

Buzz off! Replacing with Care & Clarity

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With Josh Layne www.joshlayne.com

Buzzing and surface noise is something that can be hard to avoid on the harp. There will always be some surface noise, and of course sitting right next to the harp we hear it the most.

When starting, I always tell students to focus first on learning good finger, hand, and arm movements and not to worry too much about surface noise. But as we get more confident with technique, listening for buzzes becomes the first step to getting rid of them :)

Causes and Solutions

Cause: Placing ON a string that's already ringing

Solutions:

- Place quickly and firmly
- Practice getting hand and fingers in position, nearly on the strings, hover, and then place confidently.

Unforced error - don't let fingernails "brush" - make sure to open first, and approach from above.

Cause: Placing NEXT to a string that's already ringing

Solutions:

- Thread the needle!
- "Just don't buzz" - practice the exact path to take to avoid buzzing.
- Approach from above.
- Straighten fingers?
- Move hand closer towards you to change finger angle?

Unforced error - don't let fingernails "brush" - make sure to open first, and approach from above.

Other options:

Muffle - either beforehand, or as you go to play.

Muffle with:

- Open palm
- By replacing on ringing string
- With back of finger/knuckle
- With a trailing finger (generally 3 or 4).

Fingering:

- Place in advance to eliminate buzzes.
- Switch from thumb to finger (or vice versa) in some cases.

Harp Tuesday Videos

Over the years I've done a number of videos that touch on the topic of buzzing. Here's a short list of recommended videos from harptuesday.com:

Ep. 62 - Avoiding buzzing and surface noise

Ep. 143 - Avoiding buzzing in Debussy's "Arabesque"

Ep. 24 - muffling and dampening techniques

And three "**Slow Motion Monday**" videos:

Slow Motion Monday ep. 17 - LH muffling in Rota's "Sara-banda"

LH Muffling in Bach's Toccata and Fugue - Slow Motion Monday ep. 29

Slow Motion Monday ep. 16 - Staccato RH notes