

# Music Vocabulary

**Rhythm** A pattern of long and short sounds in music.

**Beat** A main accent or rhythmic pulse.

**Note** A musical sound or the symbol used to write it down.

**Meter** The rhythmic pattern made in music by putting together strong and weak beats.

Each music note has its own shape that tells you its value, or length in time.

Note	Rest	Name	Beats
		Whole	4
		Dotted Half	3
		Half	2
		Dotted Quarter	1 ½
		Quarter	1
		Eighth	½
		Sixteenth	¼

**Staff** A set of five lines and four spaces on which notes are written to indicate their pitch. A clef at the beginning of the staff tells which notes are on which lines.

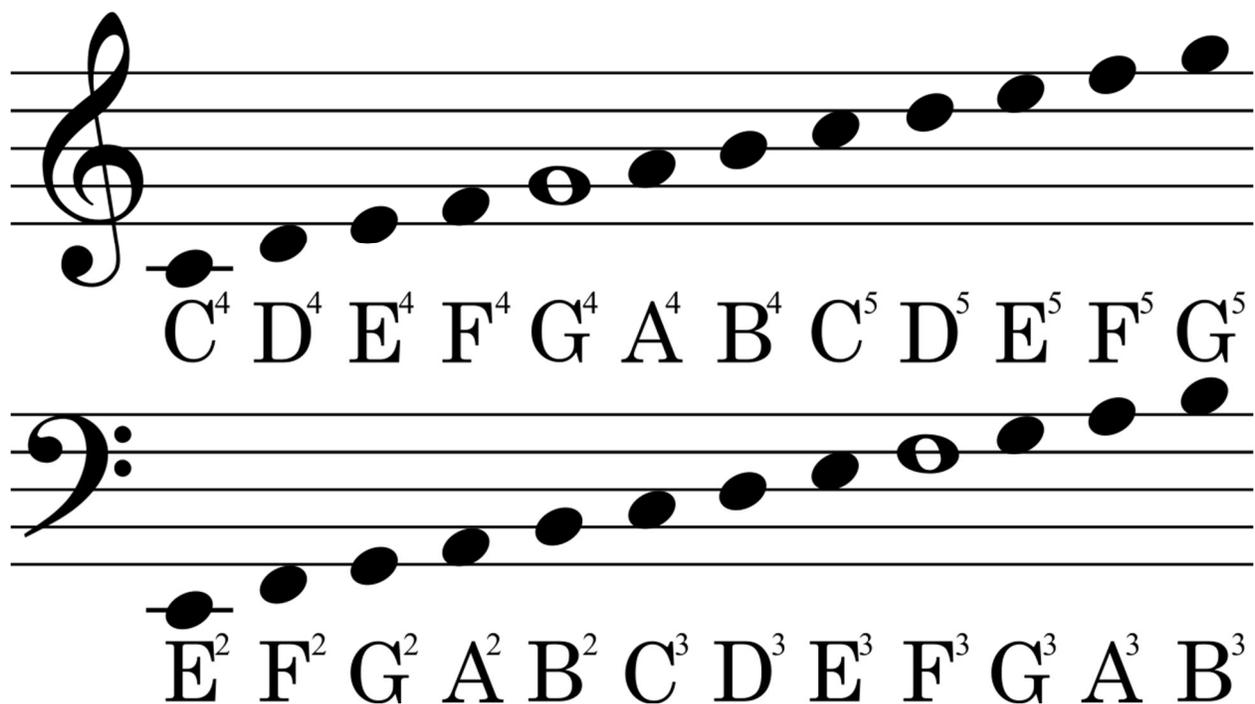
**Pitch** The highness or lowness of a musical tone.

**Clef** A sign put at the start of each line of a piece of music. The clef tells you what pitch the notes on the staff are in.

**Treble** The highest voice in a piece of music written for several voices.

**Bass** The lowest voice or instrument.

**Octave** Eight notes in order (for example, A B C D E F G A is an octave). These seven letters are the only notes. An octave begins and ends on the same note.



