

\$15.00 US

Autoharp



For Kids

by
Cathy Britell

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Autoharp for KIDS

**An easy introduction to song accompaniment
for children ages 4-12**

By:

Cathy Britell

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Hey, parents and teachers...this part's for YOU ! PLEASE READ !



It's wonderful that you've decided to help your child get started with the autoharp. The purpose of this book is twofold: first to introduce your child to the fun of accompanying her singing with the autoharp with success right away, and second, to impart an intuitive sense of song and chord structure and allow him to begin to see common ways songs are put together. Your child will need some help using the book...that's where you come in.

Your jobs:

1. Tune the autoharp and check the tuning every time your child plays.

This is very important. If your child is going to learn a sense of pitch and be able to hear and enjoy the chords, she must hear notes in tune. Playing an out-of-tune instrument is confusing to children, and will hinder their learning significantly.

2. Help your child get set up comfortably to play.

Most children cannot hold the 'harp upright and pick it. Therefore, they will need to sit at a table/chair of the proper height with the book propped up on its edges using the non-skid material included. They will also need a pick. Often you can find extra-large picks in the music store. Felt picks also work nicely. Or you can cut a good-sized smooth triangle from an old laundry soap bottle. The autoharp should be set on the table with the LONG BASS STRINGS side AWAY from the child. This will allow her to strum the instrument like a dulcimer, with the right hand, while chording with the left hand, thus avoiding crossing hands.

3. Assist your child in finding a good singing key for each song.

Children's singing voices are lower than one expects, and it taking some care to find a comfortable singing key will make your child much more willing to sing.

4. Help with the stickers.

Once your child has decided on the key for the song, help him put the colored stickers on the chord bars and/or check that they're on correctly. This book is all about using color to identify chords, and if the stickers are on the wrong chords, the result will be disastrous.

5. Sing along, have fun, be positive and encouraging, but DON'T PUSH, CAJOLE,

THREATEN, OR COMPETE WITH YOUR CHILD!

This is so important. Remember, this is PLAY. Don't call it "practice" or "work" or try to achieve specific learning goals with your child. The learning comes from having fun, making pleasing music, and getting lots of praise and encouragement. Don't push your child to "perform". S(he) will quickly learn, if given some opportunities without pressure, that performing is great fun. Also, if you are learning autoharp at the same time as your child, learn a completely different set of songs and tunes and use an adult method, (such as my book, *"It's an Autoharp: a very first beginner's guide to autoharp playing"*) And if your child decides she wants to play something different from what's this book or play it in a different way, S(HE) HAS ACHIEVED THE MOST IMPORTANT LEARNING GOAL OF THE BOOK! Encourage exploration!

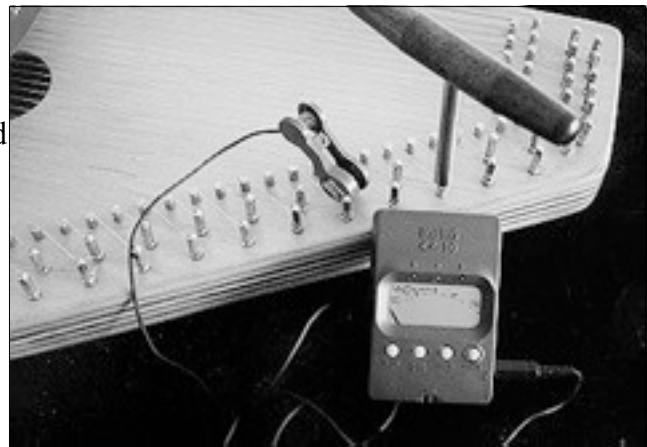
Now here are some helpful hints to get you going:

TUNING

You should ALWAYS keep the 'harp in tune. Children learn to hear musical intervals by playing and hearing instruments. Often children can learn to tune the instrument by around age 8 - 10 years, but will need LOTS of help at first. If the 'harp is out of tune, this will hamper the child's learning. In order to tune the 'harp, you'll need a tuning wrench. I find a "T" shaped wrench easiest to use. It is possible to tune your instrument by ear with a pitch pipe or keyboard, if you have a lot time and work hard at it. However, an electronic tuner (available for about \$30-\$60) will make tuning a snap and if you play (and therefore tune) often, you'll find it a very good investment. Another handy tool is a tuning clip. This attaches to a tuning pin, and plugs into the tuner. It helps the tuner to "hear" the instrument better and will allow you to tune in noisy places. These can be purchased in any music store.

How often should you tune? Whenever you need to. If the temperature and humidity are stable and you are not playing very hard, and your 'harp tends to stay in tune fairly well, you may only need to tune it every 1-2 weeks. On the other hand, if the instrument is played long and hard and taken into different physical conditions, you may have to re-tune it 2-3 times per day. Always check the tuning before your child begins playing.

