HARP STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026 - 2027 ACADEMIC YEAR

KELA WALTON - HARP INSTRUCTION

www.kelaharp.com

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Studio Philosophy

To encourage students to develop compassionate hearts and disciplined minds through the study of music.

“There is nothing difficult - only new things, unaccustomed things.” - Carlos Salzedo

“First character, then ability.” - Shinichi Suzuki

I EXPECT ALL HARP STUDENTS TO:

- Aspire to learn to play the harp well.
- Approach my suggestions with an open mind.
- Have a teacher-approved lever or pedal harp at home or accessible at school for daily practice, as well as Student Supplies listed at https://www.kelaharp.com/student-supplies.html.
- Devote ample daily practice time between lessons *in addition to* time spent in ensemble rehearsals in order to attempt new ways of playing.
- Make every good faith effort to attend lessons regularly.
- Listen to recordings of pieces they are learning as part of their daily practice.
- Attend harp-related concerts, where the students themselves do not perform.
- Participate in performance opportunities that are mutually agreed upon by both student and teacher, to develop solo and ensemble performance skills. These performances may include: harp studio recitals, informal performances, American Harp Society events, summer harp camps or festivals, and competitions when appropriate.

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Studio Policies

LESSONS

Weekly Lessons - Regular weekly lessons are available for 45 minutes or 1 hour. All school-aged (pre-college) students are required to take weekly lessons. Weekly 30-minute lessons are offered only to students under the age of 8, or beginners in their first semester of lessons.

Floating Lessons - Adult students who do not wish to take regular weekly lessons may take floating lessons. Floating lessons must take place at least twice a month.

LOCATIONS

In-Person - at my studio in Arlington, TX. Students may bring their own harp, or play one of my Lyon & Healy lever or pedal harps during the lesson.

Online - Occasional online lessons are also offered to all students when I'm traveling, if family members are ill, during inclement weather events, or in other emergency situations.

Regular online lessons may be available at my discretion to students who live further than 30 miles away from my studio, and will require a combination of video conference lessons, occasional in person lessons, and video recordings submitted by students between lessons.

PRACTICING

Students who practice regularly enjoy playing the harp the most. I suggest the following guidelines:

- A **minimum** of 15 minutes a day and 5 days per week is expected for all students.
- Students ages 5 and under: 5 minutes with enthusiasm, 3 times per day!
- Elementary School students & Beginning adult students: 30 minutes of harp practice per day. Practice time can be divided into multiple sessions per day.
- Middle School students & Intermediate adult students: 45 minutes of harp practice per day, in *addition* to time spent playing in school or harp ensemble rehearsals.
- High School students & Advanced adult students: 1 hour per day, in *addition* to time spent in school or harp ensemble rehearsals.
- Students preparing for college auditions and/or competitions at the state or national level: 1.5 hours or more per day.

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TUNING

- Harps must be tuned a **minimum** of 3 times per week.
- Tuning **everyday** BEFORE practicing is best for the harp.
- Students ages 12 and older are responsible for tuning their harp.
- Parents must tune (or supervise tuning) for elementary students.

ATTENDANCE

- I have set aside your lesson time to teach you so please be respectful of my time and make every good faith effort to be at your lesson.
- If you will miss your lesson for any reason, or are having technical difficulties online, you must contact me directly via **phone** or **text** as soon as possible.
- Failure to give notice about an absence prior to the lesson time - i.e. no call, no show - will result in paying a $50 fee plus the usual cost of the missed lesson.

SCHEDULING

- All lessons will be scheduled and confirmed via our studio's online scheduling platform MakeMusic Studio (formerly called Fons) https://www.studio.makemusic.com/
- Weekly Lessons: The student's regular lesson time is theirs to keep for one term (Fall, Spring, or Summer).
- Floating Lessons: Floating lessons are scheduled at the beginning of each month.