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**Scale** A series of notes played one after the other, either from the lowest note to the highest note or from the highest note to the lowest note. There are many different scales.

**Chord** When three or more notes are played at the same time.

**Arpeggio** Playing the notes of a chord quickly one after the other.

**Interval** The difference between two pitches. For example, pitches that are two steps apart are called seconds. There are three different kinds of intervals: major, minor, and perfect.

**Key** The tonality, or scale on which a piece of music is based. The key gets its name from the first note of the scale.

**Major** A stepwise series of whole and half steps arranged: whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half. This creates major intervals at the third sixth, and seventh steps of the scale creating a happy sound.

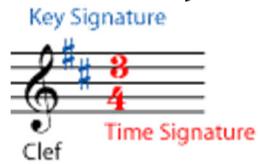
**Minor** A kind of scale or key which has the third note of the scale a half step lower, creating a minor interval and sad sound.

**Measure** This is the space between two lines drawn through the music staff.

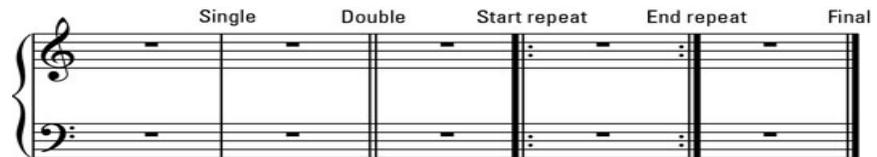
**Finale** Italian for “end.” The final part of a piece of music.

**Key Signature** Sharps and flats at the beginning of each staff or written music that indicate the scale or key in which the piece is written.

**Time Signature** Explains how a piece of music is divided up, how long each note will be, and how many notes will be in each measure. For example, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  time signature means that in each measure there are 3 beats and the quarter note (shown by the 4) gets one of those beats.



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**Dynamics** How loudly or softly to play a piece of music.

**Pianissimo** Italian for “very soft.”

**Piano** Italian for “soft.”

**Mezzo piano** Italian for “half soft,” or moderately soft.

**Mezzo forte** Italian for “half loud,” or moderately loud.

**Forte** Italian for “loud.”

**Fortissimo** Italian for “very loud.”

**Crescendo** Italian for “growing louder.”

**Decrescendo** Italian for “growing softer.”

**Tempo** The speed or pace of music.

**Adagio** The slowest tempo. The Italian translates to comfortable, without hurrying.

**Grave** Slow tempo, Italian for “slow and serious.”

**Largo** Slow tempo

**Andante** A tempo which means moderate speed, a walking tempo.

**Allegro** A fast tempo. Italian for “happy.” To play a piece in a lively manner, at a fast (but not too fast) pace.

**Vivace** A lively tempo, Italian for “full of life.”

**Presto** Tempo that is very quick and fast.

**Accelerando** Italian for “accelerating.” To grow faster and faster.

**Ritard** To gradually slow down.

**Musical Articulations**

**Accent** When you are playing music, to accent a note is to make it stand out from the other notes by playing it differently.

**Dolce** Italian for “sweet.”

**Grazioso** Italian for “graceful.”

**Legato** To play notes smoothly, without stopping between notes.

**Martelé** A bowstroke used when playing stringed instruments which means “hammered.”

**Staccato** To play notes sharply detached or separated from the other notes.

**Melody** Notes that are played one after the other to make a tune.

**Harmony** A combination of pitches sounding together, such as a chord.

**Dissonance** A harsh or disagreeable combination of sounds, or a combination of sounds that creates a feeling of tension needing to be resolved.

**Ensemble** A group of people who sing or play music together.

**Conductor** The leader of a music ensemble.

**Composition** A work of music, literature, or art.

**Composer** A person who writes music, especially as a professional occupation.

**Call & Response** A technique where one musician offers a phrase and another musician answers.

**Fugue** A composition with two or more voices or parts, in which the melody (called the subject), is played by one voice/part then replayed/modified by other voices/parts.