

Musical Terms

1. Accent

An accent is when a specific note or phrase is emphasized with an increase in intensity above other non-accented notes.

2. Adagio

Adagio means slowly in Italian. In music, it signifies that a piece should be played a slower tempo or speed.

3. Allegro

Allegro means cheerful in Italian. In music, it means the music should be played at an upbeat and bright tempo.

4. Alto

Alto is a range of pitches normally assigned to a singer in a choir. The alto range of pitches is below Soprano but higher than the Tenor range.

5. Andante

Andante is used to describe a moderately slow tempo. It's Italian meaning "to-go about" suggests a walking pace to be used in a piece of music.

6. Arpeggio

An arpeggio is when a chord of notes is broken and played in sequence. For example, a C major arpeggio would be played C-E-G-C.

7. Bar

In music, a bar is a subsection of time that's defined by a time signature. For example, a 4/4 [time signature](#) assigns four quarter notes to each bar.

8. Cadence

A [cadence](#) is a sequence of chords used to signify the end of a phrase.

9. Cadenza

A cadenza is a moment in a musical piece where an instrumentalist or singer is given the opportunity to play a solo freely and with artistic license to go outside of a rigid tempo or rhythm.

10. Canon

Canons in music are when a melody is played by one instrument or group of instruments, and then repeated a certain number of bars later by another instrument to overlap the initial melody.

11. Clef

The clef is a [symbol](#) used at the beginning of a piece of sheet music to denote the note values on the staff.

For example, a G clef or treble clef symbolizes that a G is found on the second line of the staff.

12. Coda

A coda is a symbol used in sheet music to denote where the final passage of a piece begins. A piece will include a “da coda” instruction to tell the orchestra when to proceed to the beginning of the final passage.

13. Crescendo

A crescendo is a gradual increase in dynamic volume during a section of music.

14. Da Capo

Da capo is an instruction used in sheet music that tells the band or orchestra to re-start the piece from the beginning and go back to the top.

15. Dal Segno

Dal segno is an instruction used in sheet music that tells the band or orchestra to resume playing the piece from a different section of the piece, usually denoted by a star-like symbol or sign.

16. Diminuendo

The opposite of a crescendo, a diminuendo is a decrease in dynamic volume during a section of music.

17. Fermata

A fermata is a symbol used in sheet music to indicate that a note should be held longer than its standard duration. The length that the note can be held is up to the artist or conductor.

18. Flat

In music, flat refers to the relative tonal quality of a note. A flat note is one half-step below the same natural note in pitch.

19. Forte

Forte is a term used to describe a louder dynamic. Forte should be louder than mezzo-forte but quieter than fortissimo.

20. Fortepiano

Fortepiano is a dynamic instruction that tells an instrumentalist to initially play a note loudly and then quickly decay to a quiet sustained dynamic.

21. Giocoso

Giocoso in music implies that the piece should be played in a fun and carefree manner, most often at a higher tempo.

22. Glissando

A glissando instructs instrumentalists to slide in pitch from note to note, instead of accentuating each note.

23. Glockenspiel

The glockenspiel is a pitched percussion instrument with metal bars that are struck by a hard mallet.

24. Largo/Larghetto

Largo means large in Italian. In orchestral music, it refers to a large and slow-moving pace.

25. Leggero

Leggero means light in Italian. In sheet music leggero means to play lightly, usually at a quicker pace and in a light-hearted manner.

26. Legato

In music legato means to connect each note smoothly without much articulation between notes.

27. Motif

A motif in music refers to a specific melody or series of notes is used in different ways throughout a piece of music or song.

28. Natural

Natural notes in music refer to a note that is neither sharp nor flat. Typically a natural note symbol is used to tell the musician that the note is natural despite the key signature.

29. Nonet

In music, a nonet is a group of nine musicians.

30. Ostinato

Similar to a motif, an ostinato is a rhythmic pattern that repeats throughout a piece of music.

31. Pan

Pan in audio production refers to the stereo direction of the audio signal. When an audio signal is fully panned to the left it will come from the left side of a stereo speaker.

32. Pianissimo

Pianissimo is a dynamic instruction in music that tells musicians to play very softly or quieter. The dynamic range for a pianissimo passage should be quieter than piano, but louder than pianississimo.

33. Pizzicato

Pizzicato means plucked in Italian, it instructs string sections to pluck their instruments instead of bowing them.

34. Quarter tone

A quarter tone is a musical interval that is half the value of a semitone and a quarter of the value of a whole tone.

35. Quintuplet

Similar to a triplet, a quintuplet is a rhythmic notation that instructs players to play five notes in the space a quarter note uses.

36. Rhapsody

A rhapsody is a one-movement piece of music that explores multiple free-flowing sections that don't necessarily relate to one another.

37. Ritardando

A ritardando is a music instruction that requires musicians to gradually slow down in tempo.

38. Rondo

A rondo is a type of orchestral form or song structure. It usually consists of multiple repeating sections.

39. Scherzo

Scherzo refers to a short orchestral piece of music.

40. Sforzando

Sforzando is a dynamic instruction that requires players to play a note abruptly and loudly. The emphasis put on a sforzando note is usually more than an accent.

41. Sharp

A sharp musical note is a semitone higher in intonation than the same natural note.

42. Soprano

A soprano is a range of pitches in the highest register of tones, this range is higher than the alto range of pitches.

43. Sostenuto

Sostenuto means sustained in Italian. In sheet music, sostenuto notes or musical passages require musicians to play each note beyond its normal value.

44. Staccato

Staccato is the opposite of sostenuto. Staccato notes are played much shorter than their normal values.

45. Tempo

Tempo is the pace or speed at which a piece of music is played. Usually, the tempo will define the length and duration of a quarter note.

46. Tenor

Tenor refers to a range of notes between alto and bass.

47. Tremolo

Tremolo is an effect musicians can put on a sustained note to create a trembling sound. Usually, it takes shape in the form of repeating the same note very quickly.

48. Trill

Trill is an instruction to sustain rapid alternation between two different pitches.

49. Vibrato

Vibrato is an effect where the pitch of a note is subtly moved up and down to create a vibrating effect.

50. Vivace

Vivace means lively or vivacious in Italian. Typically this instruction suggests a fast tempo, louder dynamic, and bright playing.

Reference: <https://blog.landr.com/music-terms/>