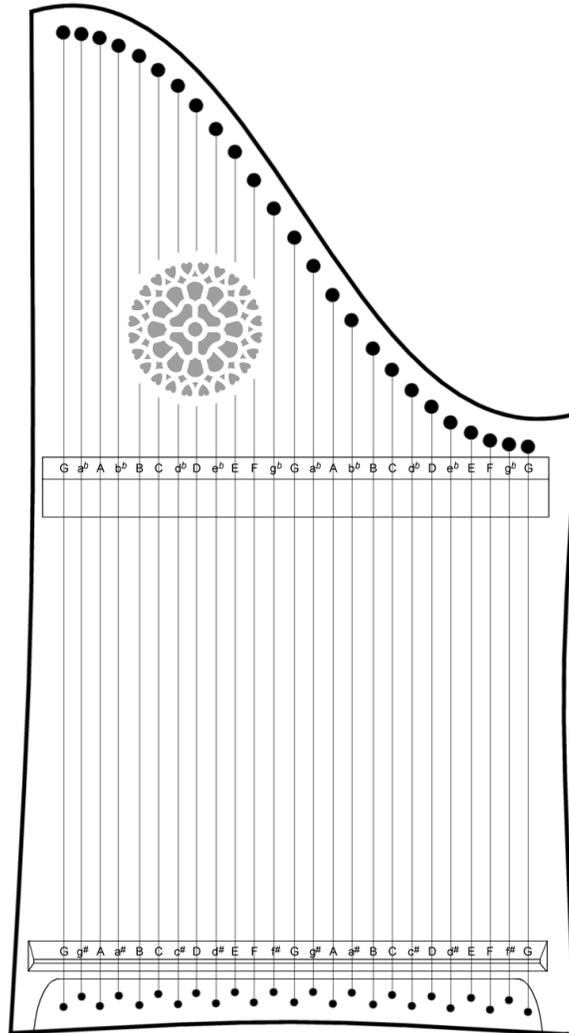


Joystings Music
presents the
Joystings Harp



INSTRUCTIONS AND CARE GUIDE

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Joystings Music

Welcome!

Thank you for purchasing a Joystings harp, and welcome to the family of Joystings harp players. Whether you play your new harp alone, with family and friends, or in a Joystings harp group, this manual will show you how to care for your new harp and how to get the most enjoyment from it.

Music is for everyone!

What makes this harp unique?

Anyone who has tried to learn to play a traditional musical instrument knows what a challenge that can be. It can take months or years of practice to read sheet music well – translating all those marks on paper into hand movements, and doing it fast enough to keep up the rhythm. Even playing “by ear” (that is, without sheet music) still requires you to memorize which hand movement produces which note, and to work out – while you’re playing! – which note to play next. Either way, playing a traditional instrument can be a daunting task. No wonder so few of us ever experience the joy of playing a real instrument.

But with the Joystings harp, all the hard work of deciding *which* note comes next and *where* to find it on the instrument has already been done before you sit down to play. All you have to do is play! The note-map fits right under the harp’s strings, so you just pluck where you see the notes. A line leads your eye from each note to the next, all the way to the end of the page. Most people can play a simple tune the very first time they sit at a Joystings harp, even if they’ve never played any instrument before. And with a little patience, most people can even write their own music for the Joystings harp! No wonder we say:

Music is for everyone!

If you already play another instrument

The Joystings harp is a great way to extend your musical experience to another instrument. Everything you already know will be useful as you play this harp and arrange music for it. You can also play duets with friends or relatives who have no musical training – you play your instrument, and they play the harp. With a Joystings harp,

Music is for everyone!

Quick Start

So you've just received your Joystrings harp and you'd like to get started right away. Let's begin by setting up your harp and playing a simple piece of music.

Set up: If your harp came with a leg, attach it (see page ##) and stand the harp on a table. Or if you have a harp-stand, set it up (see page ##) and stand the harp on it.

Find some music: Find the simplest piece of music that came with your harp. Good choices are *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* and *Frère Jacques (Brother John)*. For now, choose the simpler side of the sheet (the side with no red notes).

Insert the music: Slide the music sheet into your harp's top and bottom guides. Take your time and be gentle, so you don't bend anything.

Line it up: The first note has an arrow pointing to it and a letter printed near it. Find the string on the harp that has the same letter printed near it on either the top or bottom guide, and slide the music so the first note aligns with that string.

