

Glossary of Musical Terms

Accompaniment	An additional musical part which supports the main voice or instrument.
Beat	The basic regular pulse you feel in music.
Body percussion	Using the body as an instrument to create sounds (e.g. clapping, stomping, snapping fingers).
Brass	A family of wind instruments made from metal with cupped mouth pieces (e.g. trumpet, trombone, tube).
Conductor	A person who stands at the front of a group of musicians (e.g. orchestra or choir) and directs the performance.
Crescendo	Gradually getting louder.
Diminuendo	Gradually getting quieter.
Dynamics	The volume of sound – the loud or soft passages in a piece of music.
Ensemble	A group of musicians that perform together.
Forte	Loud.
Glissando	Sliding from one note to another, taking in all the notes in between.
Graphic Score	A way in which a piece of music can be written down using shapes, pictures and symbols.
Harmony	The sound of two or more notes played/sung at the same time.
Kodály rhythm names	The names for different rhythm values help learners to understand and say rhythms accurately. (Relates to the <i>NYCoS Singing Games</i> and <i>Go for Bronze</i> resources.)
Kodály handsigns	Each pitch of the scale is given a solfa name and corresponding handsign to help learners understand the relationship between different pitches. (Relates to the <i>NYCoS Singing Games</i> and <i>Go for Bronze</i> resources)
Legato	Notes are played or sung smoothly.
Melody	Notes played one after the other to make a tune.
Mezzo-forte	Moderately loud.
Ostinato	A repeating pattern.

Pentatonic Scale	A scale of five notes (<i>do, re, mi, so, la</i>).
Percussion (tuned and untuned)	Instruments that are played by hitting, striking, shaking or scraping. Tuned percussion can play a range of notes at different pitches. Untuned percussion mostly have one pitch or sound.
Piano	Soft (quiet).
Pictorial rhythm notation	Pictures that show the rhythm of a song/rhyme.
Pitch	The highness or lowness of a sound, i.e. higher or lower notes in a melody.
Round	Singing in a round means harmony is created when each voice/group sings the same melody, beginning at different times.
Rhythm	A pattern of sounds in time which can be long or short or of equal duration.
Rhythm Stick Notation	The stems of notes used to write down rhythm.
Soundscape	An atmosphere or environment created by sound.
Stave	A set of five horizontal lines and four spaces that each represent a different pitch.
Staccato	Notes are short and detached.
Strings	A family of instruments with strings that are plucked or bowed (e.g. violin, viola, cello).
Structure	How the music is organised into different sections (e.g. verse, chorus or beginning, middle, end). Binary form: in 2 sections (AB) Ternary form: In 3 sections (ABA)
Tempo	The speed of a piece of music.
Texture	How many instruments or voices there are. The more instruments/voices, the thicker the texture.
Timbre	The sound quality that causes different instruments to sound different from each other when they are playing the same note.
Time signature	The top number tells you how many beats are in every bar. The bottom number tells you what kind of beat it is.
Unison	Two or more instruments or voices playing/singing the same pitch at the same time.
Woodwind	A family of wind instruments made from a long tube of wood or metal. Sound is created by blowing through a reed or across a small mouthpiece (e.g. clarinet, flute, oboe).
World music	Different styles of music from around the world (e.g. Latin American, Indian, African).