RESCHEDULING & MAKE-UP LESSONS

- Due to scheduling restrictions involving spaces and teacher availability, rescheduled or make-up lessons for student cancellations are only considered upon the teacher's discretion and should never be **expected** by students or parents.
- In cases of sudden illness or emergencies, a lesson may be rescheduled or made-up at the teacher's discretion (pending schedules) as long as notice is given via phone or text as soon as possible and **prior** to the original lesson time.
- Rescheduling requests for reasons other than illness or emergency must be received at least one week in advance in writing (text is acceptable) to be considered.
- Make-up lessons will not be offered for students who miss the lesson without giving prior notice to the teacher.
- If a rescheduled or make-up lesson is missed or cancelled by the student, a second make-up lesson will not be offered.
- Make-up lesson opportunities are built into the calendar, usually at the end of each term.

TEACHER CONFLICTS

- Should a conflict arise in my schedule, I will give notice as soon as possible. We will reschedule the lesson in advance at everyone's earliest convenience or during the allotted make-up lesson days at the end of each term.
- Should I need to cancel at the last minute due to illness or emergency, I will call, text, and/or email the student (or parent). A make-up lesson will be available during one of the make-up lesson opportunities at the end of the term, or the lesson may be refunded.

EXTREME WEATHER & EMERGENCIES

In extreme weather or local emergency situations, in-person lessons will be held or cancelled based on the decisions of the student's local school district, or emergency declarations by local authorities. Students will be notified via text or email regarding emergency related lesson cancellations.

In extreme weather or emergency situations, there is no guarantee that lessons will be made-up. Online video lessons may be offered when possible, or the lessons may be rescheduled during the dedicated make-up lesson opportunities at the end of the term.

ONLINE LESSONS

Occasional online lessons may be offered to all students when I'm traveling, if family members are ill, during inclement weather events, or in other emergency situations. Online lessons may be available at my discretion to students who live further than 30 miles away from my studio.

- Online lessons utilize a combination of both regular online video conferences (via a platform such as Zoom https://zoom.us) AND video recording submitted between online lessons.
- Information about how to configure your space as well as your computer or mobile device for online lessons is available on my website at: https://www.kelaharp.com/online-lessons.html
- Recordings of your online lessons will be available to view (privately) for one month in Dropbox before being deleted.
- Students will be asked to submit a video recording of one piece (currently in the polishing stage) between lessons. It is much easier to hear musical nuances like dynamics and phrasing in video recordings. Therefore, these recordings are an essential part of the online lesson process.
    - Students can upload videos to Dropbox or Google Drive, or text videos to me if they do not have access to an online file storage system.
    - I will provide positive comments and suggestions for improvement on the video performance much I would during a lesson.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- Always wash your hands before touching any harp, especially harps that are not your own.
- Everyone attending lessons must be fever and/or vomit free for a minimum of 24 hours and ideally 48 hours prior to the lesson.
- Anyone who is visibly ill or showing signs of contagion may be asked to leave.
- I may wear a mask if I've recently been exposed to or if I am recovering from an illness (and do not have a fever).
- In-person lessons may be temporary suspended and replaced with online lessons at my discretion for the health and safety of studio members.

SHORTENING OF LESSONS

I reserve the right to shorten or cancel the lesson at the student's expense should a student arrive late, arrive unprepared (i.e., without their music or lacking sufficient practice), or refuse to work on music during the lesson. I have set aside my time to teach, therefore a lack of preparation and/or a poor attitude is a lack of respect for my time.

Anyone who is visibly ill or showing signs of contagion may be asked to leave in-person lessons.

TERMINATION OF LESSONS

Lessons will be terminated by the teacher for the reasons listed below.

- Failure to abide by studio policies
- Repeated lack of preparation (i.e. not practicing) or a routinely poor attitude
- Habitual absences or cancellations
- Perpetual tardiness

Students and families will receive one written warning, and one chance to change their behavior or resolve the problem. When the decision is made to terminate lessons, the student's regularly scheduled lesson time will be forfeited and possibly assigned to another student.

