

Harp Care and Maintenance

Harp in the Home:

Place the harp in a quiet space away from television, computer and telephone distractions. Ideally, keep the harp in a room with a door, so that the space can be closed off from extraneous noise. Make it clear to your family that when you are practicing you are not to be disturbed. Always, place the harp in a low-traffic area, never in the middle of a room where it could be bumped and fall over. Keep harp away from windows, drafty doors, and heating elements and vents. The more stable the heat and humidity the better for the instrument and tuning. If you are keeping the harp in the basement, monitor and keep humidity between 45--60%. Always keep your bench up against the back of the harp, so that if it is bumped it will be less likely to fall. Keep harp out of reach of very young children and away from play areas of both children and pets. The harp is not a toy. It is a delicate instrument.

Consult your home/renters insurance company and make sure your harp is properly insured. Make use of any warranties on your instrument and renew them when possible.

Harp Maintenance:

Tune your harp daily. I suggest using a Seiko tuner set to A 440 until you have developed the ability to aurally adjust pitches. Start at middle C and work your way to the column, and then go back to middle D and work your way to the top. Be sure to check that pedals are in the upright flat position, or that any levers are fixed to your performance preference. Once you have developed an ear for this tuning, you will be able to make adjustments by ear based on perfect fifths and octaves.

Strings will break. For this reason, if it is financially possible, I recommend buying a full set of strings for your harp. The upper octaves will break more often than the lower, and as they break you can order replacements. This way you will not have to wait for the string you need to come in the mail. The first time the harp breaks a string, bring your harp into your lesson and we will replace it together. Bring your set of strings and we will replace any others that are on the verge of breaking to get lots of string replacement practice! After this, a broken string cannot be an excuse for not practicing!

Always play the harp with clean hands and short fingernails. Long nails will negatively affect your technique and can dent the sounding board, especially in the upper octaves. The harp can be dusted with a soft, clean cloth, but never apply any dusting product to your instrument without my approval. You may like the shiny look of it, but these products can damage the delicate wood and finish. Consult me and your harpmaker about approved products and only use when absolutely necessary.

Moving the Harp from the Home:

Make sure that your car can fit your harp. When purchasing your harp, measure from top of the column to the floor to check the height and compare to the cargo room of your vehicle. You may need to add on 3-4 inches to the measurement if your car's back hatch is slanted. The harp should be moved on a flat, horizontal surface, padded with pillows and blankets to protect the delicate parts of the instrument. Always move your harp with the cover on, even if it is warm outside. Never move the harp in an open-backed vehicle such as a truck or trailer. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions regarding the specifics of your car and harp. As you continue, you may move to a bigger instrument. Keep this in mind. In the end the instrument should dictate the car, not the other way around!

Move and ready the car before you bring the harp outdoors. Open the hatch and prepare the padding. When moving the harp outdoors, never leave the harp unattended. Keep your hands on the instrument at all times, not only for security reasons, but also because the covered harp in wind acts as a giant sail and can very easily be blown over by even the slightest breeze. Slide harp onto padded surface on the tuning peg side of the harp, never on the disks or levers. Never place anything on top of the harp, even if your cover is well padded. Close the back door slowly so as not to bang the instrument if it is not correctly adjusted. Make sure the hatch is secure. Always lock your car.

Never leave the harp unattended in your vehicle for more than 15 minutes. Temper your car if it will be a drastic change from your home. If it is cold, make sure you heat the car before moving the harp and if it is warm run the air conditioning a little before you put the harp in. This will make tuning easier and protect your harp from warping, string breakage, and any cracking to the finish or sound board.

When you arrive at the performance venue, assess the area before moving the harp inside. Find a place in a low traffic area where the harp will be as inconspicuous as possible, such as a corner, or against a wall in a safe hallway. With help to open doors, move in smaller items such as the bench and stand. Then move in harp and place bench against the harp. If area is very busy, ask someone to monitor your instrument, but do not give them details as to what it is or its value. Then move the car. Keep harp covered until you can devote your entire attention to it. People will be curious and want to touch it if it is left unattended and uncovered.