

MMC Glossary

This glossary includes definitions for musical words that feature throughout the Charanga Model Music Curriculum Scheme. Please use the **MMC Vocabulary Years 1–6** and **MMC Theory Guide** documents (found in the Music Theory section on the Model Music Curriculum homepage) for further support.

Elements of Music (Western Music)

Pulse – The regular heartbeat of the music; its steady beat.

Rhythm – A combination of notes and rests; long and short sounds/silences or patterns that happen over the pulse.

Pitch – High and low sounds/notes.

Tempo – The speed of the music; fast, slow or somewhere in between.

Dynamics – How loud or quiet the music is.

Timbre – The character or colour of a particular instrument or sound. All instruments, including voices, have a certain sound quality, eg the trumpet has a very different sound quality to the violin.

Texture – Layers of sound in music. Layers of sound working together make music very interesting to listen to.

Structure and Form – The shape of a piece of music and how it's put together. Every piece of music has a structure, eg an introduction, verse, chorus and ending.

Notation – The link between sound and symbol; how we write music down.

An A-Z of Musical Words

a cappella – An Italian term to describe vocal music that is performed without accompaniment from musical instruments, ie voices only.

A Cappella style – A style of vocal music that is performed 'a cappella', without accompaniment from musical instruments. A Cappella choirs/groups sing in this style.

a tempo – An instruction to return to the original tempo of a piece.

accelerando – A performance direction that tells a performer to gradually speed up. It is the opposite of ritardando and rallantando. This is the symbol for it in a written score:



accompaniment – The supporting part or parts in the music, over which the main part plays.

ad-lib – When a vocalist briefly improvises around, embellishes or varies the music that is written.

alto clef – See **clef**.

amplification – Making the sound of an instrument or voice louder by sending it through a speaker or amplifier.

arpeggio – When all of the notes in a chord are played one after the other, in ascending or descending order.

arrangement – A new version of an existing composition which is different in some way from the original. When you create an arrangement, you make choices about how the music will be played by considering the musical style, the order of the sections and which instruments or voices will play the melody, rhythm and chords.

articulation – The way notes are played, eg spiky, flowing, constant or swelling. We can describe articulation using words such as ‘staccato’ (‘detached’) or ‘legato’ (‘smooth’).

atonal – Music without a clear scale or key.

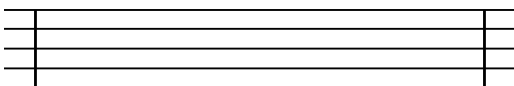
backbeat – A rhythm played on the drums, that emphasizes beats two and four of a bar.

backing track – The accompaniment to a song.

ballad – A slow, reflective song that tells a story (often a love song).

band – A group of people who play and perform together.

bar – A segment of time in music, which is divided into a specific number of beats. In a written score, one bar looks like this:



barline – A line used to mark the division between bars (circled in red on the staff below):



bars (Grime, Hip Hop) – Rappers often refer to their lyrics as ‘bars’.

bass – A word used to describe sounds with a low frequency or pitch. In music, this means low notes, which are indicated on a staff with a bass clef. ‘Bass’ is also used to refer to specific bass clef instruments, like the bass guitar, double bass and brass band tubas (B♭ and E♭ bass).

bass clef – See **clef**.

bassline – A low-pitched instrumental line that usually holds the music together.

beat – A regular pulse within the music that you can feel or count.

beatboxing – Using percussive vocal techniques to make beats.

binary – This refers to a two-part structure, often described as ‘AB’.

blue note – The note in a scale that gives the music a Blues feel, which is often achieved through expressive pitch bending.

Blues scale – There are a few different Blues scales. Each of them combines major and minor notes in a way that is different from the standard major and minor scales. Blues scales are often used in styles such as Blues and Jazz.