Play: Begin at the top of the page and play the first note. Follow the dotted line to the second note, and play that. Keep doing that all the way to the end of the page. Congratulations! You just played your first piece of music on the Joystrings harp!

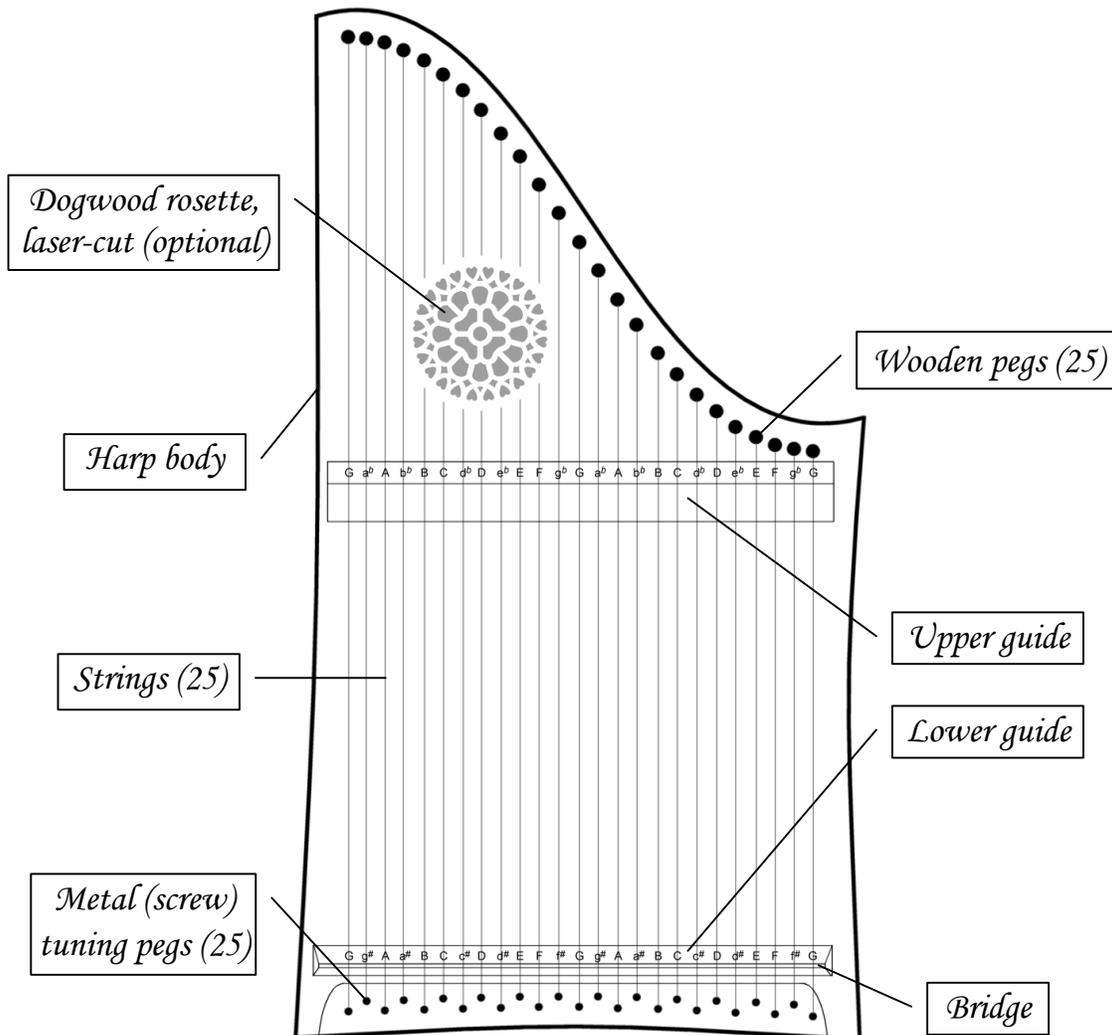
A word about rhythm

Have you ever tapped your foot to music? All music has a steady rhythm; the notes don't all last the same length of time, but together they fit into the rhythm.

Our music sheets for the Joystrings harp use different shapes of notes such as ○ ○ ● ● • to represent the different durations of the notes. The larger and brighter the symbol, the longer the note lasts. Every sheet has a little table showing how many beats long each shape of note is. As you play your harp, try tapping a steady beat with your foot and using that to help you keep the rhythm steady. When practicing alone, you can use a device called a *metronome* to provide a steady beat. (Some *tuning aids* also include a metronome function.)