If lessons are terminated by the student or teacher before the end of a tuition payment period, payment will not be reimbursed.

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Tuition

- Tuition includes fees for lessons, my research and preparation outside your lesson time, recitals for in-person students, and occasional group classes or ensemble rehearsals.
- Accepted payment forms: personal check, cash, or online via MakeMusic Studio https://www.studio.makemusic.com/ (a service for automatic ACH bank transfers or credit card payments).
- If payment is not received by the second lesson of the tuition payment period, the student will not receive that lesson or any further lessons until payment is made. If payment is not received within thirty (30) days of the first lesson of the tuition period, the regularly scheduled lesson time will be forfeited and possibly assigned to another student.
- If payment is declined by the bank for any reason, there will be a $75 fee in addition to reimbursement for the original amount of the funds declined and bank fees.
- If lessons are terminated mid-month or mid-term, prior payments will not be refunded.

SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENT PLANS

Students taking weekly lessons pay tuition using a subscription plan that includes up to 14 lessons per four-month term (Fall Term: Sept - Dec, Spring Term: Jan - April, Summer Term: May - August). Tuition is paid either by monthly subscription or in full at the beginning of each term.

Monthly Subscription Tuition Payment Plan

Due on or before the 1st lesson of each month.

LESSON LENGTH	MONTHLY PAYMENT
30 minute	$165
45 minute	$225
1 hour	$295

Full Tuition Subscription Payment per Term (5% Discount)

Full tuition payment for the entire term is due on or before the first lesson of each term in September, January, and/or May, and payable with cash or check ONLY to receive the discount.

LESSON LENGTH	FULL TUITION PAYMENT
30 minute	$630
45 minute	$840
1 hour	$1120

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SUMMER TERM LESSONS (MAY - AUGUST)

Students are highly encouraged to continue lessons during the Summer Term (May - August), and may choose from one of the following options below.

1. Students who would like to continue regular weekly (up to 14 lessons) in the summer may continue to do so and pay the monthly or full term tuition Subscription Plans above.
2. Students with busy travel and camp schedules in the summer, may choose to switch to Floating lessons for the summer. Floating lessons must take place at least twice a month during the Summer Term (see Floating lessons below for details).
3. Students with extremely busy summers may purchase a Summer Package and schedule up to 6 lessons during the Summer Term. Summer packages must be purchased and lessons scheduled by June 1st to retain your place in the studio for the following Fall Term.

LESSON LENGTH	SUMMER PACKAGE (UP TO 6 LESSONS)
45 minute	$390
1 hour	$480

PAYMENT PLANS FOR FLOATING LESSONS

- Floating Lessons are available year round to adult students who would like more flexibility in their schedule. Students with Floating Lessons accept a lesson day and time that changes i.e. floats in the studio schedule.
- Pre-college students must take weekly lessons during the regular academic year, and make take floating lessons in the summer term (May - August).
- Floating lessons must take place at least twice a month, be scheduled in advance, and are paid for by purchasing packages of 2 or 4 lessons via MakeMusic Studio.

LESSON LENGTH	PACKAGE OF 2 LESSONS	PACKAGE OF 4 LESSONS
1 hour	$170	$320
45 minute	$140	$260

SINGLE LESSONS

Single lesson rates (for audition preparation, competition preparation, extra lessons, etc.) are $90 for an hour, or $135 for a 90-minute lesson.

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Performances & Events

To develop solo as well as ensemble performance skills, students are expected to take part in at least one of the following every academic year: harp studio recitals, informal performances, harp ensemble, American Harp Society events, competitions, and/or summer harp events.

RECITALS

Students are encouraged to join their fellow studio members and perform on our various studio recitals. ***Students are always expected to remain present until the end of the recital or performance.*** In the past these have included performance events such as:

Harp-o-ween Recital - held in October featuring fall or Halloween themed solos. Sometimes students get creative and "creepify" one of their favorite review pieces, or compose their own solo.

