

Miscellaneous Harp Tips

- Put all the levers on your harp down when you want to tune. This extends the life of the string!
- When your harp is not in use - leave all the levers down
- **Never leave your harp in a hot car!!!** NEVER...that's right! Temperatures in a closed up car sitting in the sun can exceed 200 degrees! NEVER! Glue joints can loosen up at 120 degrees, the finish can dry out and crack, the inside bracing can move - harps can be badly damaged
- When traveling in the car with your harp, wrap it in a space blanket with the reflective side up to deflect the heat. If you have to drive a long distance and the sun is on your harp (even if you have the air conditioner on) wrap the harp in a blanket or a summer sleeping bag, then put the space blanket on top of the harp. This keeps the temperature even
- Leaving your harp in a cold car is better than a hot car, however sudden temperatures are not good for the harp. Its best to warm the harp up gradually. However!! DO NOT leave your harp in a cold car overnight! The lacquer on the soundboard could crack if its freezing outside
- Put a *red and blue dash on the right side* of your tapered tuning pegs, so you know which string you are looking for when you want to tune. This prevents tuning the wrong string.
- When playing wire harp and there is not enough light, I found it helpful to put a small dot of "white out" ("Wite Out") on my string. This is also known as "liquid paper." It is correction fluid which can be purchased at office supply stores.
- Clean the wood of your harp occasionally with guitar polish
- Many students ask **how often they should change strings?** I generally say whenever they break, however, I sometimes just "clean" my strings with

What you become tomorrow depends on what you do today
Anonymous

Ivory liquid soap. This will get any hand lotion, oils, sweat, kitty cat kisses off etc. Be careful not to get any water or soap on the sound board. If my harp still sounds dull, I change one octave of strings at a time. I do not do this often though. For example, on a harp I have had for 15 years, I have changed all the strings only twice. It is not as necessary as you think (especially if we are hanging around guitar players who are always changing strings!)

- If I am left handed, how do I know which hand to play the melody with? I generally say which ever hand is more dominant or the hand you write with, even if you are ambidextrous! *Why fight the side of the body that has the most dexterity?* Some Celtic harps are taught in the old traditional style, left shoulder. However, if you are right handed, it may take a very long time to develop coordination in a non-dominant hand. I say, play traditional songs, with traditional ornaments and style, *but only do traditional left shoulder playing if you have a dominant left hand!*
- What key should my harp be in with all the levers down? That depends on how many levers I have, and what kind of music I play mostly!

For harps with no levers:

- Most of the time these harps are tuned in the key of C or G. If you play mostly Celtic music, I would opt for the key of G.

For harps fitted with C - F - B levers:

- Generally a lot of Celtic harp players keep their harp tuned in the key of F. This allows harpers to get into four different keys: Key of F, C, G and D. Most Celtic songs are just for these keys! Celtic tunes are written in C, D and G because penny whistles and uilleann pipes are in these keys. Having C, F and B levers allow you to play pop and classical music as well, however sometimes there is an occasional sharp or flat we cannot access in classical music unless the string is re-tuned.

For harps with a full set of levers:

- For me, I still choose to keep my harps in the key of F. I have found a lot of classical, pop, medieval, renaissance and Celtic songs in C

It is not our abilities that show us what we really are, it is our choices
Professor Dumbledore