Some people like to "count" the beat of their music: "1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4..." To help you with this, some of our music for the Joystrings Harp is printed with those numbers beside the notes. (If you don't need those numbers, just ignore them.)

Components of the Joystings Harp



At rear (not shown)

Sound hole

Inlaid wood mosaic ring (optional)

Leg hole for tabletop use (optional)

Other options (recommended)

Tuning key

Harp carrying case

Harp stand

Harp stand cover

Tuning aid with contact microphone and earphone

And of course

Joystings Harp sheet music ("Note Maps")

A word about tuning

If your first performance didn't sound quite right, your harp may need tuning. All stringed instruments need tuning from time to time, and this is described on page 7. Tuning keeps your harp sounding its best.

Setup

Inserting the leg into your Joystings harp

If your harp came with a leg, place the harp face down on your lap and look at its back. There should be a hole there to receive the leg. Gently insert the tapered end of the leg all the way into the hole, then give it a firm push and a slight twist at the same time. It will stay firmly in the hole, and you can now stand the harp on a table. To remove the leg, pull it while twisting it; don't wiggle the leg from side to side, as that could enlarge the tapered hole, making the leg a poor fit.

If your harp didn't come with a leg, it probably came with a harp stand instead.

Setting up the harp stand

If you purchased our harp stand, you'll need to set it up.

If the clear plastic top was shipped separated from the metal base, it came with two embedded screws and two black plastic nuts you can turn by hand. Remove the nuts from the screws, put the screws through the small square holes in the top of the metal base, and put the nuts back on and tighten them. Do this with the base lying on a soft couch so there's no chance for anything to slip out of your control while you connect the top to the base. You only need to do this step once – after that you can carry the stand around with the top attached.

To set up the stand, loosen the black plastic screw that secures the ring at the top of the legs to the metal stem. Once the screw is slack you can slide the ring up and down the stem – though you may first have to pull each leg away from the stem, because the legs fit very snugly against the stem when closed. To set it, tighten the black plastic screw that secures the ring to the stem. As you slide the ring down the stem, at first the legs move out away from the stem and then they begin to move back toward it. The position with the legs widest apart is the most stable, and we recommend setting it there. This setting also affects the height of the harp from the ground, so if the main height adjustment is unable to make the harp low enough for you, adjust the legs to lower the harp further.

Now stand the whole harp stand upright on the floor, and adjust the tilt of the top. There is another black plastic screw that secures the top at the tilt you prefer. We recommend you tilt the top back at enough of an angle that the harp's own weight keeps the harp securely in contact with the four non-slip pads on the stand. If the top of the stand is too vertical, the harp may bounce up and down as you play loud notes.

If you are playing the harp while sitting down, the setup process just described should be all that you need to do. But if you are playing while standing up, you will want to adjust the height of the stand. There is another black plastic screw that secures the telescoping central stem of the stand. Slacken that screw, pull the top up to the desired height, and tighten the screw again. If this setting is unable to make the harp low enough for you, adjust the legs to lower the harp further.

Tuning

All stringed instruments need tuning from time to time. The 25 strings on the Joystings harp are each tuned to one of the individual notes (called "semitones" by musicians) from which all music is composed. To make your harp sound right, you'll need to tune each string to the correct sound (or "pitch").

At the bottom of the harp, each string winds around a peg screwed into the harp's wooden frame. To tune a string, put the "tuning key" (a sort of handle) *firmly* on top of the peg, and turn it *slightly*. Turning the peg to the left (anticlockwise) tightens the string, which raises the pitch. Turning it to the right (clockwise) loosens the string, which lowers the pitch. *Unless you've just put a new string on your harp, you never have to turn these pegs very far.* Avoid overtightening any string, as this can break the string or damage the wooden peg. If a lot of the strings are overtightened at the same time, that could even bend the entire harp.

How do you know when the pitch is right? There are basically two ways to be sure the strings are tuned correctly. The first way (called *by ear*) is to compare the sound of each string with something else that is correctly tuned. If you have a piano or electronic keyboard, you can compare the sound of each string on the harp to the corresponding note on the other instrument, and tune until they sound the same. If you don't have another instrument, we supply a tuning CD that has two minutes of steady tone for each of the 25 notes on the harp, plus a play-through of all 25 notes at the end. You play each track and tune the corresponding harp string until it sounds the same. There are also websites that generate steady tones for tuning, and some tuning aids can also generate tuning tones.

