



Care & Feeding of Your Mountain Dulcimer

Congratulations on acquiring a piece of history. Your new Mountain Dulcimer is based on historical originals housed in museums and homes throughout the USA.

Your musical instrument is constructed of thin pieces of new and recycled woods that need protection from the elements to keep it in the top playing and cosmetic conditions. Please note the following on how to care for your dulcimer:

1. Warnings
 - a. Your instrument is constructed from solid wood that was carefully dried and seasoned. Solid wood soaks up moisture in wet climates and gives off moisture in dry climates. If you live in a desert, high mountain, or cold winter region, you will occasionally experience dry weather that could crack your instrument. If not properly taken care of, your instrument will crack. The damage is serious, but can be prevented by storing your instrument in a case and using an instrument humidifier (available from most musical instrument stores and on the internet). For instruments hung on display, the room or house should have a humidifier. Around 50% relative humidity is optimal.
 - b. Keep out of direct sunlight
 - c. Do not store or display next to heaters
 - d. Do not leave your instrument in a hot car
2. Care
 - a. Dust with soft bristle brush and/or soft dust cloth (Do not use spray-on dusting helpers or “sticky” tack cloths.)
 - b. Waxing: Most Ron Cook Studios dulcimers have a satin finish. **Do not wax or polish.** Wipe with a clean slightly damp cloth, followed by a clean dry one. If you purchased one of the few with a high gloss finish, you can use a non-abrasive wax or brand-name polish (like liquid guitar polish available at music stores) to rub out minor scratches and to preserve the high-gloss finish.
3. Strings
 - a. Dulcimer string sets are available through Ron Cook Studios, some local music stores, or on the internet.
 - b. Suggested gauges for string replacement (loop end—banjo strings work well):
 - i. Melody strings (2): .010 or .012 gauge plain steel (The .010 gauge for DAD Mixolydian, .012 for AAD Ionian.)
 - ii. Drone 1: .012 gauge plain steel
 - iii. Drone 2: .022 or .024 gauge wound steel or bronze
4. Common Tunings
 - a. Major Key—Ionian Mode: Tune the low drone (wound string) up to where the tension feels good (not too tight or the string will break). Press down the low drone string on the 4th fret. The note you hear is what you tune the rest of the strings. Typical tunings are with the strings at DD D A, where A is the low drone. The major scale begins on the 3d fret.
 - b. Minor Key—Aeolian Mode: Simply tune the double melody strings up a step and a half. Press down on the bass drone at the 6th fret, and tune the melody strings an octave above that note. If you tune to DD D A (as in item a, above), tune the melody strings to Bb. The scale begins on the first fret.
 - c. Many more tunings are possible and are covered in more detail in dulcimer how-to books available at music stores or on the internet.