

# HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN HARP COVER

*by Janet Lanier*

You have a beautiful lever harp and now you want to protect it from the elements as you take it from place to place sharing your music. But there aren't many small harp covers on the market and you want something unique or symbolic of your individual style yet affordable. If you have a sewing machine and basic sewing skills, you can make your own unique harp cover.

To show you what my basic plan is for making a harp cover, I'd like to show you the first cover I ever made. It's made of a textured vinyl fabric and has double fold bias tape for trim. The cover has two basic parts to it: an upper yoke area and an attached skirt that overlaps around the column/pillar. The cover slips over the harp quickly and easily. Notice the length of the skirting. It will not drag on the ground and picking up dirt that could get on the harp when the cover is removed.



*My first harp cover and still very useful!*

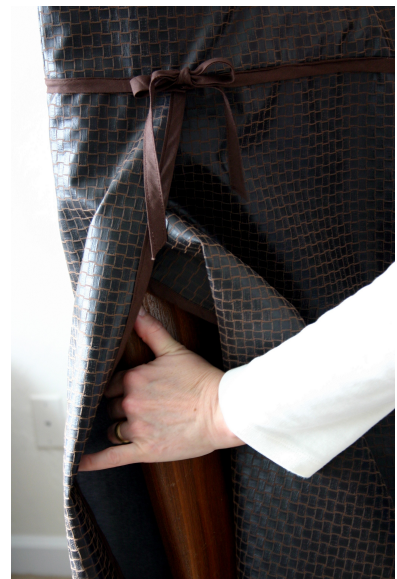


*Cover drapes quickly and easily over harp*



*Grab tone hole in back through the fabric*

I came up with this wrap-skirt pattern because I wanted to have a way to pick up the harp securely. With the cover on the harp, I grab the sound hole in the back through the cover and then reach in between the split skirt area to grab the column with my other hand. If I would try to pick up the harp column with my hand outside of the cover, there is a chance that the harp might slip under the fabric. The split skirt option allows me to get a secure hold on the column and the harp is still protected from the rain.



*Grab the column between the split skirt opening*

There are lots of materials to choose from but I recommend looking at the upholstery section of the fabric shops. You can save a lot of money by using a remnant if you can find one with enough yardage. I particularly like using the vinyl fabrics because they can be wiped clean with a damp cloth and they repel the rain. If you don't want vinyl but still want the rain protection, you might experiment with spraying the fabric of your choice with a Scotch Guard protection.

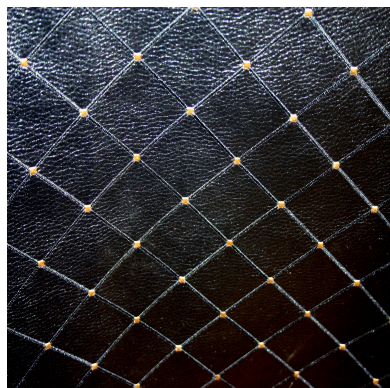


*Choose fabric with smooth backing*

You should also select a fabric that doesn't give off a lot of lint or has a rough texture on the reverse side. As you can see on the back of this particular piece of vinyl from my first harp cover, it is smooth and doesn't have a texture that could scratch the harp wood or snag on the string end points.



*Avoid materials that will snag on string end points*



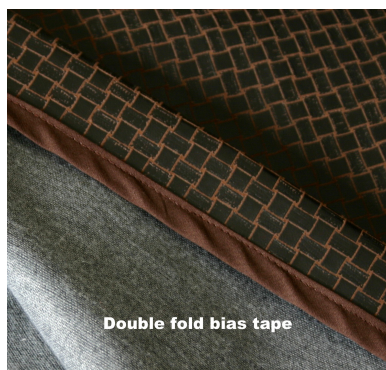
*Black vinyl*

This is the fabric I will be using for the tutorial. Once again, it is vinyl and has this great diamond stitching pattern with a gold detail to it. The fabric is 58 inches wide and has a smooth backing. I purchased 2 1/2 yards of it. If your harp is larger than 29 strings or the fabric you choose is not as wide, you will need to take that into consideration. It is best to overestimate how much you'll need. You could always use the leftover material for other projects. I will cover how to estimate the yardage in a few minutes.