BPM – An acronym which stands for ‘beats per minute’. This means the number of beats you will hear in a minute, which indicates how fast a piece of music is.

brass band – An ensemble made up of brass instruments, with a percussion section.

breakdown – When layers or voices are stripped away in a piece of music, leaving only one or a few layers. This usually creates contrast in the texture of the music.

bridge – A contrasting section to other sections in a song, such as the verse and chorus. Just as a bridge we walk across takes us from one place to another, a musical bridge can take us from a verse to a chorus. A middle eight is a type of bridge.

call and response – A rhythm or melody made up of two parts. The first is a ‘call’, which introduces a musical idea, followed by a ‘response’, which answers or relates to the call, like a musical conversation. A ‘question and answer’ phrase is a type of call and response.

canon or round – A particular kind of ‘echo’ effect in a thick musical texture. One performer plays/sings a melodic pattern and another performer joins in, playing/singing exactly the same pattern, slightly later. More performers can then join in, with many melodic patterns entering one after another.

cassette tape – A small, rectangular plastic container of magnetic tape, wound over two small reels. The magnetic tape stores music, which is picked up by a cassette player and played through a speaker.

CD (compact disc) – A plastic disc that stores music as tiny bumps on its surface. A laser in a CD player reads these tiny bumps and turns the data back into sound, which is amplified through headphones or a speaker.

charanga – A traditional ensemble that plays Cuban dance music.

chord – More than one note played at the same time.





chord progression – A group of chords played one after another, often in a familiar-sounding pattern.

chorus – A chorus is the repeated section in a song that delivers the main message; it generally has the same melody and words each time it is sung. The chorus often contains the ‘hook’ of the song too.

chromatic – Notes moving up or down, one semitone at a time. A chromatic scale is a 12-note scale containing only semitones. Here is an ascending and descending chromatic scale starting on the note C:



clef – A sign placed at the beginning of a musical staff to determine the pitch of the notes. In written notation, a clef indicates which register the music is being played in:

-  Bass clef = low register
-  Tenor and  alto clefs = mid register
-  Treble clef = high register

coda – A short section which brings a song or piece to an end.

communal music – Music that is shared with other participating musicians and doesn't require an audience. It may accompany other activities, such as working or protesting.

composer – Someone who comes up with and puts together new musical ideas to write their own song or piece of music.

concert hall – A music venue for concert music, usually indoors with a stage at the front and seats facing it.

concert music – Music that is intended to be presented live to a listening audience.

concerto – A substantial, large-scale piece for a solo instrument and orchestra/large ensemble. Usually, there are three to four movements and the solo part is very challenging to play.

cover – A version of a song performed by someone other than the original artist/songwriter that might sound a bit – or very – different.

crescendo – A performance direction meaning ‘gradually getting louder’. It is written in a score as **cresc.** or as a symbol made up of two lines that are closed on the left and open on the right (sometimes called a ‘hairpin’ or ‘wedge’):



crossover – A type of music that can be a mixture of different styles which introduces new music to different audiences.

crotchet – A one-beat or whole-beat note (half the length of a minim and worth the same as two quavers). A crotchet symbol has an oval, filled-in notehead with a stem attached to it, which can go up or down. Here are two examples of a crotchet in a written score:



dance music – Music that is intended to accompany dance.

dastgāh – The system of melodic modes used in Iranian Classical music. Each dastgāh has seven notes, with several specific melodies called ‘gushehs’ belonging to it.

DAW (digital audio workstation) – An electronic device or software which allows someone to record, edit and produce music.

decrescendo/diminuendo – A performance direction meaning ‘gradually getting quieter’. It is written in a score as **decresc.** or **dim.** or as a symbol made up of two lines that are open on the left and closed on the right (sometimes called a ‘hairpin’ or ‘wedge’):



devotional song and poetry – Music and poetry that celebrates religious or spiritual themes, or is used in a religious or spiritual setting.

digital music – On a computer, music gets turned into digital data (made up of millions of ones and zeroes). It can be saved in many formats, including MP3 (a smaller but lower quality format) and WAV (a much higher quality but much larger format).

distortion – An effect that makes an instrument sound crunchy or fuzzy. It is often used by Rock guitarists to make a heavier, more powerful sound.

