

Music Curriculum Glossary

Acappella	Without instrumental accompaniment.
AB form	A structure of music using two sections, A and B, which contrast with each other (binary form).
ABA form	A structure of music using three sections, A, B and A; two are the same, and the middle one is different (ternary form).
Accent	Stress or emphasis on a note.
Accompaniment	Musical background to a melody.
Analyze	Examine in detail the structure and context of the music.
Arrangement	Setting or adaptation of an existing musical composition.
Articulation	Characteristic way in which musical tones are connected, separated, or accented. Types of articulation include legato (smooth, connected) and staccato (short, detached).
Band	A group of brass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments.
Bass clef	Indicates that the notes between the : are "f".
Beat	Underlying steady pulse present in most music.
Body percussion	Use of the human body as an instrument to create percussive/rhythmic sounds such as stomping, patsching, clapping, clicking, and snapping.
Bordun (drone)	Accompaniment based on the tonic and dominant of the key with the tonic on the bottom (do-sol).
Brass family	Metal instruments such as trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba that are played by buzzing the lips into the mouthpiece.
Canon	A song form with two or more voices in which melody is introduced and imitated one or more times; similar to a round.
Chant	Most commonly, the rhythmic recitation or rhymes, or poems without a sung melody; a type of singing, with a simple, unaccompanied melody line and free rhythm.
Chart	Jazz or popular music score, often abbreviated, with a melody (including key and time signature, and a set of chord changes).
Chord	Three or more pitches sounded together.
Chord progression	Series of chords sounding in succession; certain progressions are typical in particular styles/genres of music.
Coda	Short section added to the end of a piece of music.
Color parts	The use of instruments to create special sound effects on a particular word or at the end of a phrase.
Composer	One who create music compositions.
Composition	Original piece of music that can be repeated, typically developed over time, and preserved either in notation or in a sound recording.

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Conductor	The person who leads performers using special patterns of arm movements.
Counter melody	Contrasting melody, written to go with a song.
Crescendo	(<) getting louder little by little.
Divisi	A musical direction indicating that a section of players should be divided into two or more groups, each playing a different part.
D.C. al Fine	Italian words that tell you to go back to the beginning and keep going until you see the word fine.
D.S. al Fine	Italian words that tell you to go back to the sign *** and keep going until you see the word fine.
Decrescendo	(>) getting softer little by little.
Diatonic	Seven-tone scale consisting of five whole steps and two half steps.
Dissonance	The sounding of a combination of pitches that creates harmonic tension and that sounds unfinished.
Drum circles	Music-making events where people sit or stand in a circle while playing world percussion instruments.
Dynamics	Level or range of loudness of a sounds or sounds.
Elements of music	Basic characteristics of sound (pitch, rhythm, harmony, timbre, form, and style/articulation) that are manipulated to create music.
Ensemble	Group of individuals organized to perform artistic work.
Expression	Feeling conveyed through music.
Fine	Italian word that means "the end".
First ending	Sign that tells you to go back to the beginning of a song and sing to the second ending.
Form	Element of music describing the overall organization of a piece of music, such as AB, ABA, rondo, theme and variations, and strophic form.
Forte	Musical term for "loud".
Fret	Thin strip of material placed across the fingerboard of some stringed instruments.
Harmony	Chordal structure of a music composition in which the simultaneous sounding of pitches produces chords and their successive use produces chord progressions.
Improvisation	Music created and performed spontaneously or "in the moment," often within a framework determined by the musical style.
Interlude	A short musical connection between sections or verses of a song.
Interval	The distance between two pitches.
Intonation	Singing and playing the correct pitch in tune.
Introduction	Short section added to the beginning of a piece of music.
Key signature	Set of sharps or flats at the beginning of each staff.