I'm using bias tape to trim the edges of the skirt and a beautiful gold braid trim to cover the seam where the skirt attaches to the yoke. There are so many beautiful trims on the market. You could even use fringe here. On the first harp cover I showed you, I used bias tape only but I thought this time I'd like to add a little pizzazz to the cover by using the gold trim. Also, in my first harp cover, I used a double fold bias tape and it worked fine but on the new cover I'm using a single fold and I liked that better because it had a cleaner looking edge.



*Single fold bias tape and gold trim*



**Double fold bias tape**

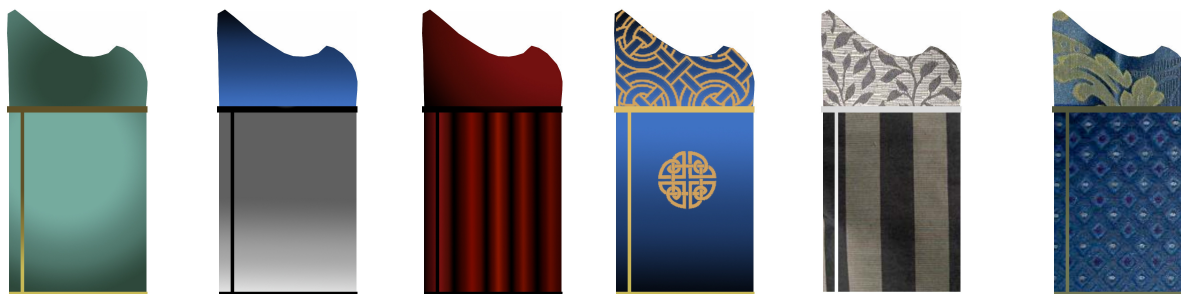


**Single fold bias tape**

*Double fold vs. single fold bias tape*



You have lots of choices in deciding your harp cover color scheme. The yoke and skirt fabric can be the same or of different coordinating materials. The trim can blend in or contrast with the fabric. Whatever you choose, you'll have a one-of-a-kind harp cover.



Here are the costs for the cover I will be making for this tutorial:

Black vinyl fabric @ \$17.49 (on sale) per yard X 2.5 yds. = \$43.72

Bias tape @ \$1.79 (4 yds. in a package) X 2 = \$3.58

Gold trim @ \$.90 per yard X 2.25 yds. = \$2.03

Black Thread @ \$3.51 X 1 spool = \$3.51

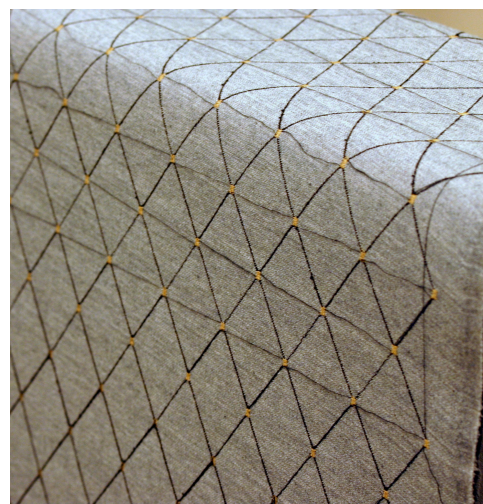
Gold Thread @ \$3.51 X 1 spool - \$3.51

**TOTAL COST: \$56.35**

Similar harp covers on Ebay might cost \$125 plus \$30 for shipping so you save money and get exactly the color and fabric you like.

With this particular piece of fabric, I had an extra step of preparation. The back of the fabric had connecting threads as a result of the machine stitching pattern so to avoid snagging with the harp levers and string ends, I had to clip all of those threads which took quite some time.