DJ (disc jockey) – Someone who selects songs and plays them through a sound system, usually finding creative ways to mix the songs together.

dotted crotchet – A one-and-a-half-beat note (worth the same as three quavers). A dotted crotchet symbol has an oval, filled-in notehead with a dot next to it and a stem attached, which can go up or down. Here are two examples of a dotted crotchet in a written score:



dotted minim – A three-beat note (worth the same as three crotchets). A dotted minim symbol has an oval, hollow notehead with a dot next to it and a stem attached, which can go up or down. Here are two examples of a dotted minim in a written score:



downbeat – The first beat of the bar.

drone – Held notes or chords with a fixed, unchanging pitch.

drum loop – Drum sounds that have been recorded or sampled using electronic music software, and repeated over and over in a track. See also: **loop**.

ending – A short section which brings a song or piece to an end.

ensemble – A group of singers or musicians who perform together. It is a French word used to describe playing, singing or performing at the same time.

fanfare – A bold, short melody or melodic idea, usually played loudly on brass instruments and percussion, to introduce someone or something.

fill – A short melody or rhythm played at the end of a phrase, to add interest between two sections of music. It can also indicate a change in the music.

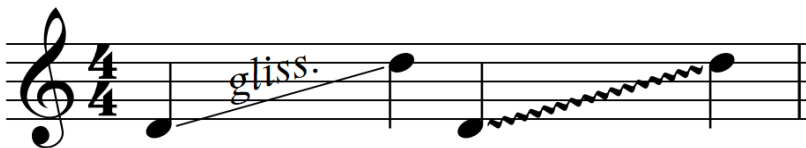
flat – A musical symbol \flat which means ‘lower in pitch’. When placed in front of a note, it lowers the note in pitch by one semitone. It can also show what key a piece of music is in when included in the key signature at the beginning of a staff. It is the opposite of a sharp symbol.

forte – Loud dynamics. The musical symbol for this is *f*

fortissimo – VERY loud dynamics! The musical symbol for this is *ff*

gamelan – An ensemble that plays Gamelan music, a traditional style of ensemble music originating from the Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese peoples of Indonesia. Various types of tuned and untuned percussion are played in a gamelan. Flutes, voices, and bowed and plucked strings may also be included.

glissando – A performance direction to glide from one note to another, where all the steps between the two notes are played. Here are some examples of a glissando symbol in a written score:



groove – A catchy, repeating musical pattern that makes people want to dance.

gusheh – A specific melody belonging to a dastgāh (system of melodic modes) in Iranian Classical music.

harmony – Different notes that are sung or played at the same time, to produce chords.

hook – A term used in Pop music to describe a short, catchy phrase or riff. It's the melody that 'hooks' us in; the main musical idea from a song that listeners will remember.

imitation – This refers to an 'echo' effect in a thick musical texture. For example, when one instrument performs a melodic pattern and then other instruments join in playing similar patterns slightly later.

improvise – To invent music on the spot – music that has not been written down or played before that moment.

improvised solo – A section of music featuring a single musician who invents and plays new musical ideas on the spot – melodies that have not been written down or played before that moment. This solo can highlight a performer’s skills or the particular qualities of an instrument. It can be played unaccompanied or over an accompaniment provided by a band.

instrumental section – A section in a song or piece of music where the singing stops and only instruments are playing.




interlude – A passage of contrasting music between sections of a piece.

interval – The distance between two fixed notes.

introduction – The opening section of a song or piece of music.

key (see also: **key signature**) – The scale or group of pitches that a piece of music is based on, with a ‘home note’ called the ‘tonic’. When a particular scale is used within a piece of music, it is said to be ‘in the key of’ that scale.

key signature – In written notation, a key signature indicates what key the music is in. It is made up of sharp or flat symbols (or an absence of symbols) placed after the clef at the beginning of a staff. For example:

- C major/A minor: 
- G major/E minor: 
- F major/D minor: 

kignits (Qeñets) – The melodic modes (scales) of Amhara traditional music, from Ethiopia.

kumi-daiko – A Taiko ensemble, originating in Japan. The Japanese phrase ‘kumi-daiko’ (組太鼓) translates as ‘a set of drums’. Taiko (太鼓) refers to a range of Japanese percussion instruments and is also the name of the percussion performance itself.

