



Manjimup Bluegrass & Old Time Music Weekend Autoharp Workshop 2020



Strum - Pinch - Pluck: Autoharp Basics 1 & 2

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What is the autoharp good for?

- 1) Song accompaniment
- 2) Playing melodies
- 3) Composition (i.e., June Carter Cash *Ring of Fire*)

Is it easy to play an autoharp?

- 1) Anyone can play a chord and make a pleasant sound
- 2) Strumming is an art in itself
- 3) Playing melodies can certainly be done
but it takes a little work and practice
- 4) You can start simple and go a long way

Some good autoharp resources:

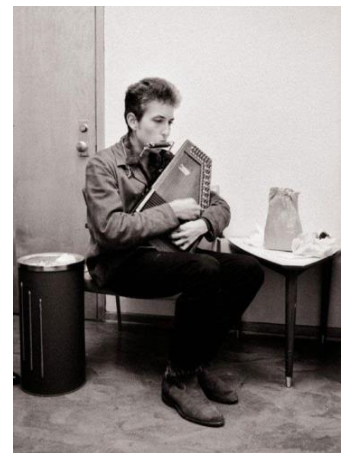
The Autoharp Owners Manual by Mary Lou Orthy
Complete Method for Autoharp or Chromaharp by Meg Peterson
Hal Lenard Autoharp Method by Ray Choi
Chords Aplenty by Lucille Reilly
<https://www.thedulcimerlady.com>
Cyberpluckers Autoharp Forum:
<https://cyberpluckers.org/>
Autoharp Quarterly Magazine
Australian Autoharpers on Facebook

Buy autoharps:

<https://www.daigleharp.com/>
www.raychoiautoharps.com
<http://schreiberautoharps.com/>
<https://www.blueridgeautoharps.com/>
<https://www.oscarschmidt.com/>

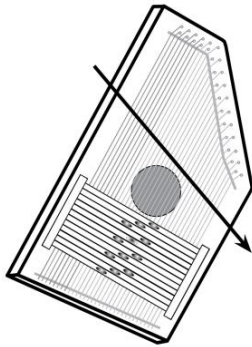
Autoharp parts and stuff:

<https://www.eaglemusicshop.com/>
<https://www.daigleharp.com/>



There are different makes and types of autoharps. I like to play 2 key diatonic harps (made by Ray Choi) because of their sound. For a beginning or only occasional player a chromatic harp is a good choice. But be careful! An Oscar Schmidt harp from Amazon (about \$450 USA up) or other on-line retailer, or even a music store, can be so far out of adjustment that it may be exceedingly difficult to play. It is maybe best to buy an OS harp from a luthier that has set it up well. One place to ask about this is Australian Autoharpers on Facebook.

The autoharp (like anything else) has its better and best ways to play it. A good sound really comes from knowing your instrument and how to hold it correctly.



A melodious sound comes from the centre of the strings above the chord bars. Other places on the string bed give other effects, but if you want a full 'harp-like' sound, try for the middle of the strings.

Figure 1 Image courtesy of Lucille Reilly

If you've already started playing lap style and you intend on remaining an occasional player, there's no need to change. However if you're just starting out, or you think you might want to get deeper into Autoharp playing, the upright position is recommended. Playing with the Autoharp against your chest has several advantages: it allows you to play either sitting or standing, it frees up your picking fingers to play faster, and it projects a bit more sound.



Figure 2 From the Georgia Autoharp Workshop and a web photo of Dolly

Strum, pluck, and pinch - Strumming is something you may know how to do on a guitar or ukulele. Plucking maybe not so much, unless maybe you've done it on a violin? But the pinch is something unique to the autoharp.

But to do these things well you need to wear picks. The types of picks I like to use are brass National brand picks and a Golden Gate thumb pick (all available from Amazon).



The most common first step with the autoharp is to strum a song and sing along. Below are some strumming patterns.

Let's try some...

Count: 1	2	1	2		Count: 1	2	3	1	2	3	
1 $\frac{4}{4}$					1 $\frac{3}{4}$:
t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	
&	↓	↓	↓	↓	&	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
boom-chick					boom-chick-chick						
2 $\frac{4}{4}$					2 $\frac{3}{4}$:
T	t	T	t	T	T	t	t	T	t	t	

Figure 3 Courtesy of Lucille Reilly (www.the.dulcimerlady.com)



I'll Fly Away

Albert E. Brumley 1929

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1. Some bright morn - ing when this life is o'er,
 2. When the sha - dows of this life have gone,
 3. Oh, how glad and hap - py when we meet,
 4. Just a few more wear - y days and then,

5 I'll fly a - way. To a home on
 like a bird from these
 no more cold iron
 to a land where

11 God's ce - les - tial shore, I'll fly, I'll fly a - way.
 pri - son walls I'll fly,
 shak - les on my feet,
 joys will nev - er end,

16 I'll fly a - way, oh glo - ry,

21 I'll fly a - way (in the morn - ing)

25 when I die, Hal - le - lu - ia by and by,

29 I'll fly a - way.

You Are My Sunshine

Jimmy Davis 1939

♩ = 120

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