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Leap or skip	One way a melody moves; to move higher or lower by jumping over two or more pitches.
Legato	Smooth and connected.
Lyrics	Words of a song.
Major scale	Specific set of eight pitches from do to do'.
Measure	Unit used to group notes and rests.
Melody	Linear succession of sounds (pitches) and silences moving through time; the horizontal structure of music.
Meter	Grouping of beats and divisions of beats in music, often in sets of twos (duple meter) or threes (triple meter).
Meter signature	Symbol that indicates how many beats are grouped in each measure.
Minor scale	Specific set of eight pitches from la to la; Scale in which one characteristic feature is a half step between the second and third tones; the three forms of the minor scale are natural, harmonic, and melodic.
Modes	Seven-tone scales that include five whole steps and two half steps; the seven possible modes – Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian – were used in Medieval and Renaissance periods and served as the basis from which major (Ionian) and minor (Aeolian) scales emerged.
Motif/motive	Brief rhythmic/melodic figure or pattern that recurs throughout a composition as a unifying element.
Musical range	Span between the highest and lowest pitches of a melody, instrument, or voice.
Notation	Visual representation of musical sounds.
Octave	Leap of eight steps between two pitches.
Orchestra	Ensemble of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion instruments.
Ostinato	Musical patterns that repeat over and over.
Partner songs	Separate songs that sound good when sung at the same time.
Pentatonic scale	Five-tone scale often with the pattern of the black keys on a keyboard, although other five-tone arrangements are possible; (do, re, mi, so, la).
Percussion family	Instruments such as drum, rattle, and bell that are played by striking, scraping, or shaking.
Phrase	Musical segment with a clear beginning and ending, comparable to a simple sentence or clause in written text.
Piano (p)	Musical term for "soft" (quiet).
Pitch	Identification of a tone or note with respect to highness or lowness (i.e., frequency).
Refrain (chorus)	A section of a song that is repeated after each verse.
Repeat	A symbol () that tells you to repeat that part of the music.
Repertoire	Body or set of musical works that can be performed.
Repetition	Using the same musical idea more than once.

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Rhythm	The duration or length of sounds and silences that occur in music; organization of sounds and silences in time.
Ritardando	Gradually getting slower.
Rondo	Musical form consisting of three or more contrasting sections, in which one recurs, such as ABACA.
Round	A type of canon; a short song for three or more voices in which each voice begins at a different time.
Scale	Pattern of pitches arranged in ascending or descending order and identified by their specific arrangement of whole and half steps.
Score	Written notation or an entire music composition.
Second ending	The ending after the first ending of a song.
Solfege	Naming pitches using do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do.
Staccato	Short and choppy.
Staff	The five lines and four spaces on which musical notes are written.
Stepwise melody	One way a melody moves; to move higher or lower to the next pitch.
String family	Instruments such as violin, viola, cello, and double bass that are sounded by plucking or by drawing a bow across string.
Style	The distinct way that people use the elements of music to express themselves.
Syncopation	A type of rhythm in which stressed sounds occur between beats instead of on beats.
Tempo	Rate or speed of the beat in a musical work or performance.
Texture	Manner in which the harmonic (vertical) and melodic (horizontal) elements are combined to create layers of sounds.
Theme	The main musical idea of a piece.
Theme and variations	Musical form in which a melody is presented and then followed by two or more sections presenting variations of that melody.
Tie	A curved line that connects two notes of the same pitch and means that the sound should be held for the length of both notes.
Timbre	Tone color or tone quality that distinguished one sound source, instrument, or voice from another.
Tonality	Tonic or key tone around which a piece of music is centered.
Treble clef	Indicates that the notes on the second line of a staff are called "G".
Tutti	All parts singing or playing together.
Twelve bar blues	Blues chord progression of twelve measures, usually following a set pattern.
Unison	All instruments or voices playing or singing the same notes at the same time.
Variation	A changed version of a theme or melody.
Verse	A section of a song that is repeated using the same melody but different words.
Vocables	Audible sounds and/or nonsense syllables used by vocalists to convey musical ideas or intent.

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Woodwind family	Wind instruments such as flute, clarinet, and oboe that are or once were made of wood.
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