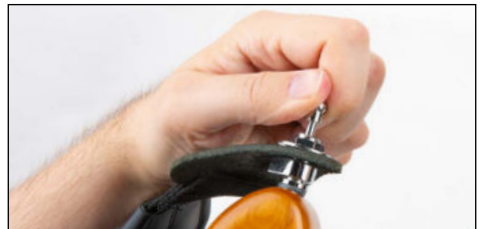
Remove the washer and the nut from the lock. Then put the lock through the hole in the strap. Make sure that the lock is on the inside and the thread is on the outside of the strap.



Put the washer onto the thread from the outside of the strap.



Screw the nut tightly onto the thread. To be on the safe side, tighten the nut with a suitable wrench.



Pull the head of the Security Lock to unlock the safety catch and slide the lock over the strap button (strap pin). Please make sure that the lock engages securely. You will hear a confirming click.

**Note:** The firm seat of the Security Locks should be checked periodically. If necessary, re-tighten the fastening screw on the strap button and the nut on the strap. If the hole in your strap is too tight or if the strap itself is too thick, we strongly recommend that adjustment and setup be performed by a professional guitar technician or at your Sadowsky dealer.

## Maintenance & Care

### Satin Finish

Sadowsky MasterBuilt basses with a **Satin Finish** (matte) come with a transparent or solid finished surface. This closed finish does not require any special care. However, depending on how dirty it is, it should be cleaned with a slightly damp cloth or one of the many suitable spray cleaners available from specialist dealers. Do not use any cleaners that are designed to remove scratches, as this will be too abrasive for a satin finish and will make it shine.

## High Polish Finish

The high gloss appearance and feel of your Sadowsky MasterBuilt bass is achieved by using a **High Polish Finish**. The wood is completely enclosed under this finish, the surface is mirror-smooth and without any noticeable wood structure. As with the **Satin Finish**, care is limited to visual aspects. You can carry out a thorough cleaning with a damp cloth or a suitable spray cleaner or use a polish that highlights the full shine of the finish and is able to remove minor scratches and signs of wear.

## Neck care

You can wipe all necks that are sealed with a **Varnish-Wax Finish** (all standard MetroLine and MasterBuilt instruments) clean with a dry cloth. For perfect protection and the best possible care, you should treat and seal the neck again with the appropriate wax if necessary. Instruments with a **High Polish Finish** (high gloss) on the neck can be cleaned with a damp cloth and treated with suitable spray cleaners or polished.

## Fingerboard care

All Morado fingerboards of the Sadowsky MasterBuilt instruments are unvarnished and need a little care every now and then to prevent them from becoming brittle or dull. Maintain and protect the fingerboard with care products specially made for this purpose. These can be obtained from specialist retailers. For best results, please observe the manufacturer's specifications for suitable care and cleaning agents. Maple fingerboards can be wiped clean with a dry cloth as they are coated with a layer of varnish.

## Warranty & Service

This product is subject to the statutory warranty period. In the event of a warranty claim, please contact your dealer first.

We hope you enjoy your new Sadowsky instrument. Should you have any further questions about your instrument, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**Note: The manufacturer reserves the right to change the specifications without notice.**