

# HARMONICS! PART 1

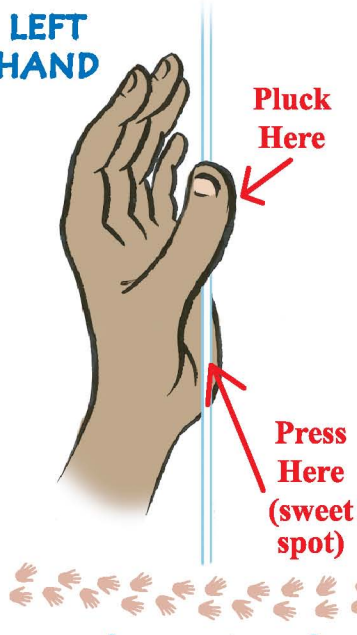
Harmonica? Nope! Harmony? Not quite! We're talking about *harmonics*.

*Harmonics* are tones produced by touching a string in the center as you pluck it. By touching it you effectively "cut it in half" - and when you pluck just one half - you get a *harmonic*; a fraction of the normal string tone. *Harmonics* created this way sound exactly one octave higher than the string's normal note. Also called *partial tones*, *partials* and *overtones*, *harmonics* have a chiming, bell-like sound.

Each hand has its own method for playing harmonics:

## Left Hand Method

LEFT  
HAND



- \* For the *left hand*, press gently against the string with the side of your hand, like a karate chop (without the chopping!). It is okay to press against more than one string - just make sure you've included the one you want to play.

- \* Now cup your hand slightly to bring your thumb into position to pluck the string.

- \* Pluck with your thumb and lift your hand away from the string at the same time.

## Right Hand Method

- \* For the *right hand*, curl up your index finger and press gently against the string with the side of the finger/knuckle.

- \* Place your thumb on the string as you normally would.

- \* Pluck with your thumb and lift your hand away from the string at the same time.



RIGHT  
HAND

The important thing for BOTH of these methods is to press in the EXACT CENTER of the string - otherwise it won't work.

Some people call that center point the "*sweet spot*". It takes a bit of experimentation to find the sweet spot on each string.

Note: On pedal harps - the sweet spot is different when the string is pitched flat, natural or sharp. On lever harps, the sweet spot is different when a lever is engaged.

Bonus Genius Question!  
Why is this so?

Playing harmonics can be a bit tricky, so don't feel bad if you don't get it instantly. Practice and experimentation will help you find the right placement, pressure, timing and motion to get it right! Your teacher may have some other techniques to try as well. Just be sure not to practice too long at one time - it can be stressful on the hands.