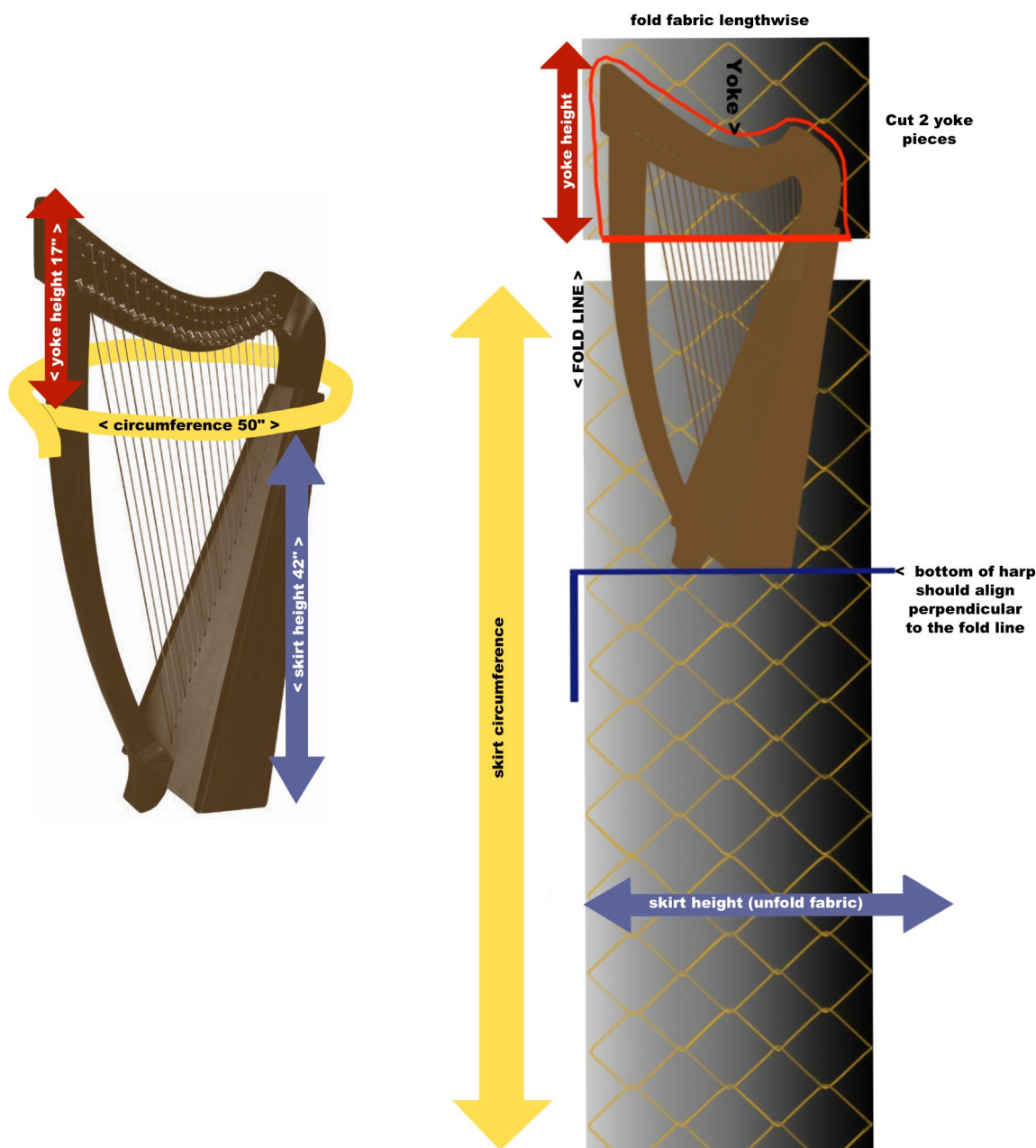
If you do have your heart set on a particular piece of fabric with a rough backing, you could add a lining on the inside of the harp cover and if you want to avoid the snagging of threads on the levers and string ends, you could get away with lining just the yoke area only.



*Reverse side of fabric (removing threads)*

Here are two different ways to layout the fabric and cut the pieces. You will be cutting two identical pieces for the yoke and then one long straight piece for the skirting. Take the three measurements of your harp as indicated in this diagram.