ledger line – In written music, when a note is higher or lower than the staff and you run out of lines to place the note on, a ledger line extends the staff to help show exactly which note to play. A ledger line is a bit like a stepping stone for each note, like this:



legato – An Italian term meaning ‘smooth’, to indicate a particular type of musical articulation. To perform legato, notes are played in a smooth, connected and flowing way, without breaks between each note. To indicate legato in a score, the word ‘*legato*’ may be written below the staff, or the notes may have a curved line above or below called a ‘slur’:



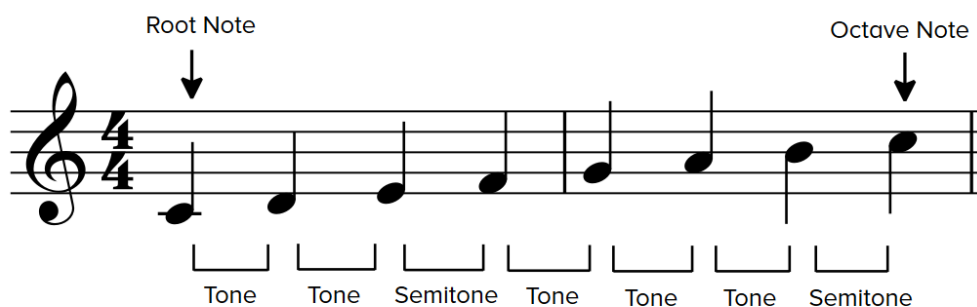
lick – A recognisable pattern or phrase used or quoted by musicians, often in a solo or ad-lib.

loop – A musical idea or sound that has been recorded or sampled using electronic music software, and repeated over and over in a track.

Lullaby – A quiet, gentle song sung to calm children and encourage them to sleep.

lyrics – The words in a song.

major scale – A scale is a set of notes in order of their pitch. If the pitch is becoming higher, it is an ascending scale. If the pitch is becoming lower, it is a descending scale. The steps between the pitches are measured in tones (or ‘whole steps’) and semitones (or ‘half steps’) and are different in different types of scales. A major scale is often described as having a bright or happy sound. It has seven different notes, plus an eighth note which is the same as the first (root) note, but an octave higher. It goes up in these steps (a C major scale is shown in this example):



makam (Turkish) – The system of melodic modes used in traditional Turkish music. Each makam has different combinations of notes that create a different mood for the listener.

maqam (Arabic) – The system of melodic modes used in traditional Arabic music. Each maqam has different combinations of notes that create a different mood for the listener.

marching band – An ensemble dominated by loud brass and percussion instruments with roots in the military. The performers march as they play their instruments and often perform at sports events and parades.

mariachi band – An ensemble that plays Mariachi music, a style of regional Mexican music. Mariachi instruments may include violins, trumpets, vihuela (a type of high-pitched guitar) and guitarrón (a type of acoustic bass guitar). All performers take turns singing lead and backing vocals.

MC – Someone who speaks, chants, raps and sings over the music played by a DJ. They are often the point of connection between the audience and the DJ.

melodic – Relating to or having melody.

melody – A sequence of pitches and rhythms; another name for a tune.

metre – How many beats there are in each bar; where the strong beats fall in a bar. The time signature tells us what the metre is.

mezzo forte – Moderately loud dynamics. The musical symbol for this is *mf*

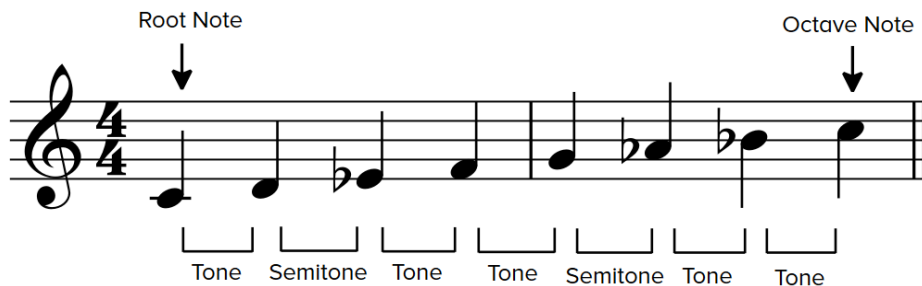
mezzo piano – Moderately quiet dynamics. The musical symbol for this is *mp*

microtone – A musical interval that is smaller than a semitone.

