

Harp Help Sheet:

Music study, like any organized activity, seems costly at first—piano and harp being very similar in cost. The difference between the two is that some families already have a piano, as the instruments are more common in the household. Harps, however, are not as few and far between as they may seem. Believe it or not, the Minneapolis area is a very large and growing harp community. It is finding an available instrument that is the initial challenge. That being said, here are a few different instrument options. There are benefits and downsides to each:

Renting a harp:

This is initially the least costly and quickest way to get into a harp, if you can find one to rent. You usually pay a rental fee each month or quarterly to the individual or music store you rent from. The fees are usually small and you may sign a contract to rent for a certain amount of time. The downsides of renting is that you are making empty payments into something that you will not own and often they are in rougher shape than a used harp for sale would be. You may also have a hard time finding a good size and type of harp to rent. Make sure to scope out the sizing and sound of the harp before you rent it.

Buying a used harp:

This is an initial investment, but the payments on a small loan are very similar to what your rental payments may be, and many smaller used harps are inexpensive enough to pay outright. With this option you are making payments into something that will have selling power. As your child grows, you may need to upgrade to a larger instrument and with this option, the selling value of your used harp in good condition will be a big help in the initial investment of a larger harp. The downside of buying a used harp is that it may again not be in the best condition. It may need initial work done to make it playable if it is an old or under kept instrument. The more “used” an instrument the smaller its value.

Rent to own:

Lyon and Healy harps no longer rents harps outright, but they do have a program to rent to own. Essentially you pay to rent the instrument for a time and at the end of the specified time you have the option of buying the instrument with all of your payments applied to the price. This is a great option if you would like time to see if you would like continue with the harp and think that you would prefer to purchase new. You also will get to play on a high quality instrument and “test-drive” the size and sound of the harp. A downside is that this higher quality instrument will be more expensive than a highly used instrument. See lyonhealy.com for rent to own details.

Buying a new harp:

I recommend Lyon and Healy harps for those considering buying a new harp. They have a variety of sizes for all students and a variety of styles and price ranges for all levels. Their quality is very high, so should you choose to sell your harp as used, and it is well maintained, you will get a very good price. Harps do not appreciate in value, but they depreciate slowly. Demand for this brand of harp is also very high here in the Twin Cities, especially the smaller student harps. You will have very little trouble finding a buyer in this area or even in our own studio. There will always be a student behind yours looking to move up a size. The downside is that this is initially the biggest investment and commitment level, but if it is financially possible, this is the option I recommend. See lyonhealy.com for harps and prices.

In the past many of my students have combined a few of the above options. If a suitable used harp is available for purchase, or a quality harp is available for rent, this is a great way to start up if you are not financially ready to make the commitment to a new instrument. Lately, I have found that many used harps are not that far off from buying new, which is great for reselling a used harp, but not as great for the buyer. Lyon and Healy has many of what I call “starter” harps, such as their small pedal harps, troubadour mid-size lever harps and smaller folk lever harps, at very reasonable prices. Consider all of the options, and feel free to consult me about any questions you have. Please do not buy a used harp until I personally have seen it. Do not buy a used harp off the internet without my approval. I want to make sure we are getting the best instrument for the price and there are many details about an instrument that need to be assessed on site to know this. In this way, it is very similar to buying a car. Never buy used without a look under the hood!