

# Fingering and Placing

The best way to insure your musical piece will be played smooth and flowing is to choose fingering ahead of time on the string patterns. Good fingering can make it look like the music rolls right off your fingers! Enjoying the harp and having fun is much like sports or dancing. Each activity presents us with lots of fun and yet to get to that place means **we have to teach our body the "moves"**. Which is where discipline and work come into focus! Good fingering is essential to a fast song. It is very hard to play a fast song if the fingering is clumsy.

## FOR FINGERING:

- Bracket and place **finger numbers either all above or below the notes**, so your eye is not jumping from top to bottom. The note patterns are how you train your eye and hands to connect to the song. Later on as you pass the beginner stage, you won't have to bracket every pattern in your song just the unusual patterns.
- **Be consistent in fingerings** in your song. If you see the same two or three note pattern in your song, do the same fingering!!
- Give yourself **three options for figuring out which note pattern to use**. Consider what notes come before and after the pattern you choose. And above all, look for *similar* note "patterns" in your song!!! If you crash and burn in the middle of a fast piece, stop and evaluate your fingering pattern.
- Your finger patterns **ALWAYS** include your thumb! You cannot have a pattern that does not include the thumb! Placing the thumb adds stability to the hand so your playing will sound solid!

## FOR PLACING:

- Place your finger patterns on the strings **BEFORE** you pluck the pattern. Placing gives your hand stability! Placing "grounds" you to the song! Placing helps you play fast! If you are "tickling" the strings with your fingers without placing you will not be thoroughly aquatinted with your piece. The song will not have a "form". It would be just a series of lots of strings rather than "patterns".

If people knew how hard I have to work to gain my mastery,  
it would not seem wonderful at all.

Michelangelo

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- **EVERY TIME you place your fingers on the strings you are teaching your fingers either the wrong or right position/placing!** So go slow and do it right the first and second and third time etc. We get better at harping when we go slow. Help yourself in going 4 steps forward by not taking 3 steps back with no placing!
- **Place fingers on the strings all together, not one at a time!** This insures an "internal" knowing of the song which takes shape. This is why songs can be played fast, be done well and memorized quickly!
- Playing harp in hot weather? **Use Talcum powder** for your fingers and on the side of your harp, so you don't "stick" to the strings and sound box!
- Put a rubber band on the 4<sup>th</sup> and pinky finger to **curb the "flying pinkys"**
- Do not let your fingers curl tightly all the way into your palm - **keep fingers loosely curled inside palm**
- **Lean your dominant hand** on the side of the harp to give your arm stability. This is a must for playing fast songs! And allows for better sight reading!

*Go slowly and you shall surly arrive  
Milarepa*