minim – A two-beat note (half the length of a semibreve and worth the same as two crotchets). A minim symbol has an oval, hollow notehead with a stem attached to it, which can go up or down. Here are two examples of a minim in a written score:



minor scale – A scale is a set of notes in order of their pitch. If the pitch is becoming higher, it is an ascending scale. If the pitch is becoming lower, it is a descending scale. The steps between the pitches are measured in tones (or ‘whole steps’) and semitones (or ‘half steps’) and are different in different types of scales. A minor scale is often described as having a dark or sad sound. It has seven different notes, plus an eighth note which is the same as the first (root) note, but an octave higher. It goes up in these steps (a C natural minor scale is shown in this example):



mode – A type of scale or group of notes played in a specific order within an octave, used to make a melody. Each mode evokes its own mood and has a unique colour and sound.

modulation – When the music moves into a different key.

motif – A small musical idea that returns throughout a piece of music and helps to tie together larger musical sections; a recurring theme.

movement – A self-contained section of a symphony or other large musical composition.

music industry – The music industry is made up of individuals and organisations who produce, perform and sell music to earn money.

music theory – The musical rules of a particular musical style. For example, in Jazz music theory, you might talk about the rules of harmony, melody and rhythm, or in Hindustani music theory, you might talk about the rules of rāga and tala.

note – Notes are the pitches you play in a scale. In written music, ‘note’ is also the word for a symbol telling you to make a sound. Look at the definitions for semiquaver, quaver, crotchet, dotted crotchet, minim, dotted minim and semibreve to see what different kinds of notes look like.

octave – The distance between two musical notes that have the same letter name and are eight notes apart.

off-beat – A note played between beats or on the weak beats of a bar – literally ‘off the beat’. For example, if a piece of music has four beats in a bar ie ‘1, 2, 3, 4’, to clap on the off-beat you would clap on the weak beats: two and four, not one and three.

opera – A dramatic form of vocal and orchestral music that originated in Europe. It is usually performed on a stage in an opera house.

oral tradition – When knowledge is passed from one person to another, or from one generation to the next, without using written documentation. This includes learning by ear; through dancing, singing and playing instruments; and through stories or conversation.

orchestra – A large group of musicians, often made up of sections with different instrument families: strings, woodwind, brass and percussion. There are different types of orchestras, such as large symphony orchestras and smaller chamber orchestras.

orchestration – How a composer arranges a composition for an orchestra, within a written score. The composer or orchestrator makes decisions about how the music will be played. They think about how each orchestral instrument sounds, and then decide which instruments will play the different melodies, rhythms and chords within a particular section of music.

original – The first ever version of a song or piece of music.

ornamentation – Decorating a melody with pitch-bending, extra notes and other techniques.

ostinato – A short, repeated melodic pattern.

outro – The closing section of a song.

overture – A piece of music played at the beginning of an opera that introduces the main musical themes.

pedal – A note that is held while music plays above or below it.

pentatonic – A melodic mode (scale) of five notes.

perform – Sing and play instruments to an audience.

phrase – A musical sentence.

pianissimo – Very quiet dynamics. The musical symbol for this is *pp*

piano (dynamics) – Quiet, soft dynamics. The musical symbol for this is *p*

pitch – The position of a single sound within a range of high and low sounds. A musical note indicates a pitch.

pitch bending – When a musician or vocalist bends the pitch of a note up or down.

pizzicato – A performance direction to indicate when the strings of a string instrument are plucked with the tip of the finger. This is the symbol for it in a written score:



powwow – A Native American social gathering with lots of singing and dancing.

producer – The musician who takes charge of a session in a recording studio. In Electronic Dance Music and Hip Hop, this is the musician who composes using a DAW and other studio production techniques.

programme music – Music that describes a scene or tells a story.

protest song – A type of song associated with movements for social or environmental change, such as standing up for human rights. Protest songs can be in any style of music, from Rock to Pop to Soul.