Holiday Harp Ensemble - performances at area senior living centers in December. Holiday Harp Ensemble pieces will be chosen based on the skill levels as well as the cultures and traditions of students performing. Students are also encouraged to play a solo at these events.

Spring Harp-A-Que - potluck and informal performance

Suzuki Book Recitals - students are strongly encouraged to give a graduation recital upon completion of each Suzuki book.

Senior Recital - high school seniors are encouraged to give a Senior Recital. These may be combined with other seniors who play harp or other instruments.

Local Harp Society Chapter Events - students are encouraged to participate in their local American Harp Society chapter which may offer: the Music Education Auditions & Evaluations program, masterclasses, harp ensemble, festivals, and other performance opportunities.

IMPORTANT DATES & CALENDARS

To see your personal lesson schedule and other harp events login to MakeMusic Studio: https://studio.makemusic.app/calendar/

COMPETITIONS

Students may choose to prepare for local, state, or national competitions in their lessons. These may include, but are not limited to: TMEA auditions, UIL competitions, and the American Harp Society local and national competitions.

SUMMER CAMPS, INSTITUTES & FESTIVALS

All students are strongly encouraged to participate in summer harp activities which greatly enhance their skills and provide an opportunity to interact with other harp students. Harp camps, Suzuki Institutes, summer festivals, and the American Harp Society national events can be found online at:

https://suzukiassociation.org ~ http://www.harpcolumn.com ~ http://www.harpsociety.org

Communications & Important Links

- Students must provide their current mobile phone number, so I can contact you in case of emergencies on your lesson day.
- Email is the primary way students and parents will receive updates, so please provide the address you check frequently.
- Email harpist@kelaharp.com is typically the best way to reach me in non-emergency situations. Please use only this address and be sure you have this email address saved in your address book to receive important studio emails.
- Harp-related text messages on my cell phone are acceptable: 512-350-4018. I may also text students/parents in situations when I need to pass on last minute information quickly. No personal or holiday greeting texts please.

STUDIO WEBSITE

I've created a corner of the web just for my students where you will find links to supplies, videos, and more. http://www.kelaharp.com/teaching.html

DROPBOX

We have a shared studio Dropbox folder that contains practice aids, helpful info about changing strings, DIY flash cards, practice videos, etc. Each student may be additionally be assigned their own individual Dropbox folder where I often share videos and documents via a private link.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow me for updates about harp happenings, studio member accomplishments, and more.

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/kelaharp/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/KelaHarp

Instagram: https://instagram.com/KelaHarp/

Privacy Concerns - I do not tag students in photos or use student's full names online. See Photo and Recording Release Form at the end of this Handbook for more info. I do not friend or follow minor students on social media. You are welcome to connect with me via any of the above links.

AMERICAN HARP SOCIETY, INC.

http://www.harpsociety.org I encourage all harpists to become members of the American Harp Society (AHS) both nationally and at the local chapter level. Ask about becoming part of our studio membership for an AHS member discount! Member benefits include discounted harp insurance, *the American Harp Journal*, national events, chapter events, scholarships, and more.

Harp Student Supply List

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- ☐ **Harp -** Students must own or rent a teacher-approved harp for individual daily practice. The use of a school-owned harp is also acceptable, provided the student has daily access for practice and the ability to borrow the harp from the school for holidays, group classes, performances, etc.
- ☐ **Music** – Students are responsible for promptly purchasing and owning **original** (physical or digital) music and recordings of all pieces they perform, as well as other music as assigned.
- ☐ The remaining **required** supplies such as tuners, metronomes, benches, music stands, etc. with affiliate links to purchase them can be found on my website at https://www.kelaharp.com/student-supplies.html

OPTIONAL RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES

- ☐ **Sproutbeat -** Online Music Theory curriculum for all levels and ages. Student Sproutbeat accounts are purchased through me (our studio has a group discount), for $75 per calendar year.
- ☐ Additional and optional **recommended** supplies, with affiliate links to purchase, can be found on my website at https://www.kelaharp.com/resources.html

Physical music and supplies can also be purchased directly from me. I offer shipping discounts on group music orders at the beginning of each semester.