Here's how you do it. If the instrument is REALLY out of tune, start with your highest note (usually C) and tune each C on the autoharp. Then do each B each A# each A , each G#, etc. If you do it this way, rather than just chromatically going up or down the 'harp, you will apply stress more evenly across your 'harp, and will end up with the 'harp more evenly and easily in tune and help it stay in tune better. If it's



just a bit out of tune, you can just go from one end to the other. You may find that your tuner doesn't register too well on the lower notes, and so you'll need to tune those by ear. Once you have tuned all the individual strings on the 'harp, slowly play all the chords you have, and make certain they are tuned to your ear. This will allow you to make fine adjustments and also to catch any mistakes you may have made by tuning a string to the wrong note (a frequent occurrence). Remember to always use your ear as the final measure of whether the chords that the 'harp produces are in tune.

PICKS

Small hands have a hard time grasping small things. You can make large picks out of plastic cut from a stiff bottle or cover, or purchase large plastic or felt picks from the music store . Picks, however, tend to go the way of socks, pens, and paper clips. I'm sure gremlins have large rooms stacked high with these things. Be prepared to constantly re-supply yourself.

POSITIONING THE CHILD'S AUTOHARP FOR COMFORTABLE PLAYING

Most serious adult autoharpers who play melodies on the instrument hold it up to their chest, put picks on 3-5 fingers, and use a strap to support the instrument. This playing position is difficult and uncomfortable for most children, usually until the age of ten or twelve. For young children, it's most reasonable to put the 'harp on a low table, seating the child in front of it in a comfortable chair his own size. Now here's where I differ from some other autoharp teachers: I like to allow children to strum with the right hand and chord with the left hand, without crossing hands. This makes it much easier to transition to the "upright" playing position as the child grows older, and allows a natural "dulcimer" strum. To do this, the 'harp is placed with the LONG, LOW STRINGS AWAY from the child, and the HIGH, SHORT STRINGS NEAR THE CHILD. I've purposely printed this little book on card stock oriented so that you it will stand up on end. There's a little piece of carpet padding in the envelope to put under the edge of the book to hold it in place.

THOSE STICKERS!

Ah, those stickers. The reason I like to use them when teaching young children to play is that I want them to develop their approach to singing and understanding chord structure naturally as a *right brain* activity. By associating chords with colors, the chord changes, in my experience, become intuitive earlier, and soon the child is able to chord along with her singing without looking at the book, and find chords to new songs without having to have them written down. My goal is to make this music fun, intuitive, and natural for your child.

The key to using stickers successfully is to apply them so that the child can see the sticker AND the name of the chord Put the sticker on the EDGE of the button so that you can see it even if

your finger is on top of the button. I've included a colored "sticker sheet" for so that you can cut out stickers of the proper colors of the right size and shape to fit your needs, peel off the paper backing and stick them on. If you need more, you can buy colored stickers at an office or school supply store, or buy white stickers and use NON-TOXIC markers to make them the right color. Make sure and put them on the 'harp where the child can see them but NOT where the child pushes the button. Each 'harp will differ slightly on the best placement of the stickers.

SIMPLE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Autoharps require very little care. There are two things it doesn't like. Those are water and extremes of temperature. Please don't let your 'harp sit in the sun, in or out of its case. Autoharps have actually "exploded" when subjected to extreme heat in the trunks of cars(not a pretty sight). To clean it, just wipe with a dry cloth. Don't use waxes or polishes on it, except for a good commercial acoustic guitar polish (I use Martin guitar polish.) The strings will sound better, play more easily, and last longer if you keep them clean. Keep the autoharp in its case when the child is not playing it, so that things don't inadvertently get spilled on it and the strings don't corrode from the moisture in the air.

The first calamity you are likely to encounter with the autoharp is a broken string. This simply happens, and is unavoidable. If you do break a string, it's fairly easy to replace. You need to

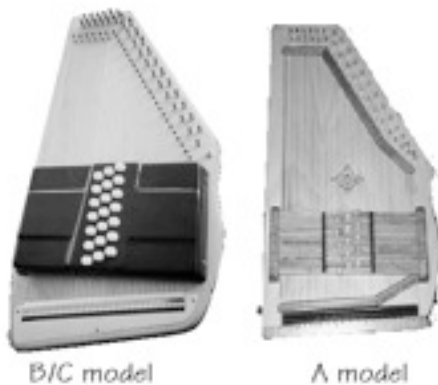


figure out first what kind of strings you have. Modern Oscar Schmidt harps use "B/C strings". Some older Oscars and Chromaharps, as well as many custom 'harps use "A" model strings. These are a bit longer than the "B/C strings". Note the number and letter of the string you broke and call around to music stores before going to make sure they have and will sell you a single string of the correct size. First, you'll need to remove the old string. Be careful of the string ends, as they can be quite sharp. Once the string is out, unwind the pin approximately four full turns from its "strung" position. Then hook the ball of the string at the base of the 'harp, thread it