quarter tone – A pitch halfway between the individual notes of a chromatic scale, or a musical interval that is equal to one-quarter of a whole tone and half of a semitone.

quaver – A half-beat note (half the length of a crotchet). A quaver symbol has an oval, filled-in notehead with a stem attached to it, which can go up or down. It also has a curled tail or flag attached to the stem. A group of quavers are connected together with a line called a 'beam'. Here are a few examples of a quaver in a written score, grouped in different ways:



question and answer – See **call and response**.

radio station – A broadcasting channel on the radio. Record companies often send music written by the artists that they represent to radio stations so that the music will be played and promoted.

rāga – A melodic framework for improvisation used in Indian Classical and Folk music. Similar to a scale, mode or maqam, a rāga is made up of a group of notes played in certain patterns, which evoke particular moods, times of day and seasons.

rallentando – A performance direction that tells a performer to gradually slow down, giving the feeling of the music naturally fading away. It is the opposite of accelerando. This is the symbol for it in a written score:



rap – A very rhythmic, often syncopated vocal style that brings out the musicality of lyrics, sometimes involving rhyme. Words are generally spoken or chanted, but sometimes sung.

record – A large vinyl (a type of plastic) disc that plays music. Tiny grooves from the sound waves of the music are cut into the surface of the disc. These are picked up by the needle of a turntable and turned back into sound.

record company/label – A company that pays artists to record and release music. In return, they take a cut of the sales profit from the music that an artist releases.

recorded music – Music made specifically for recording, to be played through headphones, speakers or a sound system.




recording – Capturing sound on a device so it can be played back.


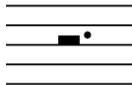

register – The range of notes that can be played on an instrument. It's common to refer to the lower, middle, or upper registers of an instrument when talking about where a note sits within the vocal or instrument's range.

remix – When a track is changed in some way from its original version, for example by adding a new beat, adding effects or taking sound away.

resonate – When an object vibrates and produces a sound. Musical instruments resonate when they are played, creating a sound.

rest – Silence, where you don't play. Rests have many different musical symbols that correspond to different note lengths, for example:

-  Semiquaver rest (quarter-beat rest)
-  Quaver rest (half-beat rest)
-  Crotchet rest (one-beat rest)

-  Minim rest (two-beat rest)
-  Dotted minim rest (three-beat rest)
-  Semibreve rest (four-beat rest) or whole bar rest (no notes in a bar)

riff – A short, repeated melodic phrase played in musical styles such as Pop and Rock music. Riffs are often played on a lead instrument such as a guitar, piano or saxophone.

ritardando – A performance direction that tells a performer to deliberately delay the beat, so the music slows down. It is the opposite of accelerando. This is the symbol for it in a written score:



rondo – This refers to music with an ABACA structure. Pieces with this structure are sometimes given the name ‘Rondo’.

rubato – When a performer chooses to slow down or speed up a musical phrase to make it sound more expressive.

sacred and ceremonial music – Music that is made in a spiritual or devotional setting.

sampling – Taking audio clips from existing recordings and using them to create new songs. Often used in Hip Hop and Pop music.

sargam – Where each note of the scale is given its own syllable in Indian Classical and Folk music traditions. From note one to note seven, the scale is Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni (Sa).

SATB – An acronym meaning Soprano (highest voice), Alto (higher middle voice), Tenor (lower middle voice) and Bass (low voice). It is used to describe types of choirs and may be written on choral music scores.

scale – A set of notes going up or down, one note after the other, in order of their pitch. If the pitch is becoming higher, it is called an ‘ascending scale’. If the pitch is becoming lower, it is called a ‘descending scale’.

scat singing – A form of singing where the voice is used as an instrument to improvise melodies and rhythms, rather than singing words. The sounds made are usually wordless vocal noises and/or syllables called ‘vocables’. It was developed by Jazz singers in the early 20th century, who wanted to solo like the saxophones and trumpets in their bands.

scratching – Physically moving a vinyl record on a turntable to create a rhythmic sound effect.

section – Part of a song or piece, eg verse, chorus, introduction.

secular music – Music that is not religious.

