

## Music Vocabulary

### General vocab

**accent** – where the music is emphasised  
**bar** – a regular section on a staff, separated by vertical lines. Contains the beats  
**beat** – unit of rhythm  
**canon** – tune that is repeated at regular intervals by different performers, but with different starting times  
**chant** – singing in unison, with a similar rhythm to speech  
**choir** – group of singers  
**chord** – 2 or more notes (usually 3) played simultaneously in harmony  
**chord progression** – string of chords played in succession, usually a pattern  
**clef** – a symbol on written music, defining what pitch to play the note  
**crescendo** – getting louder  
**decrescendo** – getting quieter  
**dissonance** – harsh sounds, chords not in harmony  
**downbeat** – first beat in a bar  
**drone** – monotonous tone  
**duet** – two vocalists or instruments  
**dynamics** – how loud or quiet a piece of music is  
**ensemble** – all instruments in an orchestra or all voices in a choir, playing at once.  
**flat** – playing a note a semitone lower than the written one  
**forte** – loud  
**harmony** – pleasing combination of two or more notes, played in background behind melody  
**key** – system of notes based on a key note

### Note lengths






 **Semibreve** – 4 beats  
**Minim** – 2 beats  
**Crotchet** – 1 beat  
**Quaver** – ½ beat  
**Semiquaver** – ¼ beat

**key signature** – the flats and sharps at the beginning of each line, to be played throughout the piece  
**major** – a happy sounding piece of music  
**measure** – a bar in a piece of music  
**minor** – a sad sounding piece of music  
**notation** – a method of writing music  
**octave** – 8 full tones above the key note. Start and end of a scale  
**off beat** – the unaccented beat  
**orchestra** – a large group of instruments, usually classical  
**pulse** – the constant beat in a piece of music  
**rest** – moment when a note is not played for a defined length of time  
**rhythm** – structured groups of accented and unaccented beats  
**scale** – successive notes of a key, ascending or descending  
**sharp** – note to be raised by a semitone  
**slur** – a curve over notes, suggesting that it is slurred together  
**staccato** – short, sharp notes  
**staff** – five horizontal lines on which notes are written  
**tempo** – speed of a piece  
**time signature** – how many beats to a bar  
**unison** – playing or singing the same notes simultaneously  
**vibrato** – quickly alternating between two notes – a wobbly sound

### Common Tempo words

**adagio** – slow and calm  
**allegro** – quick and lively  
**andante** – relaxed and flowing  
**largo** – slow and broad  
**lento** – slow  
**moderato** – a reasonable pace

Rest lengths

-  **Semibreve rest** – 4 beats
-  **Minim rest** – 2 beats
-  **Crotchet rest** – 1 beat
-  **Quaver rest** – 1/2 beat
-  **Semiquaver rest** – 1/4 beat

**rit. (ritardando)** – slowing the tempo (also  
**ral. (ralentissez)**)  
**presto** – quick and lively  
**prestissimo** – extremely quick