carefully under the chord bar mechanism, and feed it into the hole in the pin. If you then turn under about the last 3/8" of the string into a little loop and tuck the end back into the hole, it will be more secure and also the end won't catch on your clothing or cut your fingers when you're done. Now, wind the string carefully and neatly without overlapping, and bring it up to tune. Note that a new string will take a few days and 3-4 tunings to "settle in", and so you will find that the string you just replaced will frequently be out of tune at first, and thus require special tuning attention.

The other things that will inevitably need some attention are the felt pieces that cushion the chord bars as they hit the strings. Particular in older 'harps, the glue on these felts often becomes hard and comes loose. A quick fix for these will be to simply glue them back on. I find that "Tacky Glue" works best for this, as it is easy to work with and dries with some flexibility. At some time, you may need to replace all the felts on your 'harp. This is time-consuming but not difficult with some advance planning. You'll need to order a set of felts of the right size for the 'harp, and set aside 4-5 hours of uninterrupted time to do this job. It's a good idea to talk with someone who has done this before before embarking on this project.

If you need some expert repair help, you can sometimes find someone through a local shop that specializes in acoustic musical instruments; however, be careful about entrusting your instrument to someone who does not play the autoharp or see it as a "real" instrument.

SETTING UP THE AUTOHARP FOR EASIEST PLAYING AND LEARNING

Setting up the optimal chord bar arrangement is, I think, one of the best ways to make playing easy and facilitate learning song structure. I played along for about 5 years before I realized I could change around my chord bar arrangement to suit myself. This following is a setup I've found to yield the most ease of playing and consistency between keys. The buttons are arranged with the majors in the middle row, the minors in the farthest row with the relative minor right underneath the major, and the sevenths in the closest row, with the seventh right above the same major. This can be arranged so that it is almost totally consistent among all the keys (with some variations on either end of the 'harp), as illustrated here for a typical 21-bar setup:

HIGH STRINGS ARE UP HERE

Eb	F7	C7	G7	D7	A7	E7	
Bb	F	C	G	D	A	E	
Gm	Dm	Am	Em	Bm	F#m	B7	

LOW STRINGS ARE DOWN HERE

In this way, children don't have to do much thinking about what key you're playing in, and the chords of most songs fall automatically and comfortably beneath your fingers. If you don't have 21 bars on your 'harp, you can purchase a conversion kit for about \$100 from Pete Daigle (www.daigleharp.com) If you can't do that, however, any autoharp will do, and will work with the sticker/color coding system.

