



MUSIC GLOSSARY

FOR THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN P–10 MUSIC SYLLABUS

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Glossary

For the purposes of the Music Pre-primary–Year 10 syllabus, the following definitions will apply.

12-bar blues

Standard chord progression and musical form used in jazz and contemporary music. In its simplest form (there are many variations), the progression uses the primary triads from the major key in the following pattern: I | I | I | I | IV | IV | I | I | V | IV | I | I.

accent

An emphasis placed on a particular note or series of notes. Indicated by a symbol above or below the note (e.g. $\overset{\sim}{\bar{r}}$ $\overset{\wedge}{\bar{r}}$ \bar{r}), or an abbreviation, such as *sf*, which stands for *sforzando* and indicates to play the note in a sudden strong and forceful manner.

accidental

A symbol placed before a note to indicate an alteration of its pitch. A sharp (#) raises a note one semitone, a flat (b) lowers a note one semitone and a natural (♮) restores a note to its original pitch.

accompaniment

A part in a musical work that usually provides harmonic support and rhythmic structure for the main melody or lead. It also describes the composed music, arrangement or improvised performance that accompanies and supports the soloist or main melodic part. The accompaniment can be provided by a single instrument or part, or an entire ensemble.

aesthetic

In Music, the subjective responses by which music is perceived and judged can be relevant to genre/style/time/place. Aesthetics relates to the principles and science of what engages our sensory attention and leads us to respond in particular ways.

anacrusis

An incomplete bar at the beginning of a musical work or phrase. The remaining value of this incomplete bar is accounted for in the final bar. Also referred to as upbeat or pick-up.

arpeggio

A type of broken chord where the notes of the block chord are played in ascending or descending order. The process of converting a block chord to an arpeggio is referred to as arpeggiation.

arrangement

The process of making creative choices to modify a music work. For example, it could be arranged for and performed by a different combination of voices or instruments, or arranged/performed in a different musical style.

articulation

The way a note is sung or played. See *accent*, *legato* and *staccato*.

atonal

Term used to describe a musical work that has no clear tonic or tonal centre.

audience

Individuals or groups of people who experience music in a range of settings (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement.

audience behaviour

The expectations or conventions which determine the appropriate way for an audience to experience and respond to a musical performance.

augmentation

Lengthening the durations of all the notes in a melody by the same factor (e.g. doubling).

augmented

May refer to:

- interval: a major or perfect interval that is widened by one semitone (e.g. C-E#); or
- triad: a major triad with the fifth degree raised by one semitone (e.g. C-E-G#).

aural skills

Hearing and listening skills that students develop to identify and discriminate sounds in Music.

balance

The consideration of the volume of voices and/or instruments in a musical work or ensemble to achieve an overall sound that is clear. For example, accompanying parts may be softened to ensure a lead part can be clearly heard.


bar

The pitches, rhythms and rests occurring between two bar lines on a musical staff. The length of a bar is usually determined by the time signature/metre. Also referred to as a measure.

bar line

Vertical lines that divide the musical staff into bars of certain length, usually in accordance with a time signature.

bass clef

The clef used by lower instruments/parts, also called the F clef () as it indicates the location of the F note on the staff.

beat

The unit of measurement of rhythmic pulse in music. Beats are organised and emphasised according to time signature and tempo.

binary

Organisation of a musical work into two contrasting sections (AB), both of which are usually repeated. The sections can be the same length (simple binary: AB) or different lengths (extended binary: AB/AB). A small part of the A section may return (rounded binary: ||: A :||: B A :||).

blend

The adjustment of the timbre of different voices/instruments within an ensemble, in order to achieve a group sound in which no one part dominates the others.

blues scale

A six-note scale, comprising a minor 3rd, perfect 4th, augmented 4th/diminished 5th, perfect 5th and minor 7th (e.g. C E \flat F G \flat G B \flat). This scale is prevalent in jazz and contemporary music.

bridge

A section that links two or more sections of a musical work, also called a transition passage, in which new musical material is usually introduced. Bridge also refers to the B section in AABA form. In contemporary music, sometimes also referred to as middle 8.

cadence

A progression of chords (usually two) that is used to end a phrase, section or musical work.