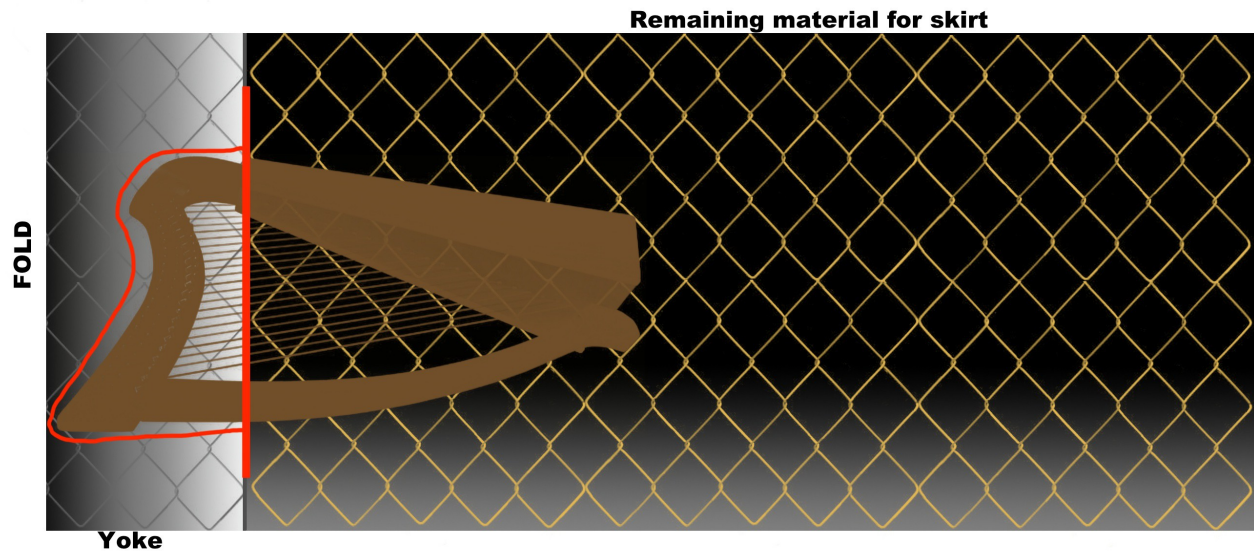
The fabric I was using was 58 inches wide and so I could fold the fabric lengthwise, lay the harp down on one end and trace around the harp for the yoke. My 29 string harp was just the right width to cut a yoke from the Method 1 layout but if you have more strings or a wider harp or perhaps your fabric is less than 58 inches wide, you might try Method 2 below.



*Method 1: Measurements and fabric cutting*



In Alternate Method 2, you could spread the fabric in a single layer and fold over one end to allow cutting two pieces for the yoke. Whether you use Method 1 or 2, if you choose a one-way design fabric, you will need to purchase extra to allow the fabric to be cut in the correct direction.



*Alternate Method 2 - cutting plan - layout fabric completely and fold one end down*



*Lay harp on the material  
lever side up*

So layout your material and fold it lengthwise with the wrong side up. Pin the raw edges of the longest side so that the fabric doesn't slip or slide. Carefully set the harp down with the levers side up on the material near one end. Make sure the bottom of the harp's legs are perpendicular and aligned with the fold of the fabric. If you don't, the fabric pattern in the yoke will not be straight vertically when it hangs on the harp.

Using pencil or chalk, trace around the upper area and sides of the harp for the yoke. The bottom of the yoke should come approximately below the point where the sound box connects to the shoulder joint.

The question of how much of a distance to draw the chalk line away from the harp will depend. If you want the yoke



*Trace around upper and side parts of the  
harp*

to be just 2 pieces like what I had for my first brown harp cover, you should draw the line far enough away from the harp to allow for seam allowances AND the thickness of the harp. The thickest part of the harp is in the back where the shoulder and sound box connect so I would make my outline tracing about 2 1/2 inches away from the harp.



However, for my new harp cover, I'm going to do something slightly different. I'm going to trace around the upper part of the harp less than 2 inches away. When I pin the yoke together and fit it to the harp, I will have an opening at the back. I'm going to cut a small triangular shape of fabric to fit in between the two yoke pieces as an insert.