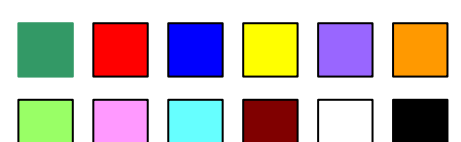
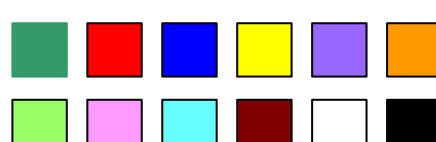
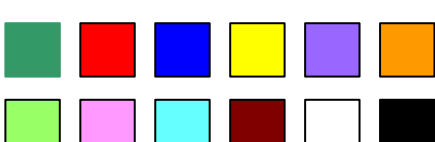
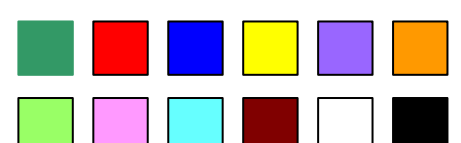
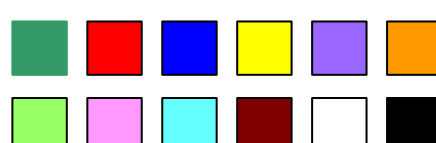
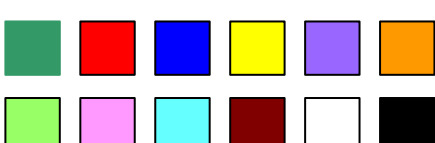
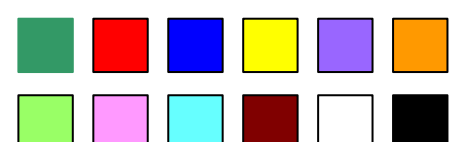
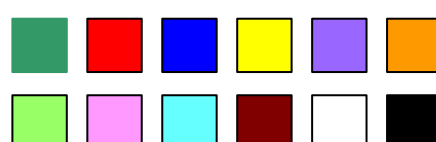
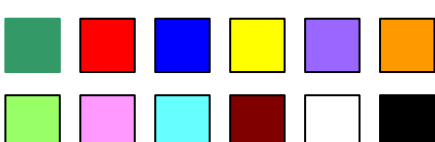
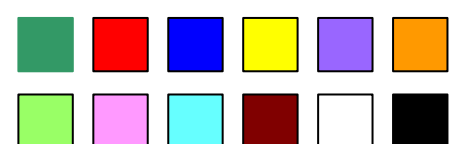
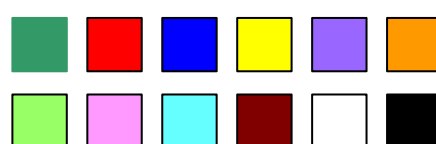
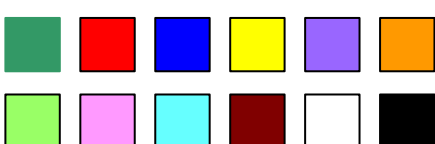
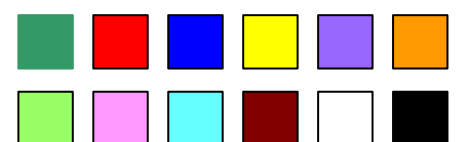
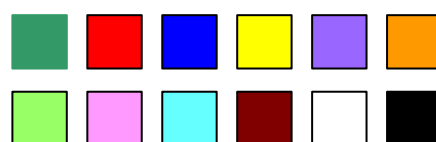
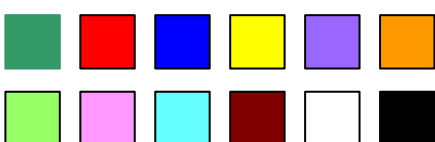
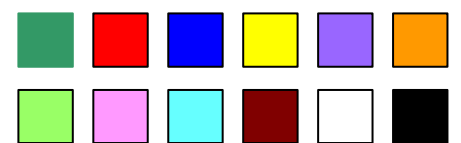
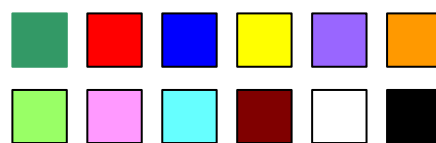
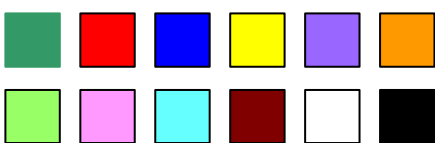
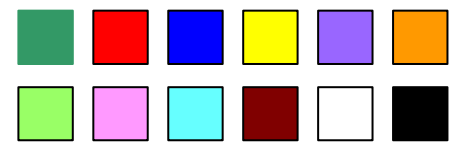
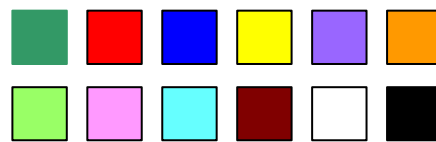
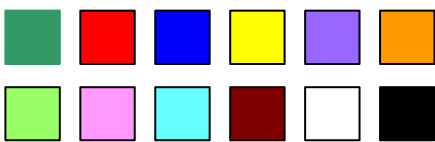
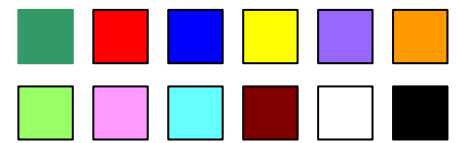
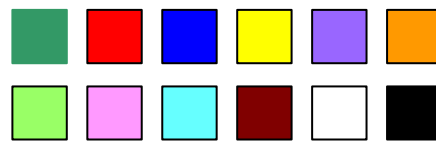
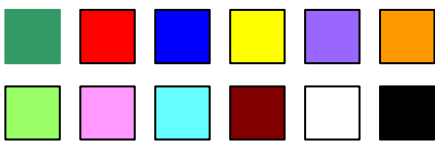
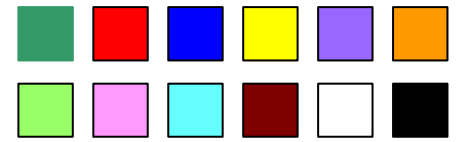
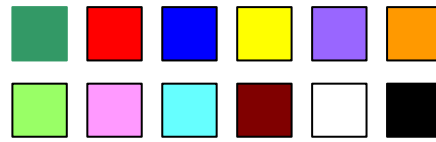
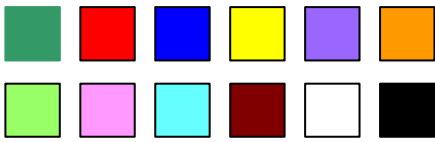
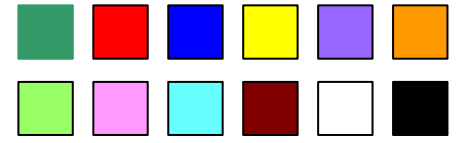
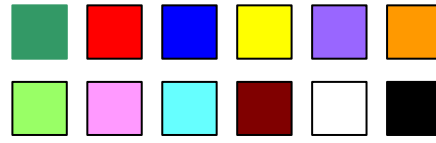
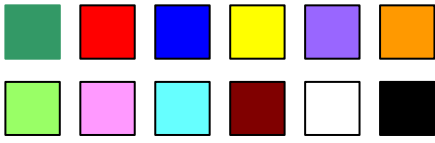
A Note About Autoharp Teachers:

