

Self Taught vs. Formal Harp Instruction: That is the Question!

I know, the moment you got your harp you want to learn how to play your harp! You wanted to play that song that you always loved for years on your harp. You are probably thinking to yourself, *should I teach myself or should I have a harp teacher teach me how to play the harp?* That is a good question!

There are a lot of self-teaching aids out there on the internet including harp instruction books and videos on how to play the harp out there on YouTube. When I first began my harp journey I started with a video by Anne Crosby Gaudet on how to play *Just For You* on YouTube. Teaching myself got me started but in due time I needed formal instruction.

I know, taking lessons can involve a significant expense. However, if this is your first time playing the harp (or even learning music for that matter) then taking lessons is well worth the investment.

A Common Misconception

One common misconception when it comes to taking lessons such as harp lessons is that you must learn the piano first. *You do not have to learn piano to learn the harp!* However, a rudimentary knowledge of music theory is highly recommended.

Online or In-Person?

Online and in-person harp music lessons offer different benefits. In-person harp lessons often provide more direct, hands-on instruction, allowing for immediate feedback and correction of technique. On the other hand, online harp lessons offer greater flexibility and convenience, with access to a wider range of teachers and the ability to learn from home.^{1 2 3 4}

¹ <https://www.forbesmusic.com/can-online-lessons-really-be-as-effective-as-in-person/>

² <https://thesoundartist.com/blogs/news/what-are-the-pros-and-cons-of-in-person-music-learning>

³ <https://www.quora.com/Are-online-music-lessons-as-good-as-personal-lessons>

⁴ <https://musicteachers.co.uk/music/6-benefits-of-online-music-lessons-you-may-not-have-thought-of>

In-Person Harp Music Lessons: ^{1 2}

- Benefits: ^{1 2}
 - Direct, hands-on instruction: Teachers can immediately observe and correct technique, posture, and physical nuances, ensuring proper development. ^{1 2}
 - Stronger feedback loop: Real-time feedback allows for more efficient learning and faster progress. ^{2 5 6 7}
 - Potential for building rapport: In-person interaction can foster a stronger relationship between student and teacher, leading to increased motivation and engagement.⁸
 - Better for beginner learning: Hands-on instruction is particularly beneficial for beginners who need physical guidance and correction of fundamental skills.⁹
- Drawbacks: ⁴
 - Less flexibility and convenience: In-person lessons require scheduling and travel, which can be challenging for some students. ^{1 3 4 10 11}
 - Higher costs: In-person lessons may be more expensive due to studio space, travel time, and other overheads.¹²
 - Potential for distractions: In-studio environments can be noisy or have other distractions that may affect focus.^{5 12 13 14}

⁵ <https://www.creativesoulmusic.com/blog/benefits-to-in-person-vs.-online-music-lessons>

⁶ https://www.reddit.com/r/drums/comments/17cjfpc/thoughts_on_drumeo_drumbeats_online_and_the/

⁷ <https://themystickeys.com/are-online-music-lesson-as-effective-as-in-person/>

⁸ <https://kandmmusicschool.com/blogs/music-lessons/online-and-in-person-music-lessons-comparing-skill-level/>

⁹ https://www.reddit.com/r/violinist/comments/gvyh3e/online_vs_inperson_lessons/

¹⁰ https://www.reddit.com/r/pianolearning/comments/1edj9xx/whats_your_take_on_inperson_vs_live_video_lessons/

¹¹ <https://edunade.com/studying/online-vs-in-person-ib-tutoring/>

¹² <https://themystickeys.com/are-online-music-lesson-as-effective-as-in-person/>

¹³ <https://principal tutors.com/english-tuition/in-person-vs-online-english-tutoring-which-is-better-for-your-child/>

¹⁴ <https://creatorlens.beazy.co/p/pros-and-cons-of-shooting-in-a-studio-vs-on-location>

