# Sizing Pinches to Fit

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Pinching all the time with the middle finger and thumb (mt), the usual pinch taught to new melody players, can at times be less than optimum, let alone tiring. With the autoharp's bass pitches balancing the tone of high-pitched melody notes, pinches sometimes need to be larger

or smaller than *mt* to help the thumb strike the bass strings comfortably.

Pinching with the index and ring fingers (*it*, *rt*) enlarges and reduces the playing hand's size while magnifying a melody's orchestration!

Don a thumb pick and *three* fingerpicks on the index, middle and ring fingers (*i*, *m*, *r*), then give the following tutorial a try.

### **Tutorial:** Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

I notated "Twinkle" three ways, in G and D major, to play in the high, middle and low ranges of the autoharp's string bed. If F and C major play more resonantly on your autoharp, use these keys instead. The Roman-numeral chords in the *Chords Key* at the bottom of this page make transposing to any key easy.

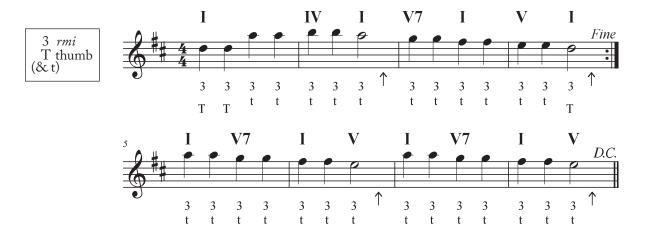
### Version 1: High range in D major

First, be sure your playing arm is off the autoharp so the hand can center itself over the high strings.

Version 1 is easy: pinch with the thumb and *all three* fingers throughout, as indicated by "3" over each T (a low bass string) or t (a higher bass string), for rmi-T and rmi-t. The ring finger sounds every melody note, the

middle and index fingers pluck harmony just below the melody, and the thumb strikes the lowest strings. To catch T or t. all you have to do is open the playing hand wide and the thumb will go down low and define a bass line automatically. You can't miss!

Pinch away:



Play Version 1 once more and check that the pinky remains free while pinching! If it sticks straight out, it's stuck. (Save that pose for 4pm high tea. ③)

Even though the pinky doesn't have a fingerpick on it, it still needs to flex to help *rmi* move freely and easily.

<u>Chords Key</u>				
	I	IV	V7	V
G major	G	C	D7	D
D major	D	G	A7	A
F major	F	Bb	C7	С
C major	C	F	G7	G

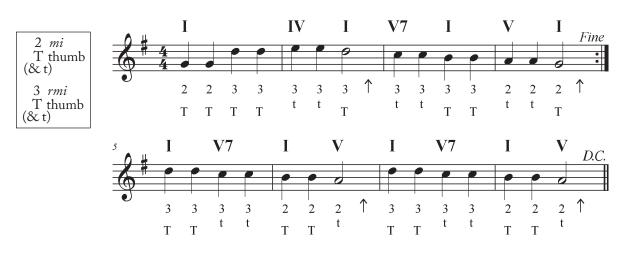
### Version 2: Mid-range in G major

Version 2 sets "Twinkle's" pitch range towards the middle of the string bed. The playing hand can open less large now when the thumb strikes the low bass strings. However, *rmi* scrunch together uncomfortably on a medium-sized hand.

To pinch smaller and comfortably, add some two-finger pinches (middle-index) for *mi-T* and *mi-t*. Also,

let the ring finger *and* pinky flex along with all *mi* pinches to keep the playing hand open and free.

In Version 2, the middle and ring fingers *take turns* striking the melody strings. It's a good idea to practice the pinch sequence below on your lap or a tabletop a few times first. Then pinch your way through "Twinkle" using the same fingering sequence on the autoharp.

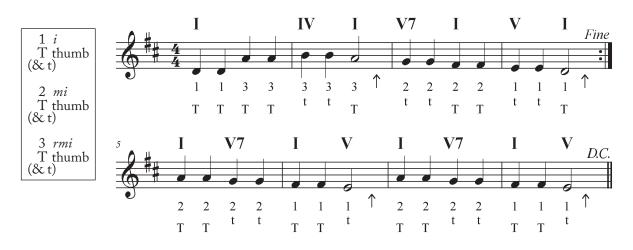


#### Version 3: Low range in D major

Version 3 plays one octave lower than Version 1, setting "Twinkle's" pitch range close to the bass strings. It takes small pinches to play here, using one-finger (index) pinches of i-T and i-t, the smallest possible,

to keep the hand open and free. All three fingers take turns sounding the melody strings in Version 3.

As with Version 2, practice pinching on your lap or a tabletop before playing Version 3 on the autoharp.



#### In Closing

A mixture of one-, two- and three-finger pinches helps the playing hand pinch comfortably while *orchestrating* melodies with luscious harmony. The number of fingers per pinch need to adjust tune by tune to sound glorious, beautiful chords beneath all the music you love to play. •

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