This book is meant just to pique your child's interest in playing the autoharp. It's not in any way a "complete method" for the autoharp. The best way for a child to learn autoharp is to work with a teacher who has experience teaching music to children and who **loves the autoharp and plays it well**. Many musicians who don't know much about this instrument consider the autoharp a "no-brainer", and think they can teach you how to play the autoharp without actually playing it themselves. These folks probably won't be very useful to you. A teacher who can't pick up the autoharp and "knock your socks off" with beautiful playing isn't going to be an inspiration to your child. Choose a teacher who really loves and respects the instrument, who plays it professionally, and who will take your child's autoharp playing seriously while at the same time making it fun.

HAVE FUN! And give me a holler if you'd like...

Cathy

About the author: Cathy was the 2005 International Autoharp Champion, and 2012 International Autoharp Hall of Fame inductee, has played and taught music professionally to adults and children for over 25 years, and has played autoharp in old-time string band, solo and folk ensemble performances for 15 years. She presently lives and works in the Pacific Northwest and may be reached for performance, workshop, or studio bookings at Larkpoint Music, PO Box 99767, Seattle, WA 98139, visit her Website at www.larkpoint.com, or e-mail cathy@larkpoint.com. Her adult autoharp method, entitled, "It's an Autoharp" is available for on her Web site.



Row Row Row Your Boat

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

C

Row, row, row your boat,

C

Gently down the stream.

C

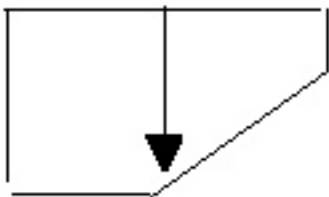
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,

C

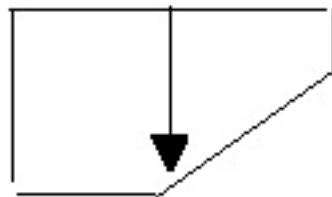
Life is but a dream.

Suggested strum:

Row, row



row your boat



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Mary Had A Little Lamb

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

C **G7** **C**
Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb,

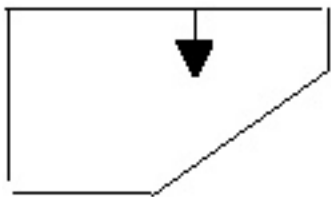
C **G7** **C**
Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow.

C **G7** **C**
Everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went,

C **G7** **C**
Everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.

Suggested strum:

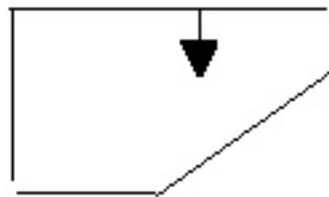
Ma -



ry



had



a



Itsy Bitsy Spider

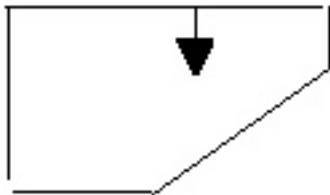
Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

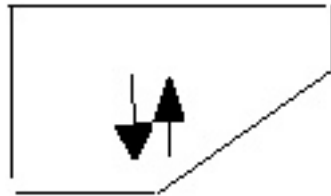
C **G7** **C**
The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout
C **G7** **C**
Down came the rain and washed the spider out
C **G7** **C** **G7**
Up came the sun and dried up all the rain and the
C **G7** **C**
Itsy bitsy spider went up the spout a-gain.

Suggested strum:

itsy



bitsy



Wheels On The Bus

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

C

The wheels on the bus go round and round,

G7

C

Round and round, round and round.