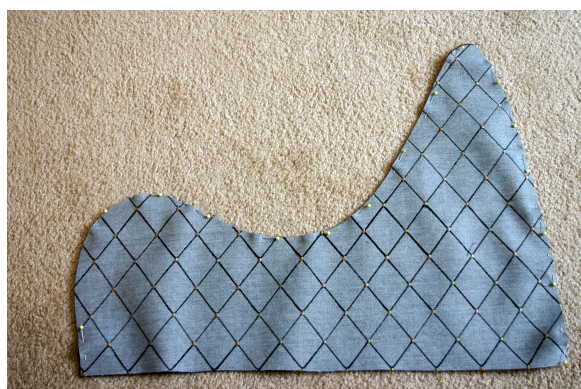


*Cut a triangular piece of fabric as an insert between the yoke pieces*



*Outline of yoke*

After tracing the upper edge of the yoke, carefully lift the harp off the fabric and finish drawing the bottom of the yoke. The bottom line should be perpendicular with the fold of the fabric.



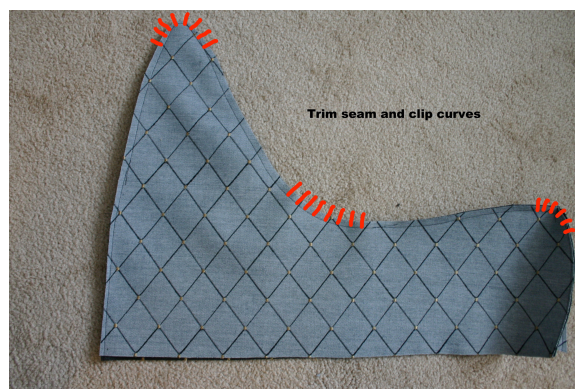
*Pin the upper edges of the yoke*

Next pin the two yoke pieces together (right sides together) and try them out on the harp. Adjust where needed.

Sew the yoke pieces together. Clip the edges of the seams up to the stitching line wherever there is a curve. This will help the seam lay better.



*Sew yoke pieces together*



*Trim seam and clip curves (red marks)*

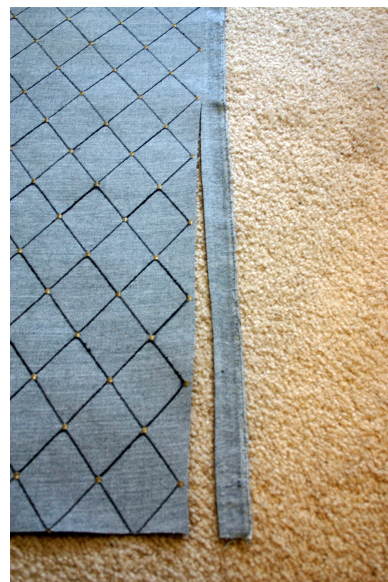


Turn the yoke right side out and try it out on the harp. Adjust where needed.



*Yoke fitted (right side out)*

If you're happy with how the yoke fits, you're now ready to work on the skirting. As you can see in the fabric I chose, there is a wide selvage so I trimmed that to the edge of the diamond pattern. I did this because this is where the yoke and skirting will attach and I wanted to make sure the selvage wouldn't show outside of the seam. If your fabric doesn't have a wide selvage like this, you can omit this step.



Next, estimate where the skirt will attach to the yoke. Since the skirting is going to be like a wrap skirt, there will be an overlap around the column. I started the edge of the skirt approximately 4 inches from the center of the column. This initial pinned edge will be the part of the skirt that lays under the skirt overlap.

Turn the yoke and skirt wrong side out and put it on the harp. Start pinning the upper edge of the skirt to the bottom edge of the yoke (right sides together). The final pinned edge of the skirt will overlap approximately 4 to 5 inches from the center of the column. At this point, you might want to trim off some of the excess fabric at the bottom of the skirt so that you can tell how it will drape on the harp.



*Estimate where to start attaching the skirt*

When you're happy with how the cover lays, remove the cover from the harp and sew the skirt to the yoke. The cover is now quite heavy and may be a little awkward to sew on the machine but take your time. Trim seams and clip curves.



