

Practice Guidelines for the Harp

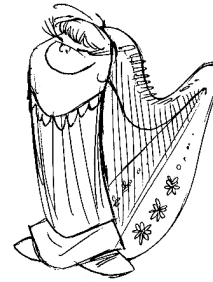
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- “I always help produce a small and beautiful sound through moving fingertips naturally”
Haruko Kataoka

Basic Lesson/Practice Format:

1. Warmups
2. Scales
3. Exercises, Studies, Etudes
4. Musical Pieces



Although all techniques can be practiced separately, their **combination** is what makes your harp playing the best it can be!



Techniques to Improve Playing:

- basic reading (rhythm, melody)
- tempo (speed and accuracy)
- tone (clarity, richness of sound)
- restringing and tuning
- articulation & dexterity (agility)
- dynamics (volume)
- posture; hand, arm & body position (strength and stamina)
- phrasing & interpretation (combination of the above skills)

Additional Skill Builders:

(incomplete list)

- sight-reading
- glissando
- harmonics
- pedal technique
- instrument care & cleaning

Eventually you learn the standard harp repertoire (Solos, Chamber Pieces, Concertos, Orchestral Excerpts, etc.)!



Harp Posture and Hand Position Tips Kim Milai

Seating posture

Seat height needs to be adjusted so you can play in the middle of the strings. Feet need to be flat on the floor or on a stool. The harp is supported by the right shoulder near the neck and supported by the knees. The curve of the harp back is slightly above shoulder. The harp is far enough forward so weight is lessened.

Building Technique Assignment Tips

Finger numbers review

Finding C's

Second finger hovers like a humming bird

Lower forearms parallel to the floor, wrists bent inward (opposite of violin wrist)

Rhythm study first variation 'pepperoni pizza' 'ready go'

- b. Place the tip of the second finger on the string
- c. Hand should be pushed forward, wrist in
- d. Arms should not touch the sound board
- e. Play, all fingers (including thumb) open and close with each note

Hand and Playing Tips

- Pluck softly, hands folds like a flat house (check preplunk hand position)
- Plucking is natural soft, never forced, like baby feet walking
- Also try playing the rhythm in the air, helicopter hover
- Thumb is placed high to give room for the rest of the fingers to pass under when needed.
- Fingers are slightly curved or are straight (not bending at the finger tip joint)
- Do not rest arm on the harp, if you tire, go back later to play.
- After plucking, fingers close into the palm of the hand (flat) and the thumb closes over the second joint of finger 2. Never tight.
- Gesture after long notes is up and forward
- As you ascend, elbows go higher, wrist only slightly less bent in.
- 'Raising up' from the strings beneficial

Final Tips:

Technique building should be done almost meditatively. The finger action is at song tempo but the 'spaces' between notes or phrases can be longer so you can check your hand position. If you feel yourself tensing up, shake out your hands and arms and take a little mini break. As with any instrument, harp playing can cause stress related injury to the neck and shoulders if not done correctly. That's why learning the proper technique in the beginning is crucial.

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