Reputable Harp Music & Accessories Retailers:

Harp Column Music: https://harpcolumn.com/music/ (mainly digital downloads)

Lyon & Healy West (Salt Lake City, UT): www.Harp.com

Melody's Traditional Music & Harp Shoppe (Houston, TX) : www.FolkHarp.com

Vanderbilt Music Company (Bloomington, IN): https://vanderbiltmusic.com/

Virginia Harp Center (Midlothian, VA): www.vaharpcenter.com

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Photo & Recording Release Form

A harp student's accomplishments with photos may be featured in both printed and online studio publications - such as on Kela Walton's Harp Studio website, social media, etc.. Audio and/or video recordings of student performances may also be published via YouTube and on other social media.

A student's first name only may be published on the internet with any photo or video, ONLY with their permission. Students will not be tagged on social media posts, but may share them if they choose.

To grant permission for Kela Walton to publish images and/or recordings of you or your child, please indicate so below. (Please check all that apply.)

____ I approve the use of *photographs* of myself or my child as an individual for studio publications in print and online.

____ I approve the use of *recordings* of myself or my child as an individual for studio publications in print and online.

____ I approve the use of *photographs* of myself or my child as part of a group for studio publications in print and online.

____ I approve the use of *recordings* of myself or my child as part of a group for studio publications in print and online.

If you DO NOT wish Kela Walton to publish images and/or recordings of you or your child under any circumstances, please indicate so below:

____ I DO NOT approve the use of *photographs* of myself or my child for studio publications in print and online.

____ I DO NOT approve the use of *recordings* of myself or my child for studio publications in print and online.

_____ Student's Printed Name

_____ Student's Signature

_____ Parent/Guardian's Name (if student is under 18)

_____ Parent/Guardian's Signature (if student is under 18)

_____ Date

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Teacher, Parent, Student Agreement

2026-2027

As the Teacher…

1. I will provide each student with a positive environment, individual attention, and the respect necessary to nurture their growth. To create successful experiences, we will set goals together for each student's individual rate of learning.
2. I will come to each lesson prepared to teach all of the student's current assignments, and share new materials and resources as needed.
3. I will seek out additional performance and learning opportunities for the student such as: recitals, competitions, master classes, camps, workshops, and other harp events.

Teacher's signature _

As the Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s)…

1. I understand and will observe all of the policies outlined in the Student Handbook.
2. I grant permission for images and recordings of my student to be used by Kela Walton for publications in print and online, OR I have returned the Photo & Recording Release Form.
3. I will take notes during lessons in a practice planner or other format that students can easily access during home practice to complete assignments, and have previous lesson's notes available for the teacher to reference at each lesson.
4. I will help my student schedule daily practice time, and assist with practice and listening to recordings as assigned.
5. I will provide a home practice environment that is free from interruptions and distractions (such as: family, friends, video screens, mobile devices, etc.).
6. I will encourage my student to participate in performances and other harp events.

Parent's signature _____ *date* _____

As the Student…

1. I understand and will observe all of the policies outlined in the Student Handbook.
2. I will come to my lessons prepared. This means:
    - I will wash my hands and make sure my nails are trimmed *before* playing any harp.
    - I will not wear jewelry while playing any harp such as: watches, dangly earrings, etc. because they often damage the harp.
    - I will practice in accordance with the guidelines in the Student Handbook.
    - I will bring all music and materials that I am currently working on to my lesson.
    - I will treat each lesson as an informal performance and my chance to show how much I have progressed between lessons.
    - I will ask my teacher questions to be sure I understand all assignments.
    - I will refer to my assignment notes or practice planner *before* each practice session.
    - I will complete all assignments using the practice techniques as assigned in my notes or practice planner.

Student's signature _____ *date* _____

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