

# TAKING CARE OF YOUR HARP

If you take proper care of your harp, it should give you decades of pleasure.

First, you need to decide where to keep the harp in your house. Never put your harp near a window where it will receive direct sunlight, and try to keep it away from heating and air conditioning vents. The more stable the environment (temperature and humidity), the happier your harp will be. An inside wall of the house is best, because the temperature tends to be more constant there than against an outside wall. Animals and small children (and even adults!) can easily knock over your harp if it is in an area with a lot of traffic. Whenever you finish playing, place your harp with its back resting lightly against your harp bench or chair, or the wall. That way, your harp is less likely to fall over.

Never leave your harp in a parked car, even for a short period of time. On a hot day the heat that builds up in a parked car can literally melt the glue that holds your harp together. Even if this damage may not be immediately evident to you, it can cause major problems for your harp at a later time. Cold can be just as bad for your harp. Freezing temperatures can crack some types of harp finish. So, to be safe, never leave your harp in a parked car!

Harp are happiest in an environment of about 40 - 50% relative humidity. If you live in a location where the humidity is very low, check with your harpmaker for recommendations to keep your harp safe.

Always wash your hands before you sit down to play your harp. Remove any jewelry that might scratch the harp. This can include watches, bracelets, necklaces, pins, and dangling earrings. Rhinestones and sequins on your blouse or t-shirt can also cause scratches. We've even seen harps that were damaged by belt buckles from people standing close to their harp while tuning. So, be careful when wearing anything that has any potential of damaging your beautiful instrument. When in doubt, take it off and keep it away from your harp.

Always cover your harp, or put it in its case, before putting it on a dolly or into your car. Be careful when moving your harp: it is easy to bash it into doorways and other obstacles if you are not paying close attention. Never leave your harp unattended while it is on a dolly or cart.

Keep your harp clean and dust-free with a plain, soft dust cloth. Never use any type of polish or wax on your harp unless it is recommended by your harpmaker. Harpmakers use a variety of lacquers and other finishes on their instruments. You do not want to put anything on your harp that will damage the finish, or make your harp greasy, or gummy. You can use a soft, clean paint brush or dust brush to clean the "hard-to-reach-places" around the pins, levers, and disks.

Always keep your harp tuned, and replace broken strings promptly with the correct type and gauge of string. Never tune your harp to a higher pitch than recommended by the harpmaker.