

Caswell Harps

Frequently Asked Questions

• **Do you make these harps?** Yes. Chris Caswell began making Celtic harps in the early '70s at the very beginning of this wave of the folk harp revival. These harps are the culmination of his experience of nearly 40 years and 1000 harps.

• **How does the harp work?** It's like the white keys of the piano turned sideways and plucked kind of like a guitar.

• **What are the red and blue strings for?** That's how we keep our place (pianos have the black keys as a pattern to guide from). The red strings are Cs and the blue strings are Fs.

• **Do I need any musical background to play the harp?** No. Music is a human birthright for which we all have the basic skills. Even if you've never learned a musical instrument, many of the basic concepts of music are already in you as a listener. Think you're tone deaf? Only about .001% of the population is. Everyone else is trainable. Someone tell you that you have no talent? Can you type? Drive a car? Does music move you? You're trainable.

• **Do I need to be able to read music?** No. Music dwells in the ear, not the eye. Reading is an important and useful skill and can be necessary depending on what sort of music you want to do, but most of the world's music lives quite happily without the written page.

• **How long does it take to get a harp?** The waiting time for each model varies and we're happy to give you a current estimate. Caswell Harps are built to order in small batches. As a small shop, we pride ourselves in providing harps whose designs continually improve, reflecting both the input of our clients, and the insights of master harp maker Chris Caswell. The more production-oriented designs, such as the SweetHarp and the Butterfly, move more quickly through their batches. The larger artisan-made harps such as the Rhiannon take much more time. What you get at the end is magic in the form of wood and strings made just for you.

• **Which harp should I choose?** Get the one that calls most deeply to you. It is that passion which will make you play. Over time, most people want more bass notes, so choose one with the lowest bass string you can afford. (There are many fine harps available, and though we hope you will choose a Caswell, we are available to give you honest feedback on any harp you may be thinking of buying. But please avoid the cheap Pakistani and Chinese harps on eBay and similar. They don't play well and your enthusiasm may wither and die. I've seen this happen and don't say this of any other harps. We want you to have a long and joyful relationship with whatever harp you finally choose!)

• **Where can I get lessons?** Chris Caswell teaches at his home in Oakland, as well as holding group classes in Marin and the North Bay. Also, through our **Try-a-Teacher** offer, we pay for your first lesson. If we don't have a teacher in your area, we'll help you find one. If you are able to pick up your harp in person, Chris gives a free orientation and beginning lesson.

• **What's your Trade-up Offer?** Within a year, if your harp is in good shape, you can trade it in towards a larger Caswell Harp for what you paid for it (less taxes, shipping, etc). We reserve the right to make adjustments if the harp requires more than normal maintenance to be made saleable.

• **What's your Interest-Free Rent-to-Own Offer?** A 20% deposit secures your order. When the harp is ready, we ask for 20% of the balance due, and then monthly payments for up to eighteen months (minimum \$100 payment). The purchase of a case is required and there is a simple agreement to sign. Here's a look at the **Interest-Free Rent-to-Own** process:

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Model	Retail	1 st Deposit	Balance Due	2 nd Deposit	Balance Due	# of Months	Payment
Rhiannon 36	4790.00	960.00	3830.00	766.00	3064.00	18	170.72
Rhiannon 33	4190.00	840.00	3350.00	670.00	2680.00	18	148.88
Gwydion 34	4990.00	1000.00	3990.00	798.00	3192.00	18	177.33
Gwydion 31	4290.00	860.00	3430.00	698.00	2732.00	18	151.77
Butterfly 33	1095.00	220.00	875.00	175.00	700.00	14	50.00
Butterfly 29	895.00	180.00	715.00	143.00	572.00	11	52.00
SweetHarp 29	469.00	100.00	369.00	69.00	300	3	100.00

• **How often does it need tuning?** Once a new harp has settled in, a little is needed every time you play - about like a guitar. Avoiding big changes in temperature and humidity helps. A new harp, or new strings, require more tuning.

• **How about fingernails?** Fingernails are optional. Those of a classical background don't use them. Those of a traditional background sometimes do. Both styles use the finger pads, and if you use nails they catch the string also, giving the sound a bit more attack to the sound (using nails also reduce calluses).

• **How about posture and hand position?** Let your body learn how to play. A relaxed torso, arm and hand will find the most natural way. The thumb stays above the fingers so they can get under it. When in doubt, listen to your muscles.

• **When do I change strings?** When they break. Maybe one or two a year. Sometimes a bit more when the harp is new, at the change of seasons, or if there is a severe emotional stress in your life (strange but true).

• **Where do I get strings?** We are master string makers. Our Telynar Harp Strings are always available for your harp. We also do custom strings for all harps, providing some of the latest developments in string design.

• **How about warranty and repairs?** Our harps are warranted for 5 years, except for the Fairy, Elfin, and SweetHarps, which are for 2 years. If you are out of the area we work with your local musical instrument repair person. Otherwise, we do it in-house whenever possible. We reserved the right to decide when a harp should be repaired or replaced.

• **Do you do repair work on other harps?** Yes, and we also provide strings and hardware (in many cases) and, if we can, we'll gladly refer you to someone who can help you if we're not able to do the work. Some examples of recent repairs include replacing the blade levers on an older harp with Loveland levers, repairing a cracked back, and re-gluing a lifted soundboard. We try to keep repair costs down and will consult with you as to possible approaches.