C

The wheels on the bus go round and round

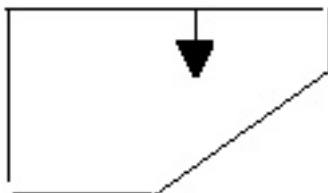
G7

C

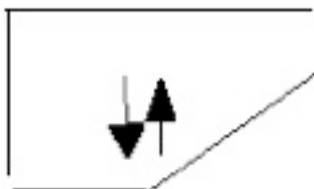
All through the town.

Suggested strum:

Wheels



on the



Skip To My Lou

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

C **G7**
Fly in the buttermilk, shoo fly shoo, Fly in the buttermilk, shoo fly shoo,

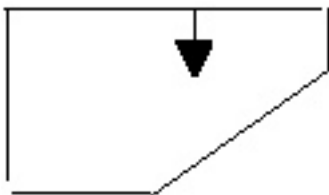
C **G7** **C**
Fly in the buttermilk, shoo fly shoo, Skip to my Lou my darling.

C **G7**
Skip, skip skip to my Lou, Skip, skip skip to my Lou,

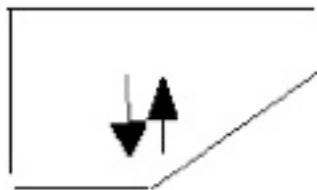
C **G7** **C**
Skip, skip skip to my Lou, Skip to my Lou my darling

Suggested strum:

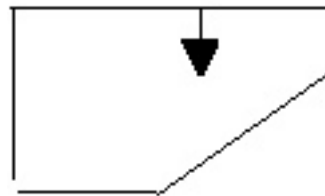
fly



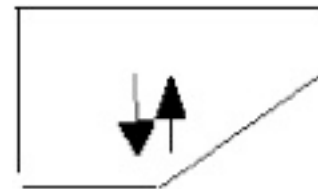
in the



butter-



milk



Where Has My Little Dog Gone

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

C

G7

Oh where, oh where has my little dog gone?

G7

C

Oh where, oh where can he be?

C

G7

With his tail cut short and his ears cut long,

G7

C

Oh where, oh where can he be?

Suggested strums:

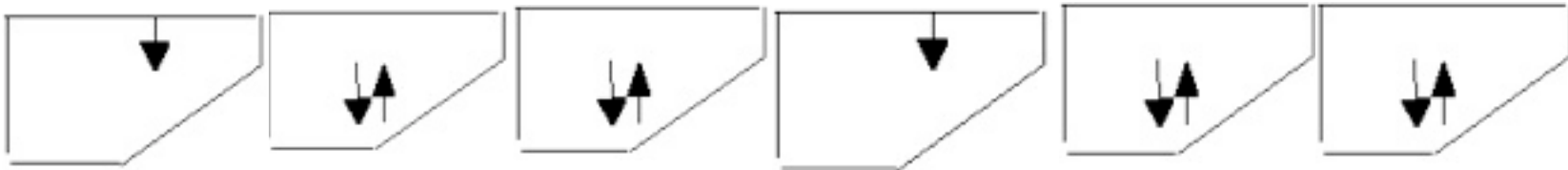
Where

oh

where

has

my



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You Are My Sunshine

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar

C

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.

C **F** **C**

You make me happy, when skies are gray.

C **F** **C**

You'll never know, dear, how much I love you.

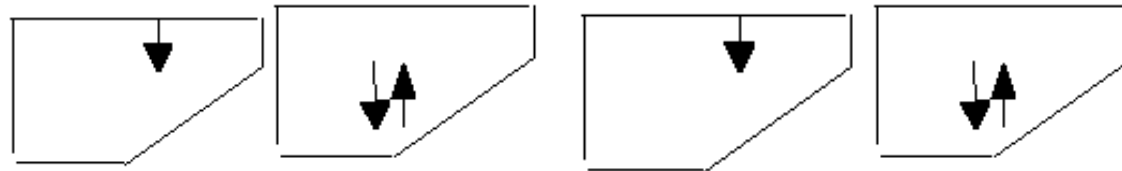
C **G7** **C**

Please don't take my sunshine a - way.