call and response

A melodic or rhythmic pattern consisting of alternating sections of calls – or questions – usually improvised by a leader, and responses that are sung or played by an individual or group. The response, or answer, is different from the improvised call and is usually not an echo.

canon

A compositional technique where a melody is exactly imitated by one or more voices/instruments after a specified duration (e.g. after two beats, or a whole bar).

chant

The repetitive rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds, using a limited pitch set.

chord

A collection of two or more notes played simultaneously. Root position refers to the standard organisation of the tonic note with two notes stacked above (usually a third and fifth above the tonic). A first inversion chord contains the same notes but starts on the third, and a second inversion chord starts on the fifth. Chords can have added notes, such as a seventh, and can be identified and described using Roman numerals (e.g. V, I, I \flat) or chord names (e.g. C major, Cmaj, C⁹, C/E).

chorus

May refer to

- musical form: a section of a song that is usually repeated after each verse. The chorus usually remains unchanged, alternating with verses, which often feature different lyrics. In jazz, a chorus is usually a single statement of the harmonic/melodic pattern that repeats throughout with some variation. See head.
- group of musicians: a large group of singers, such as an opera or orchestral chorus.

chromatic

May refer to

- notes: notes not belonging to the diatonic scale, or the prevailing scale in a musical work
- harmony: chords with one or more notes not belonging to the prevailing scale in a musical work
- scale type. See chromatic scale.

chromatic scale

A twelve-note scale with all notes a semitone apart.

circle of fifths

A representation of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, arranged to show closely related keys (those that share mostly common notes, e.g. C major and G major). In composition, the circle of fifths can be employed to select a suitable key for modulation or a series of modulations. Also referred to as the circle of fourths and the cycle of fourths/fifths.

clef

Symbol usually placed at the beginning of each musical staff to indicate the location of a particular note. See bass clef and treble clef.


coda

A section that occurs in addition to the defined form to finish a musical work.

compositional devices

Techniques that composers use to create, develop, manipulate and enhance their musical ideas. See augmentation, call and response, diminution, imitation, inversion, ostinato, pedal, riff and sequence.

compound time

Compound time (e.g. $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{9}{8}$ $\frac{12}{8}$) is organised into dotted beats that subdivide evenly into three or six
(.

consonance

The effect of stability and agreement made by certain combinations of musical sounds. The concept is subjective, relative to the musical context and changes over time. The opposite of dissonance.

contemporary music

Contemporary music encompasses popular music from the 1950s to the present day. It is predominantly commercial in nature and is constantly evolving through the influence of youth culture and the emergence of new artists and styles.


context

The setting and circumstances (e.g. time period, purpose, place, culture and style) in which music has been composed and performed.

copyright

The exclusive right or license to the ownership of material; the control over exploitation of any work by another person.


crescendo

Gradually getting louder, usually indicated by the abbreviation *cresc.* or the  symbol.

culture

The values, attitudes, customs, practices, language and conventions commonly shared by a particular group that form a part of their group identity and contribute towards a sense of shared understanding.

decrescendo

Gradually getting softer, usually indicated by the abbreviation *decresc.* or the  symbol.

diatonic

Intervals, chords, harmonies and musical passages made up of the notes of the prevailing key. The opposite of chromatic.

diminished

May refer to

- interval: a minor interval that is decreased by one semitone (e.g. A-C \flat); or
- triad: a minor chord with the fifth degree lowered by one semitone (e.g. C-E \flat -G \flat).

diminution

Shortening the durations of all the notes in a melody by the same factor (e.g. halving).

dissonance

The effect of tension or disturbance made by certain combinations of musical sounds. The concept is subjective, relative to the musical context and changes over time. The opposite of consonance.

dotted note

A dot after a note or rest extends the note or rest by half its original value. For example, a dotted minim (♩.) has a value of three crotchet beats and a dotted crotchet (♩.) has a value of one and a half crotchet beats.

drone

A note or chord sustained throughout all, or most, of a musical work. Also, the part of a musical instrument that is used to produce a drone (e.g. in bagpipes).