The second way is more accurate: you use a *tuning aid*, a little computer with a microphone that listens to the harp and indicates by how much the pitch of each string is too high (*sharp*) or too low (*flat*). You adjust the tuning until the tuning aid indicates that the note is exactly right. This method has two advantages over tuning by ear: you are not relying on your own ears or judgment, and by using a clip-on microphone attached to your harp, you can tune it accurately even when other musicians are tuning their own instruments nearby. This makes it ideal when you play in groups or at concerts.

The tuning aid we supply comes with full instructions. It also includes a clip-on “contact microphone”, which greatly improves the sensitivity of the device (as compared to using its built-in microphone). The clip-on microphone can also be used with an amplifier when you perform for a large audience.

The tuning aid we supply also includes a *metronome* function that generates a steady beat for you to practice with, and, in case you sometimes prefer to tune by ear, a *tone generator* function that generates steady tones for any note.

Whether you tune your harp by ear or with a tuning aid, it’s important to turn the peg by tiny amounts at a time. After each little adjustment, pluck the string again and check whether it’s sharp or flat. If it’s sharp, your next adjustment of the peg should be clockwise; if it’s flat, anticlockwise.

Tips for tuning

If you’re turning a tuning peg and you don’t hear any difference in the sound when you pluck the string, make sure you’re turning the right peg!

Most broken strings we’ve seen were caused by *overtightening* the string while tuning it. You can prevent that by comparing the pitch of the string you’re tuning with the pitch of the strings on either side. It should be higher than one and lower than the other. If it’s higher than both, you have overtightened it and should slack it off as soon as possible.

Make sure the *battery* in your tuning aid is fresh. If the battery is weak, the tuning aid can become unresponsive and occasionally may even lock up, requiring that you remove the battery to shut it down. In general, if the tuning aid appears to have any kind of problem, always check its battery first. If you don’t have a battery tester, try using a brand new alkaline battery; in our experience, that always makes the problems go away!

How to play the Joystrings Harp

Insert the sheet music

Joystrings Harp “note maps” are designed to last a long time with careful handling. They are printed on stiff board stock with a special coating to give sharp, clear images of the printed notes. Keep them away from water, which may warp the board and cause the ink to run. If you are carrying your music in the rain, wrap it in plastic to protect it.

To insert a sheet of music into your harp, first place the bottom corner of the sheet in the wooden bottom guide, then slide the top corner underneath the stiff plastic top guide. Take your time and be gentle, so that you don't bend either the music or the top guide.

At the top of each sheet of music there's a note with a large arrow pointing to it, and a letter printed near it. Line up that note with the string that passes over the same letter on the top or bottom guide. Now you're ready to play!

Pieces with more than one sheet

Some longer pieces of music come on several sheets. You may be able to fit three or four sheets of music into the harp at the same time, then pull them out one at a time as you finish playing each one. It's fine to do that, but don't force in more sheets than the guides can hold, especially the top guide.

For very long pieces, ordinary paper is sometimes used instead of card stock. With care, paper can last a long time, and you can easily insert 8 or 9 sheets at once.

Plucking the strings

It's best to pluck the strings with the tip of your finger, but NOT with your fingernail. Plucking with your nail produces a harsh sound; plucking with your fingertip produces a pleasant sound that everyone recognizes as the sound of a harp. After playing regularly, you will probably develop thicker skin on the part of your finger that you pluck with.

Ideally, you want to pluck with a steady rhythm and produce a constant loudness, so make those your goals when you practice.

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Playing the piece

At the top of each sheet of music there's a note with a large arrow pointing to it. Start by plucking that note, and wait for the length of time indicated by the size and shape of the note (there is a small list on every sheet showing how many beats to allow for each shape of note).

Now follow the dotted line that joins the first note to the next one, and pluck that, waiting again for the right length of time. Just continue doing that all the way to the end of the page, and you will have played the entire piece!

Repeats and jumps

Many pieces of sheet music repeat a section. To save space, we don't print those notes twice. Instead, we put a "jump" in the music – a blue arrow pointing to the next note you have to play, when it's not the next note down the page. To make it easy to see which note is at each end of the arrow, we print those notes in blue instead of black. Sometimes you'll jump ahead; most often you'll jump back. Just look at the arrowhead to see which way the jump goes.