*Pin skirt to the yoke*

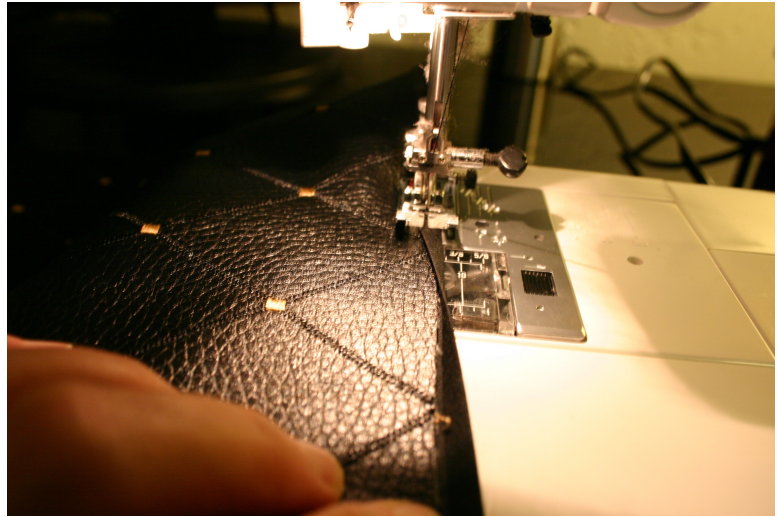
Turn the cover right side out and check the fit on the harp.



*Yoke and skirt attached*



Next, you will apply the bias tape to the vertical edges of the skirt only. Remember there will be two vertical edges of the overlapping skirt to apply bias tape. The inside edge won't be visible when the cover is on the harp but it will still make the cover more professional looking if you apply the bias tape to it. (We will be applying the bias tape to the bottom edge of the skirt later.) Some people put bias tape on in different ways. Sometimes they'll sew one edge of the tape to the fabric and then fold it over the fabric and sew it again. You can apply the bias tape as you like. I was able to apply the bias tape in one step by folding it over the skirt edge and then making one sewing line.



*Apply bias tape to vertical edges of skirt*

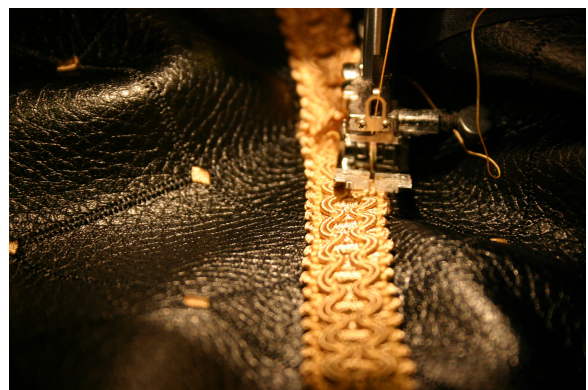
Next, position the gold trim to the outside of the seam where the yoke and skirt connect. You may want to pin this in place and hand sew it but I was able to sew it on the sewing machine without pins. It's a little awkward because the gold trim is right in the middle of all this heavy fabric. I suggest positioning the cover so that the bottom is on the right and the yoke on the left. The wide opening of the skirt will give you more room. Be careful when sewing the trim on the machine so that you don't accidentally catch some of the loose fabric underneath. Sew along the upper edge (left edge) of the trim. Check it for correct positioning and then sew along the other edge (right edge) of the trim.



*Finished edge with bias tape*



*Sew along one edge of trim*



*Sew along other edge of trim*





*Finished gold trim*

Next, position the cover on the harp and pin the bottom hem in place. I put my hem about 2 inches above the floor. This prevents the hem from getting dirty and picking up debris that could fall on the harp when the cover is lifted. Make sure the hem is level to the floor and then trim the excess off.

Apply bias tape to the bottom of the hem. Fold over the corner edges of the bias tape to make a clean corner with the vertical edges of the skirting.



*Corner of skirting*

**Your new harp cover is complete!**





If you want, you can add some embellishments to the gold trim where the skirt overlaps or you can leave it just as is. Depending on the material and trim you select, you can use embellishments such as tassels, buttons, jewelry pins, bows or anything that would give your cover a little personality.



*Contrasting tassel and bow embellishment*



*Music jewelry pin embellishment*



*Matching tassel embellishment*



*Pearl jewelry pin embellishment*

When your harp cover is not in use, fold and hang it in the closet using a skirt/pants hanger.

You can also see this tutorial on video by visiting my YouTube Channel here:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/jlanier2001>



*Hang harp cover with skirt/pants hanger*