Online Harp Music Lessons: ^{3 4}

- Benefits: ^{3 4}
 - Greater flexibility and convenience: Online lessons can be taken from home, eliminating travel time and allowing for more flexible scheduling. ^{3 4}
 - Access to a wider range of teachers: Online platforms can connect students with teachers from around the world. ^{3 15}
 - Cost-effectiveness: Online lessons may be more affordable due to lower overhead costs. ¹²
 - Suitable for independent learners: Online lessons can be well-suited for students who are self-motivated and prefer working independently. ¹
- Drawbacks: ^{16 17}
 - Potential for technical difficulties: Internet connectivity issues, audio lag, and other technical problems can disrupt lessons. ^{16 17}
 - Less direct feedback: It can be more challenging for teachers to observe and correct technique remotely. ^{16 17}
 - Potential for distractions at home: Students may be distracted by family members, pets, or household chores. ¹²
 - Less personal interaction: The lack of physical presence can sometimes make it harder to build rapport and connect with the teacher. ^{8 18}

Key Considerations When Choosing In-Person vs. Online Lessons: ¹

- *Learning Style:* Do you prefer hands-on instruction or are you more independent and self-motivated?
- *Convenience and Scheduling:* Evaluate the flexibility and scheduling requirements of each option. Take into account your daily schedule such as work or school as well as your other activities such as yoga, etc.
- *Instrument:* Some musical instruments, especially string musical instruments such as the harp, may benefit more from in-person instruction for immediate feedback on technique.
- *Technology and Equipment:* A reliable internet connection¹⁹, camera, and audio setup for online lessons is crucial. Conferencing software such as Zoom

¹⁵ <https://www.lessonface.com/advantages-to-online-music-lessons>

¹⁶ <https://www.ensembleschools.com/blog/pros-cons-online-vs-in-person-lessons/>

¹⁷ <https://grooveacademy.ca/2023/10/27/the-impact-of-online-music-lessons-pros-and-cons/>

¹⁸ <https://www.mastt.com/blogs/in-person-vs-virtual-pcg-meetings>

¹⁹ A stable Wi-Fi or wired connection is the best. Cellular connections depend on the quality of the cell signal and type of plan subscribed to – if on a limited data plan the potential of exceeding the monthly

or Microsoft Teams should be up to date with the latest versions and any security updates applied.

- *Cost:* Factor in the costs of both in-person and online lessons, including travel, studio fees, and equipment.¹²
- *Location:* If taking lessons in-person, does the teacher operate out of a private home or a business? Keep in mind, a home-operated studio usually means lower overhead compared to rented retail or office space.

Ultimately, the best choice depends on your individual needs and preferences. Some students may thrive in the structured environment and direct feedback of in-person lessons, while others may find the flexibility and convenience of online lessons more appealing.¹³⁸²⁰

Edward Ringwald's Recommendation on Self-Taught vs. Formal Harp Instruction

If you are starting out on learning how to play the harp for the very first time, I would strongly recommend formal harp instruction to get you started. Finding the perfect harp teacher should be very easy, especially if you live in a metropolitan area such as the Tampa/St. Petersburg area of Florida (also called the Tampa Bay region).

On the other hand, if you have a good working knowledge of music (maybe from what you studied in school or college), then self-taught instruction should be the way to go. There are books and YouTube videos out there on how to teach yourself how to play the harp.

My companion resource on [choosing a harp teacher](#) explains in depth on how to choose that perfect harp teacher that matches your learning style and what you would like to learn. Like when you are choosing a professional such as a doctor or a dentist, take the time to evaluate the harp teacher's qualifications and expertise by signing up for a trial or introductory lesson to gauge compatibility with your learning style.

Good luck in your journey of learning how to play the harp!

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data quota cannot be underscored. Further, cellular connections should be explored if it is the only option available.

²⁰ <https://orhanergun.net/teaching-it-online-vs-in-person-pros-and-cons>