Sometimes you'll jump back and repeat a section, but it has a different ending the second time. Look for blue numbers in circles next to the blue arrows. The first time you play through the piece, follow the jump marked ①. Next time you come to that jump ignore it, and instead follow the jump marked ②, and so on.

Writing your own music

If you can hum or whistle a tune, you can write your own music for the Joystings Harp! All you need is paper and pencil, and a little time.

The right size of paper

The Joystings Harp is designed to hold sheet music that is 11 inches tall and 12 inches wide. Most printers will be happy to cut paper to that size for you, or you can do it yourself. You can get “B-size” paper (11 x 17 inches) at most office supplies stores and cut 5 inches off the length. Or, you can get scrapbook paper (12 x 12 inches) at scrapbooking stores and cut 1 inch off the height. If the range of your tune (from lowest to highest note) is 18 strings or less, the tune may fit on letter-size paper (11 x 8.5 inches), which will also fit in the Joystings Harp.

Start with a pencil (and an eraser!)

Writing music is a “trial and error” process, so work in pencil and have an eraser handy! Start by plucking strings until you find the one that matches the first note of your tune. Make a pencil mark under that string near the top of the page. Now whistle or hum the tune and find the next note, and mark that a bit lower down the page. Keep putting one note after another until you reach the end of your tune!

When you’ve written your whole tune in pencil, play it through and listen carefully. Does everything sound right? If you hear a wrong note, mark the right note beside it.

When all the corrections have been marked, take the paper out of the harp and erase the wrong notes. Now look at the overall layout. If you ran out of space near the end of the page, and your pencil marks got a bit crowded there as a result, this is your opportunity to move your pencil marks up or down the page to even out the spacing.

After making those adjustments in pencil, put the paper back in the harp and check again that everything is correct. If it is, you’re ready to go over your pencil marks with a pen. Then after waiting for the ink to dry, you can erase all the pencil marks and your new piece of music for the Joystings Harp is finished.

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Symbols

Five different symbols are used in Joystrings Harp music to represent notes of different “durations”. (The duration of a note is how long you wait before you play the next note). To help you remember what these symbols mean, they get **bigger** and **brighter** as the notes get **longer**; **smaller** as the notes get **shorter**.

● A note of average duration (*called a “quarter note” by musicians*)

○ twice as long as ●

● half as long as ●

○ twice as long as ○

● half as long as ●

A dot after any symbol makes it last 50% longer. For example,

○ lasts **twice** as long as ● but ○. lasts **three times** as long as ●

Printing

If you want to print copies of your music to give to others, see an office supplies stores. They can copy up to 11 x 17 inches at reasonable prices.

Groups and ensembles

Playing your Joystrings Harp is even more enjoyable when you get together with other owners to play together in a Joystrings Harp group. If there is no group where you live, you can start one. You don't even need another Joystrings Harp owner to start a group; get together with other musicians such as guitarists and violinists, and begin meeting regularly to play together. The 2-octave range and beautiful tone of the Joystrings Harp make it a real musical instrument that can be played with any kind of accompaniment.

Some of the harp music available from Joystrings Music is designed for playing in groups. It has been written in two or three parts, each played by a different harpist, that together make complex and beautiful harmonies. See <http://www.joystrings.com> for lists of the music currently available. You may even know a musician who would enjoy the challenge of transposing music for the Joystrings Harp.

Cleaning

Treat your Joystrings Harp gently, as you would any fine musical instrument. If it needs cleaning, use a soft cloth dampened with clean water; for stubborn marks try adding one drop of hand dishwashing detergent to the damp cloth, or clean the harp with a product like Martin® Guitar Polish, available at musical instrument shops.

The plastic top guide for the music is made from sturdy PET plastic. It is quite strong, but if enough force is applied it will bend. Be careful when inserting music, and do not overload the guide by trying to insert more sheets of music than it can hold. Never use Windex® to clean this or any other clear plastic.

Contacting us

We love to hear from our customers, especially stories of how the Joystrings Harp is being used to bring music into the lives of people who thought they could never have that joy. You can contact us at:

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Our website, where you can find our current list of available music and details of upcoming harp concerts, is at <http://www.joystrings.com>.

We wish you much pleasure in playing your new Joystrings Harp!