dynamics

The relative volume (loudness) of sound. Usually indicated by terminology or symbols, including; pianissimo/very soft (*pp*), piano/soft (*p*), mezzo piano/moderately soft (*mp*), mezzo forte/moderately loud (*mf*), forte/loud (*f*), fortissimo/very loud (*ff*).

elements of music

The most important components or building blocks of music. See dynamics, expression, form/structure, key, key signature, pitch, rhythm, texture, timbre and tonality.

ensemble

May refer to

- groups: a group of musicians or instruments (e.g. orchestra, choir, concert band, rock band or jazz band), or
- musicianship: the degree to which a group of musicians plays with appropriate balance, blend and coordination of articulation and expression.

expression

The aspects of musical performance associated with the personal response or interpretation of the performer. In musical works, expression is specified in varying degrees by the composer. See expressive elements.

expressive elements

Particular kinds of emphasis or colour applied to notes that alter or enhance the overall sound and interpretation of music. See articulation, dynamics, tempo and timbre.

form/structure

The plan or design of a musical work. Often defined by identifying sections of the work and describing the similarities and differences between sections. See 12-bar blues, binary, rondo, ternary, and theme and variations.

found sound sources

Natural and manufactured objects that can be used to create sound.

guitar chord symbol

Symbol illustrating the finger position of a chord on the fretboard of a guitar. Includes the chord name and the illustration, e.g.

**harmonic/chord progression**

A sequence of chords that is the basis for a musical work.

harmonising

May refer to

- performing: singing or playing in such a way as to form harmony with the melody notes
- composing and arranging: the process of assigning chord notes to different parts of a musical ensemble, or solo instrument capable of performing multiple simultaneous notes. The chords may be listed explicitly or may be inferred from the melody.

harmony

The simultaneous sounding of two or more notes or pitches and the resulting relationship between them. As an element of music, harmony primarily refers to the chords and/or chord progression/s that are the basis of a musical work.

head

In jazz, the melody and its accompanying harmonic progression, usually notated as a single staff for the melody with chord symbols above. The head typically alternates with sections of improvisation which are based on the head's harmonic progression. Also referred to as chorus.

homophonic

Musical texture describing a single melodic layer supported by accompaniment.

hook

A memorable melodic or rhythmic pattern or idea that is repeated several times throughout a musical work, common in jazz and contemporary music.

imitation

The repetition of a melody, phrase or idea by a different voice or instrument.

improvisation

Spontaneously extending and varying music ideas in response to initial material or responses invented by other performers in an ensemble.

interval

The distance between two pitches (e.g. minor 2nd, semitone or half-step). Intervals may be described as

- compound: intervals greater than an octave (e.g. 9th, 11th)
- harmonic: where the two pitches sound simultaneously
- melodic: where the two pitches sound one after another.

intonation

The accuracy of pitch when playing or singing, or the pitch accuracy of a musical instrument.

introduction

The beginning of a musical work. May be related to the musical material of the following sections, but not necessarily. Also referred to as intro. Not all musical works include an introduction.

inversion

Refers to intervals, chords and melodic patterns that can be turned and played upside down. For example, an inverted interval is when the lower note is moved to become the top note, and an inversion in a chord is when the positioning of the notes changes so that the bottom note becomes the top note.

irregular metre

Irregular metre (e.g. $\frac{5}{8}$ $\frac{7}{4}$) is any organisation of beats into bars that do not divide into either two or three.

jazz

A musical style with its origin in the late 19th century in the United States of America (USA). It is a fusion of African and European musical traditions. Jazz has a heavy reliance on syncopation, swing rhythms, extended chord vocabularies and improvisation.

key

The set of pitches and the tonic/home note (or scale) that are the basis of a musical work, or part of a work.

key signature

The pattern of sharps and flats in a certain order that are placed next to the clef at the beginning of a musical work to indicate the key or scale on which the work is based.

legato

Playing or singing smoothly and well connected. Often indicated in musical notation with a slur.

leger lines

Additional short lines that are added above and below the staff to notate the pitches that fall outside the range of the five-lined staff.

major

The characteristic of an interval, chord or musical work when based on the notes of the major scale.

major scale

A seven-note scale with a particular ordering of pitches and intervals: *d r m f s l t d'*, T T S T T T S, (e.g. C major: C D E F G A B C).

