

Mini Music Dictionary



Bar Line—a vertical line on a staff, separating measures

Bass Clef Sign— F ; used in conjunction with a staff to indicate the staff is graphing lower notes, mostly below Middle C

Beat—same as a “count”; a unit of time in a measure.

Chord—a set of notes, usually played all at once, in which each note is 2 letters away from the previous note in the chord. Ex: A, C, E, G

Clef—a combination of one of several clef signs and a staff, indicating which notes are being graphed on that staff

Comping—short for “accompanying”; any style of playing that supports a soloist, rather than being the foremost sound in a group

Count—same as a “beat”; a unit of time in a measure.

Diatonic—according to the scale; a method of finding notes based on a scale, rather than the interval between the notes

Eighth Note— ♪ ; a note worth half as much as a quarter note; usually worth 1/2 of a beat, but can vary with different time signatures

Enharmonic equivalent—two note names which make the same sound, for example: G# and A \flat

Flat— b ; a note 1/2 step lower than the note indicated by the accompanying letter: G \flat is 1/2 step lower than G; the opposite of a sharp

Half Note— ♪ ; a note worth twice as much as a quarter note; usually worth 2 beats, but can vary with different time signatures

Half Step—the distance between two notes which are directly next to each other, as C and C#, F# and G, or E and F

Interval—the distance between two notes, usually measured in half-steps

Key—same as “tonality”; a predetermined set of notes to be used for a part of a song or the whole song

Major—a term used to describe many note sets taken from a major scale; often refers to the third note in a set being a half step higher than the minor version

Measure—A set number of beats indicated by a time signature; the distance between each bar line.

Minor—a term used to describe many note sets taken from a minor scale; often refers to the third note in a set being a half step lower than the major version

Mode—a set of notes based directly on a given scale, but beginning and ending in a different place from the original scale

Musical Alphabet—the set of letters used in music: A, B, C, D, E, F, G

Natural—a note which has neither a sharp nor a flat

Quarter Note— ♪ ; a note worth twice as much as an eighth note; usually worth 1 beat, but can vary with different time signatures

Repertoire—the list of songs a musician is prepared to perform

Scale—A set of notes, usually taken directly from a key or tonality

Sharp— \# ; a note 1/2 step higher than the note indicated by the accompanying letter: G# is 1/2 step higher than G; the opposite of a flat

Sheet Music—Written music in which notes are written on staves with note types and measures that indicate when and where to play each note.

Staff—the 5 lines (and four resulting spaces) on which music is written for sheet music.

Technique—the physical actions that apply only to a particular instrument

Time Signature—two numbers, one written on top of the other, usually at the beginning of sheet music, indicating how a musician is to count that piece of music. The top number represents how many beats are in each measure; the bottom number indicates what kind of note gets one beat.

Tonality—same as “key”; a predetermined set of notes to be used for a part of a song or the whole song

Treble Clef Sign— C ; used in conjunction with a staff to indicate the staff is graphing higher notes, mostly above Middle C

Triad—a chord which only has 3 notes

Turn-around—chords used at the end of a song or phrase, used to transition back into a part of the song

Whole Note— ♩ ; a note worth twice as much as a half note; usually worth 4 beats, but can vary with different time signatures