Suggested strum:

Sun

shine,



New River Train

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar

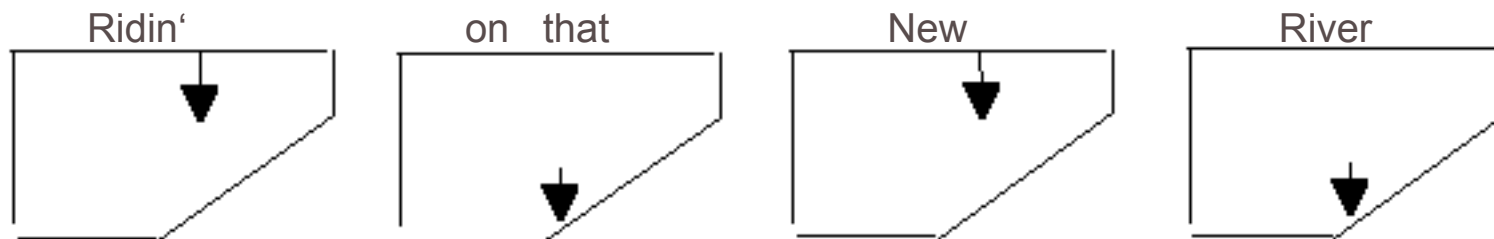
C
I'm ridin' on that New River Train,

C **G7**
I'm ridin' on that New River Train

C **F**
Same old train that brought me here, going to

C **G7** **C**
Carry me home a - gain.

Suggested strum:



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Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

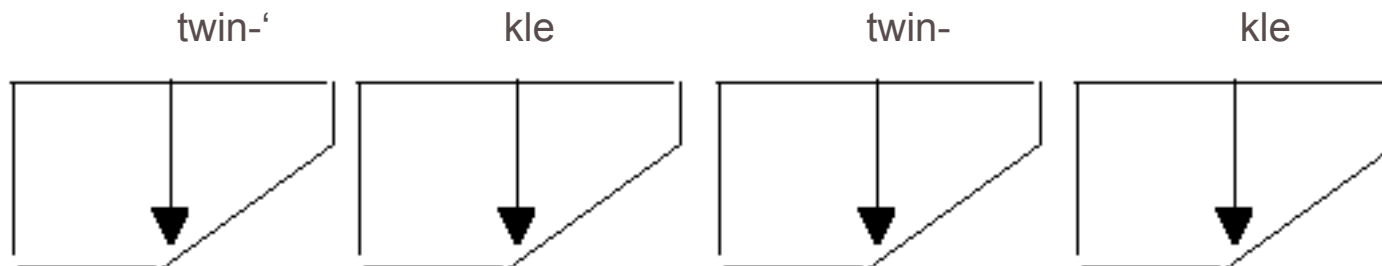
Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar.

C **F** **G7** **C** **G7** **C**
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are

C **F** **C** **G7** **C** **F** **C** **G7**
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky

C **F** **C** **G7** **C** **G7** **C**
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are

Suggested strum: You can do any strum with this; but if you do a big strum for every syllable, you'll find that you're playing the MELODY on the autoharp!



This Little Light of Mine

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar.

Put a **PURPLE** sticker on the Aminor (Am) chord bar.

C

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

F

C

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

C

Am

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine

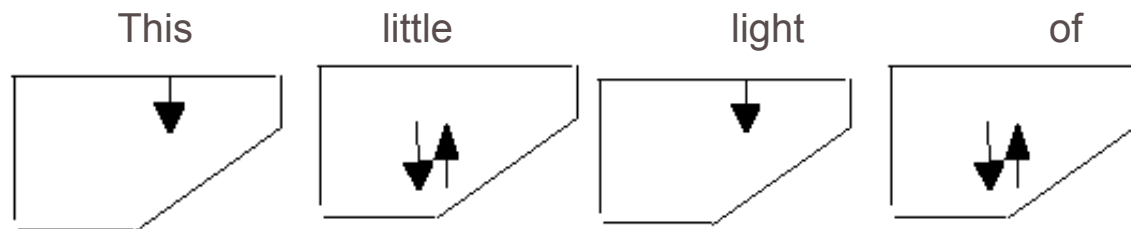
C

G7

C

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Suggested strum:



Hey, Ho, Nobody Home

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar

Put a **PURPLE** sticker on the Aminor (Am) chord bar

Put an **ORANGE** sticker on the Dminor (Dm) chord bar

Dm Am Dm

Hey, ho, nobody home,

Dm C Dm C

meat nor drink nor money have I none,

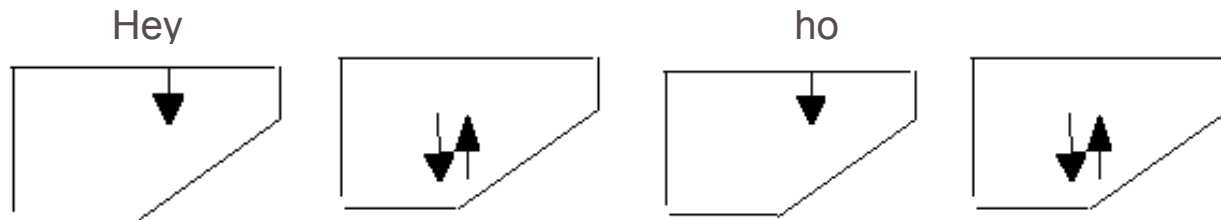
Dm

Still, I will be mer-ry

Dm Am Dm

Hey, ho, nobody home.....