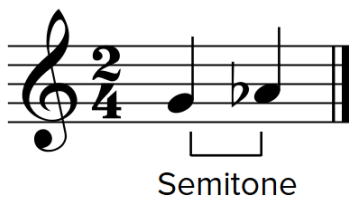
semibreve – A four-beat note (worth two minims or four crotchets). A semibreve symbol has an oval, hollow notehead. Here are two examples of a semibreve in a written score:



semiquaver – A quarter-beat note (half the length of a quaver). A semiquaver symbol has an oval, filled-in notehead with a stem attached to it, which can go up or down. It also has two curled tails or flags attached to the stem. A group of quavers are connected together with two lines called ‘double beams’. Here are a few examples of a semiquaver in a written score, grouped in different ways:



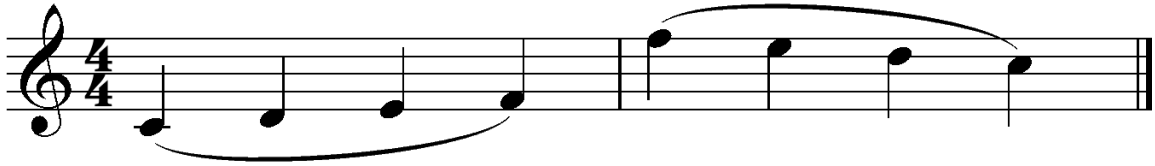
semitone – A musical interval that describes a semitone apart from a previous note. A semitone is half of a whole tone. These two notes, G and A \flat , are a semitone apart:



sharp – A musical symbol \sharp which means ‘higher in pitch’. When placed in front of a note, it raises the note in pitch by one semitone. It can also show what key a piece of music is in when included in the key signature at the beginning of a staff. It is the opposite of a flat symbol.

slur (verb) – Moving between notes without a gap between them.

slur (noun) – In written music, a slur mark is a curved line that groups notes together. It is used to tell performers not to leave gaps between the notes (legato), or to show which notes make a whole musical phrase. For example:



solfège/solfa – Where each note of the scale is given its own syllable. From note one to note seven, the scale goes: Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti (Do). Hand signs can be used to represent each note.

solo – When you sing or play on your own. It can also refer to music for a single performer, or a single performer playing the main melody while accompanied by other musicians.

sonata – A substantial, large-scale piece, usually made up of several movements and played by a solo instrument or small group of instruments.

sound effects – An effect changes a sound in some way, for example, making it sound fuzzy (distortion), making it echo (echo or delay) or making it sound like it's in a huge room (reverb). A sound effect can also be a new or unfamiliar sound added to the music to create a certain atmosphere.

sound engineer – The person who works with all the audio equipment and operates a mixing desk to get the sound right at a music venue or in a recording studio.

sound system (Jamaican) – A group or crew of DJs, engineers and MCs playing music on a large stack of handmade speakers.

sound system (technology) – A set of equipment, such as a turntable, amplifier and speakers, for the reproduction and amplification of sound.

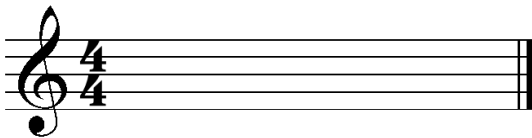
sound wave – When something makes a sound, it makes the air next to it wobble, which makes the air next to that wobble. This wave of wobbling air ripples out, just like a ripple in water. When that ripple reaches our ear, our eardrum vibrates and tells our brain that it is a sound. This ripple of air from a sound is called a 'sound wave'.

soundtrack – The music used in a film or TV show.

staccato – An Italian term meaning ‘detached’, to indicate a particular type of musical articulation. To perform staccato, individual notes are played in a short, spiky way and are clearly separated from one another. In a written score, a variety of symbols can be used to tell a performer to play staccato, such as the word ‘**staccato**’ written below the stave, or a small dot above or below a note:



stave – The main set of five lines and spaces where music is written, each of which represents a different note:



steel pan band – An ensemble of steel pans and other percussion instruments, originating in Trinidad and Tobago. They are now popular across the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

streaming platform – An online site or app that allows you to stream music on its database.

