

# Now that you found your perfect Harp

**Congratulations!** You have purchased a good harp that will last you a long time. You felt that excitement when you brought your harp home from a harp dealer or from a harp teacher or your harp was shipped to your home. I know, you are excited to play your very first piece on your newly acquired harp!

## First things first

When you get your newly acquired harp home, carefully unpack it and check to be sure that there are no damages especially if your harp was shipped. Once you unpack your harp, keep the packaging until you are sure that your harp is working properly.

Check the strings to be sure that they are tight and that the strings are undamaged. Then go through the accessories that come with your harp, such as a base and supporting legs which you can attach to the bottom of your harp. Your harp should also come with a tuning key which you will use to tune your harp.

Your harp should come with extra strings so that you can replace them if need be. If by any chance your new harp doesn't come with extra strings now would be a good time to order extra strings to keep on hand.

Next, your harp should come with a gig bag. A gig bag provides protection for your harp when you travel with your harp anywhere, whether it may be your session with your harp teacher or when you are traveling on the road. Your gig bag should also come with pockets to store your extra strings as well as your tuning key.

## Time to accessorize!

Now that you got your harp all set up, you are going to need to accessorize! Let's go through the accessories you will need to be a successful harpist!

*Tuner:* If you happen to have a smartphone such as your iPhone there are many tuner apps out there you can choose from. Some are free but there are a few that you download only to find that the tuner app is a pared down demo version and to get the full version you have to pay money. When I first began playing the harp I tried a multitude of tuning apps out there but sometimes they work or not.

I would highly recommend a Korg CA-50 Chromatic Tuner together with a microphone that you can clip onto one of your harp's tuning pegs. What you do is connect the microphone to the connector on the tuner and connect the clip end of the microphone onto one of the tuning pegs on your harp. Turn your tuner on and using

your tuning key insert the key onto one of the tuning pegs and slowly turn the key until the string is tuned.

*Music Stand:* You need a music stand to hold your music while you play! You can find a music stand that won't break your budget; there are several on Amazon that will fit your needs. Assembly is very easy and the parts can be broken down for easy carrying in a music carrying bag.

*Music Stand Light:* This is a light that clips on the top of your music stand. Having a music stand light helps you see your music in low light situations such as dusk when you are playing outdoors. Most music stand lights are powered by a rechargeable battery which you can plug in to a wall outlet.

*Music Book:* Sure, you can organize your music on your iPad! But a music book would organize your music so that you can have ready access. Your sheet music loads from the top.

*Music Stand Carrying Bag:* The perfect carrying bag for all of your harp accessories. That way, you can carry the above items I just mentioned together with your books that you need for your weekly harp lessons or for when you travel.

*Metronome:* A harpist's must have! There are standalone metronome apps you can download and most of them are free. Amazon also has a good selection of metronomes as well. Your harp teacher will show you how to use a metronome when you practice.

*Chair or stool:* Another harpist's must have! Get one that is portable and that you can easily fit into the trunk of your car when you go to performances. A folding chair will work if you have one.

All of the above accessories can be found on Amazon. I like Amazon because of the speed of delivery and the ability to receive your orders either at home or at a pickup locker closest to you especially if you are at work during the day and you cannot receive packages at home.

### **Organizing your harp items**

Of course your harp goes into the gig bag when you travel. Your gig bag should have compartments for carrying your base and supporting legs as well as your tuner and extra strings. I would strongly recommend carrying your tuner and extra strings in one of your compartments in your harp gig bag.

The remainder of your harp items including your music stand should be carried in your carrying bag. That way, you can have easy yet organized access to your harp items no matter where you go.

Another item what I would call a must have would be an iPad! Download the forScore app (be sure you get the full version; there is a cost but the cost is a one time charge) because it has accessories including a metronome. Use your iPad along with a cloud based storage service such as Apple iCloud or Microsoft OneDrive to store your sheet music; that way, if your physical copies of your sheet music go missing you can always reprint it from your cloud drive. forScore also comes with a metronome as well. An iPad does not require a second line (and additional charges on your monthly wireless bill): Simply configure the iPad for Wi-Fi and have your smartphone act as a hotspot.

### **Caring for your Harp**

Any harp requires a lot of TLC so that it can perform for you! Following these recommendations should ensure an enjoyable harp experience:

- If you have a lever harp, be sure to lower all your harp levers when you are done practicing or when you pack your harp in the gig bag. This releases any tension on the strings and makes your strings last longer.
- Try to keep your harp in a climate controlled environment. Between 60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal. Keep your harp out of direct sunlight as well as rain!
- When you perform outdoors such as the beach, *be sure to bring a protective blanket*. You don't want debris getting into your harp.
- Know how to change a string on your harp. Your harp teacher can show you how or there are videos out there on YouTube, simply search for "how to change a harp string" and follow the easy steps.
- Give your harp a cleaning once in a while, more often if you perform outdoors.
- If you have a lever harp, check to see that the levers function correctly.
- If you have a pedal harp, these harps require periodic service called a regulation. Your harp teacher or a harp dealer can point you in the right direction in order to have your pedal harp regulated.

### **And by the way...**

Consider carrying a harpist's fingernail care kit in your carrying bag! You want to make sure that your fingernails are trimmed, especially if you have a tendency for your fingernails to grow quickly. Your harp strings will certainly say thank you.

Another must have should be a hygrometer, which measures the relative humidity of any room where you have your harp. 40 to 60 percent humidity is ideal as it is crucial for your harp's stability and longevity. Keeping your harp in a climate controlled environment is very critical, especially if you live in Florida (where I'm from) as you want to keep the humid air of summer at bay.

Additionally, keeping your A/C set to 72 degrees during the summer months in particular is the best for your harp. Keeping your harp out of direct sunlight and away from air ducts helps preserve your harp for many years of practice and performance pleasure.

*Have lots of fun playing beautiful pieces on your harp!*

© 2025 Edward Ringwald