

Music Glossary



EYFS

These words should be taught throughout the year in Music lessons in Nursery/Reception.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Chant	A melody in which several words or syllables are sung in one tone.	Quiet	The volume at which a song is sung or played.
Fast	When a piece of music goes quickly.	Repeat	A melody or words that are repeated throughout.
High	The way you use your voice to create a sound.	Sing	Using your voice to create sounds.
Instrument	Something that is used to play a song. Our voice is also an instrument.	Slow	When a piece of music goes slowly.
Low	The way you use your voice to create a sound.	Song	A piece of music, where there may be singers or not.
Loud	The volume at which a song is sung or played.		

Year 1

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from EYFS.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Beat	The steady timing in a piece of music.	Quiet	The volume of which a song is sung or played at.
Beater	A object used to play instruments.	Rhythm	A pattern of long and short notes in a song.
Cymbal	A musical instrument made from a round brass plate which can be struck against one another or hit with a stick.	Shaker	A musical instrument used to create a rhythm.
Drum	A percussion instrument that is sounded by striking it with a stick or the hands.	Tambourine	A percussion instrument resembling a drum with metal discs around the edge.
Glockenspiel	An instrument from the percussion family. These have metal notes.	Tempo	The timing or speed of the music.
High (sound)	The sound of which something is sung or played at.	Triangle	An instrument that is part of the percussion family and is hit by a metal bar.
Listen	The conscious focus on a piece of music.	Tune	A melody that characterizes a piece of music.
Low (sound)	The sound of which something is sung or played at.	Voice	The instrument you use to sing a song.
Perform	The act of playing an instrument or singing to an audience.		

Year 2

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from previous years where deemed necessary.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Accompany	The musical part of music that provides the rhythm.	Phrase	A musical meter built from motifs, figures and cells to form a melody.
Body Percussion	Using your body to perform sounds as an accompaniment.	Pitch	How high or low a sound is.
Chord	Three or more notes played together at the same time.	Pulse	The steady beat in a piece of music.
Claves	A rhythmic pattern used as a tool for temporal organization.	Tuned percussion	Instruments that have been pitched to particular notes.
Compose	The structure and creation of writing a new piece of music.	Untuned percussion	Instruments that are unable to produce a specific pitch.
Duration	An amount of time of how long or short a note, phrase, section or composition lasts.	Volume	How loud or quiet a piece of music is played or performed at.
Ostinato	A repeated rhythm or phrase.	Lyrics	The words that make up a song.
Percussion	A musical instrument that is sounded by struck or scraped.	Melody	A combination of pitch and rhythm.

Year 3

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from previous years where deemed necessary.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Composer	A person who writes music.	Orchestral instruments	A group of instruments used to form a performance group.
Conductor	A person who conducts an orchestra stresses the musical pulse.	Recorder	A woodwind musical instrument, played similarly to a whistle.
Drone	A sustained tone, usually low in pitch, providing a foundation for a melody.	Scale	A set of musical notes ordered by frequency or pitch.
Duet	A piece of music or song that is performed by 2 people.	Stave	The five lines that musical notes are written on.
Duration	The length of a sound.	Stepwise movement	The melodic motion between notes that are steps apart.
Dynamics	The loudness or softness at which musicians play a section or piece of music.	Structure	The arrangement of a song.
Melodic phrase	A succession of notes forming a distinctive sequence.	Theme	The first melody you hear when listening to a piece of music.
Orchestra	A large instrumental ensemble typical of classical music.	Treble clef	A sign on a piece of music. On piano music, it shows the notes to be played with the right hand.
Orchestration	The study of practise or writing music for an orchestra.	Unison	Two or more musical parts that sound the same pitch.

Year 4

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from previous years where deemed necessary.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Harmony	Two or more notes played or sung together.	Leaping	The difference in pitch between two consecutive notes in a scale.
Improvise	When a piece of part of music is made up on the spot by musicians.	Pentatonic	A musical scale made up of five notes, missing out on the fourth and seventh notes from the eight-note scale.

Year 5

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from previous years where deemed necessary.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Accent	An emphasis, stress or stronger attack placed on a note or set of chords.	Texture	The way different elements of music are layered together.
Bass	The lowest of voices and the lowest harmony in a song.	Timbre	The character or sound quality of a note. Different musical instruments have different timbres.
Note	A symbol that denotes a musical sound.		

Year 6

These new words should be taught throughout the Year as well as recapping key vocabulary from previous years where deemed necessary.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Dictation	Translating unseen rhythms, melodies or chord progressions.	Syncopation	A variety of rhythms played together to create a piece of music.
Interval	A difference in pitch between two sounds.		

Musical Notation Terminology

During Key Stage 2, children will be taught musical notations. This includes reading music from a staff. Key Stage 1 may refer to rhythms and patterns and talk about beats and rests through composition units. Please ensure when you discuss anything to do with notation/beats you use the correct terminology, even in Key Stage 1.

Word	Definition	Word	Definition
Bass clef 	A sign on a piece of written music. On piano music, it identifies the notes to be played with the left hand.	Quaver 	In music, a symbol to show that the note lasts for half a beat.
Crotchet 	A symbol used in written music that represents a note that lasts for one beat.	Semi-breve 	A symbol used in written music to show that a note lasts for 4 beats.
Crotchet rest 	A pause that lasts for one beat.	Semi-breve rest 	A symbol used in written music to show that a pause lasts for 4 beats.
Flat 	In music a flat lowers the pitch by half a note.	Sharp 	In written music, this mark heightens the pitch of a note by half a step.
Minim 	A written note that lasts for two beats.	Time signature 	Used in written music, to show how many beats there are in a bar.
Minim rest 	A pause that lasts for two beats.	Treble Clef 	A sign on a piece of music. On piano music, it shows the notes to be played with the right hand.