string quartet – A small ensemble consisting of four string instruments: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola and Cello.

studio production – When music has been recorded and mixed in a recording studio, usually to a very high standard.

style – A type or genre of music, eg Blues or Rock.

style indicator – An identifier that shows us the genre of the music.

suite – A collection of pieces intended to be performed together; often an adaptation of an opera or ballet score for the concert hall (ie a shorter version with no singing or dancing).

swing – A performance direction used when playing Jazz or Jazz-inspired music. This is when you slightly lengthen the first note and slightly shorten the next note, instead of playing the notes exactly the same length. This gives the rhythm a different, more relaxed, ‘swung’ feel. This performance direction is used in Swing music, a style of Jazz.

symphony – A substantial, large-scale piece, usually made up of several movements and played by a symphony orchestra.

syncopation – Where there is a lot of rhythmic variety in the music and the strong beats occur in unexpected places, making the music sound off-beat.

tala – A rhythmic cycle between four and 16 beats in Indian Classical and Folk traditions.

tenor clef – See **clef**.

ternary – This refers to a three-part structure, often described as ‘ABA’.

theme – A repeating musical idea (or tune) that is important within a piece.

theme and variations – A type of musical structure where a main theme, idea or melody is repeated, but something about it is changed each time it is repeated.

time signature – Numbers on the staff at the start of a piece of music that show you the type and number of beats in a bar, or how the pulse is grouped. The top number tells you how many beats there are in a bar and the bottom number tells you how long each beat is.

- In this example, there are three crotchet beats in a bar:

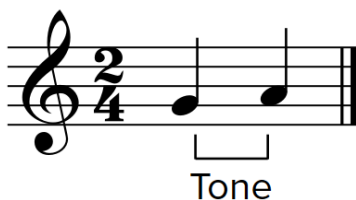


- In this example, there are six quaver beats in a bar:



tonality – A harmonic structure that centres a major or minor home key from which other keys can be explored.

tone (in a scale) – A musical interval that describes a whole tone apart from a previous note. A tone is equal to two semitones. These two notes, G and A, are a tone apart:



tone (timbre) – The sound quality of an instrument or voice. You might talk about something that has a warm tone, or a nasal tone.

tonic – The first note of a scale (giving the scale its name) and the tonal centre (home key) of a piece of music.

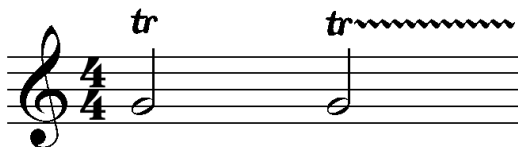
treble – A word used to describe sounds with a high frequency or pitch. In music, this means high notes, which are written on a staff with a treble clef.

treble clef – See **clef**.

tremolo – Repeating a single note very quickly, creating a shimmering, ‘trembling’ effect. In a written score, diagonal lines on the stems of notes show that they should be played with tremolo:



trill – Alternating very quickly between two notes that are usually close to each other. A trill can be written in a score as either of the following symbols:



triplet – Three notes played in the same amount of time as you would normally play two. For example:



turntable – A circular revolving plate attached to a record deck or record player, on which a record is placed and played. Sometimes used as another name for a record deck or record player.

turntablism – The art of DJing with turntables.

unison – When the same melodic line is played or sung by two or more instruments or voices at the same time.

upbeat – The final beat or note of the last bar, leading into the first beat of the next bar.

verse – The verse is a contrasting section of a song that builds towards the chorus. In general, each verse in a song will have the same melody, but different words.

vibrato – Making a note vibrate (or wobble) up and down in pitch very slightly. For example, when an opera singer is making that famous big wobbly sound, they are using vibrato. Similarly, when a violinist makes a note shake to make the music sound more passionate, they are using vibrato.

virtuoso – An exceptionally skilled musician.

vocables – Sung syllables that have no literal meaning, such as ‘shoo’, ‘bee’ or ‘ooo’.

walking bass – Often heard in styles of Jazz music, when a bassist plays steady crotchets or quavers, outlining the chords of the tune.

Waltz – A type of music that is in triple time, where the strong beat is on the first beat of the bar.