Suggested strum:



Over The River And Through The Woods

C

Over the river and through the woods, to

F

C

Grandmother's house we go.

G7

C

The horse knows the way, to carry the sleigh, through the

D7

G7

white and drifting snow.

C

Over the river and through the woods, now

F

C

Grandmother's house I spy.

F

C

Am

Hurrah for the fun, is the pudding done,

C

G7

C

Hurrah for the pumpkin pie.

Put a RED sticker on the C chord bar.

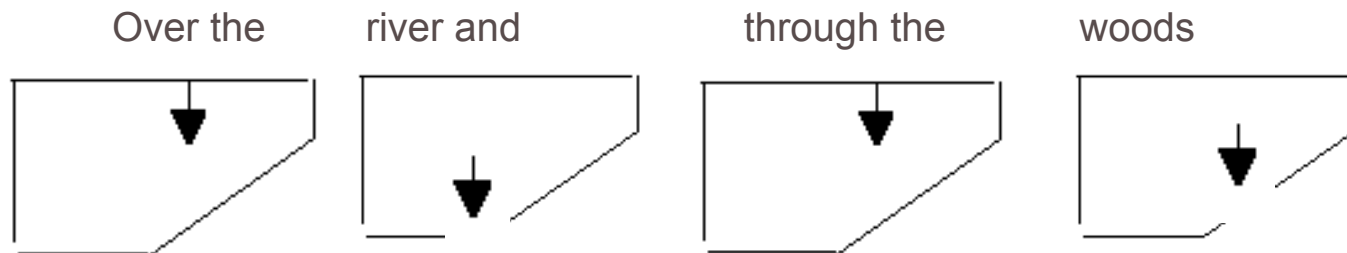
Put a LIGHT GREEN sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a BLUE sticker on the F chord bar

Put a PURPLE sticker on the Aminor (Am) chord bar

Put a BLACK sticker on the D7 chord bar

Suggested strum:



Jingle Bells

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.

Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.

Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar.

Put a **BLACK** sticker on the D7 chord bar.

C **F**

Dashing through the snow, in a one-horse open sleigh.

F **G7** **C**

Oe'r the field we go, laughing all the way.

C **F**

Bells on bob-tail ring, making spirits bright,

F **G7** **C**

What fun it is to ride and sing the sleighing song to -night.

C

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,

F **C** **D7** **G7**

Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

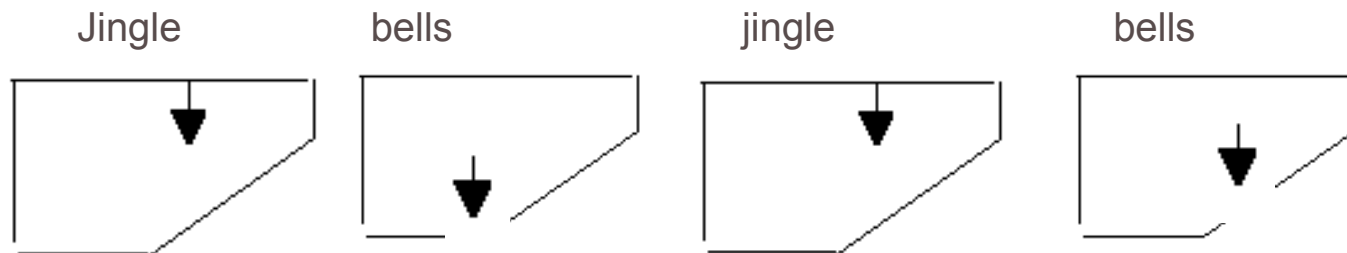
C

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,

F **C** **G7** **C**

Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh.

Suggested strum:



My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean

C **F** **C**
My Bonnie lies over the ocean,

C **D7** **G7**
My Bonnie lies over the sea,

C **F** **C**
My bonnie lies over the ocean, Oh,

F **G7** **C**
Bring back my bonnie to me.

C **F** **Dm**
Bring back, Bring back, Oh,

G7 **C**
Bring back my Bonnie to me, to me.

C **F** **Dm**
Bring back, bring back, Oh,

G7 **C**
bring back my Bonnie to me.

Put a **RED** sticker on the C chord bar.
Put a **LIGHT GREEN** sticker on the G7 chord bar.
Put a **BLUE** sticker on the F chord bar
Put a **BLACK** sticker on the D7 chord bar
Put an **ORANGE** sticker on the Dminor (Dm) chord bar

Suggested strum:

Bring _____ Back _____

