

note from the mid-range of your singing voice, but whatever you do, your note should not be weak and watery—just a nice, fairly taut, clear note. Don't worry ... the strings will let you know if you are tuning too high, so tune slowly.

The actual notes with which you are dealing are not half as important as the relationship between these notes. The "strongest" tonal relationship is the difference between octaves (D to DD)—when a note is eight tones above or below the note from which you start. For example, do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do.

The second strongest relationship is that of a fifth (D to A)—when a note is five tones away from the starting tone (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do). The third strongest is when a note is four tones away from the starting tone, sol (A to DD), and is a fourth. In this case, our scale reads do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do.

When in tune, we have two tones an octave apart (the unisons and the bass) combined with two tones a fifth apart (the unisons and the middle string), as well as two tones a fourth apart (the middle string and the bass). And, nicely enough, it makes a chord—not a very sophisticated chord—but at least when struck open, it's easy to do.

You can tune and play your dulcimer all day long without ever having to know what key you're in or to what note your unisons are actually tuned. All "being in a key" does is allow you to relate where you are tuned and what you are doing to other musicians.

It is important to keep in mind that like a great many other things, notes and keys are really arbitrary values that have been standardized over the years for reference use. To put it another way: There's not much difference between a D above middle C that vibrates at 300 cycles per second and one that vibrates at the established standard of 294. When you consider that middle C itself is rated at 262 cycles per second, and that E, the note above D, is set at 330, a tone vibrating at 300 cycles isn't that far off.

To you, this tone of 300 cycles per second is just some tone, and a perfectly good one to tune to, at