

Tuning the Autoharp

When the Autoharp is new, it will require rather frequent tuning. As the body and strings settle into final position, the tuning becomes much less frequent. It is recommended, and is also much easier, to tune the instrument to a chromatic tuner, piano, organ or any other instrument that has a fixed and accurate pitch.

Generally, only a few strings ever get out of tune at the same time. To test for these, press down on a chord and draw a pick slowly across the strings. This will locate the string or strings out of tune in that chord. Turn the tuning pin on the out of tune string a little bit clockwise or counterclockwise until it sounds in tune with the others of the chord when you strum across the entire instrument. This will raise or lower the pitch. After bringing those strings up to pitch, continue with the next chord. It is best to start tuning the C major chord first, then the F major, the G major and then follow with the others.

If the autoharp ever gets completely out of tune and a piano is available, start with the lowest string, which is the second F below the middle C on the piano, and continue up the scale. If a piano is not available, use a chromatic pitch pipe or tuner. Start tuning at the C in the middle octave. This is the same as middle C on the piano and also the first note on the chromatic tuner. Continue tuning through the chromatic scale of the pitch pipe. This will tune the middle octave. Now tune the other octaves in unison with this octave.

You may find that certain strings belong to more than one chord. When you tune it in tune with one of the chords, it will sound out of tune with all the others. Tempering, experimenting with the common string until both chords sound ok, would be a good solution.

CAUTION: Usually, a slight turn of the tuning wrench will tune a string. Turn the key very slowly and gently. Autoharp strings are steel. They can be stretched, not too much.

