

Play the Therapy Harp

Laurie Riley, CMP, ACCM

Table of Contents:

Caring for Your Harp	4
Recommended Accessories	5
Tuning	6
Holding Your Harp	7
Hand Position	8
Basic Music Theory	10
Reading Music	12
Beginning Exercises	19
Etudes	23

Original Therapy Repertoire:

Innis Mor	28
Springtime	29
The Cliffs of Mohr	30
Snowy Day	31
Roslyn Twilight	32
Rowing to the Island	33
Swaying Trees	34
Sweetwater	35

YOUR THERAPY HARP

The term “therapy harp” is used to describe any small harp that is suitable for playing for therapeutic purposes for yourself or others.

We do not claim to cure any disease or injury, either physical or psychological, with music, but it is well known that the sound of the harp is therapeutic and promotes well-being when the harp is accurately tuned and is played in a restful and pleasant way. Beautiful music is known to affect the human body by releasing endorphins that lift the emotions and promote good health.

A therapy harp is designed to be portable. Many small therapy harps will fit in the overhead compartment of an airplane, can easily be taken on camping trips and picnics, and can also be strapped on so you can stroll while playing.

You can use your harp for self-therapy, or you can study the art of Sound Healing to work with private groups and clients, or you can take a certification course to become a clinical music practitioner and play in hospitals, hospices, and nursing homes.

Any accomplished musician may volunteer to play in a hospital lobby, but if you plan to play in the patients’ rooms or at the bedsides of patients in medical facilities, you must become certified with an accredited training program. See the Resources chapter for information on these programs.

If you wish to use your harp for private Sound Healing sessions, rather than in hospitals and hospices (the applications are very different), there are many learning resources on the internet if you Google “sound healing”. Also see the Resources chapter.

CARING FOR YOUR HARP

- Tune your harp at least twice a day when it is new. After it settles down in a few weeks, tune it at least once a week.
- Always keep your harp tuned to “concert” pitch (the pitch on an electronic tuner should be set at 440).
- Your harp should be kept away from direct sunlight and other sources of heat.
- Never leave your harp in a hot car.
- When playing your harp outdoors, be sure to protect it from rain.
- When traveling, always put your harp in its protective carry case.
- To polish the wood of the harp, use guitar polish, not furniture polish, and don’t get it on the strings.
- Strings do not need to be changed unless they break.
- Get your levers regulated once a year by a professional harp regulator.
- Always have maintenance and repairs done by the company that made the harp, to protect the warranty.
- Changing strings: unlike a guitar or other fretted instruments, you only need to change the strings that break. (Most harps come with extra strings. If not, order a spare set from the company that made your harp.)

HOW TO CHANGE A STRING: First, remove the broken string. Then find the appropriate new string (refer to the string chart that came with your harp). From the inside of the back of the harp, put one end of the new string through the string hole and then pull it through from the front. Then thread the string through the hole in the pin at the top (neck), and pull it taut. Then, using your tuning key, start turning the pin so the string winds onto the pin in the same direction the other strings are wound. As you turn, be sure the string-end goes under the first winding of the string to hold it in place; otherwise it will just pull through the hole and the string will not tighten. When the string is taut, tune it as usual. The string will go out of tune more often when it is new than the older strings will, so tune it often.