melody

An organised succession of sounds and silences that relate together to create a distinct musical phrase or idea.

minor

The characteristic of an interval, chord or musical work when based on the notes of a minor scale.

minor scale

A group of seven-note scales. Some common types of minor scale include:

- **natural minor** or aeolian mode: *l t d r m f s l* or T S T T S T T
(e.g. E natural minor/aeolian: E F# G A B C D E)

- **harmonic minor**, containing a raised 7th: *l t d r m f s i l'* or T S T T S T + ½ S
(e.g. E harmonic minor: E F# G A B C D# E)
- **jazz minor**, containing a raised 6th and 7th: *l t d r m f i s i l'* or T S T T T T S
(e.g. E jazz minor: E F# G A B C# D# E)
- **melodic minor**, containing a raised 6th and 7th in the ascending octave, which are lowered in the descending octave: *l t d r m f i s i l' s f m r d t l* or T S T T T T S | T T S T T S T
(e.g. E melodic minor: E F# G A B C# D# E D# C# B A G F# E).

mode

A group of scales which use the same set of notes as the major scale, in the same order, starting from one of its seven degrees.

modulation

The process of changing from one key to another during a musical work. Modulation occurs as a process and is not simply an instantaneous switch from one key to another. May or may not involve a change of key signature.

monophonic

Musical texture describing a single melodic layer, or several parts playing in unison or octaves.

motif

A short musical idea. A phrase or melody will usually contain several motifs. Most commonly associated with melody but can also be a rhythmic or harmonic idea. Similar to riff.

notation

Written symbols that represent and communicate sound. Notation can be invented, graphic, conventional, recognisable to a traditional style, time or culture, or digitally created.

ostinato

A repeating pattern, either rhythmic, melodic or a combination of both, that usually has an accompanying role.

outro

A section that occurs in addition to the defined form to finish a musical work. Similar to coda, referred to most often in contemporary music and jazz.

pedal

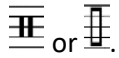
A note repeated or sustained (usually in the bass part) while the harmony in the other parts changes. When pedal appears in a voice other than the bass, it is usually referred to as an inverted pedal. Also referred to as pedal note and pedal point.

pentatonic scale

A five-note scale with a particular combination of intervals. The major pentatonic scale can be derived from the major scale by omitting the fourth and seventh degrees. The minor pentatonic scale can be derived from same set of notes, commencing on the sixth degree. For example, C major pentatonic: *d r m s l d l'*, C D E G A C; A minor pentatonic: *l d r m s l l'*, A C D E G A.

percussion notation

Series of symbols used by non-pitched percussion instruments to represent specific instruments (e.g. bass drum and snare drum) rather than notes on a pitched instrument. Indicated by the symbol

**perfect**

May refer to

- interval: the quality of intervals of a unison, fourth, fifth and octave
- cadence: a chord progression of V-I (or V-i) that ends a section or musical work.

phrase

A musical sentence or thought. An inexact term, phrases can vary greatly in length. In traditional notation, usually indicated by a slur.

pitch

The highness or lowness of sound. Pitch occurs horizontally (as in a melody) and vertically (as in harmony). May also be used to refer to a single musical sound or note. See pitch nomenclature.

pitch nomenclature

The various methods for naming pitches or notes, particularly in relation to scales.

letter names, e.g. C major	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
scale degrees	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
solfège	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti
technical names	tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading note

polyphonic

Musical texture describing two or more rhythmically and melodically independent layers combined together in equal importance.

power chord

A chord made up of the tonic and the fifth scale degrees (usually notated by the number five, e.g. C⁵). Most commonly associated with contemporary music. May be played inverted, making the interval a fourth, and/or with either or both notes doubled. Also referred to as a fifth chord.

practice (noun)

The application of music skills and knowledge to create, represent, communicate and respond.

practise (verb)

Regularly revising, developing and consolidating skills, techniques and repertoire as a class, an ensemble or an individual.

pre-chorus

A section in a musical work that precedes a chorus, usually associated with song form in contemporary music. The function of the pre-chorus is to build to, or prepare for, the chorus. The pre-chorus is often shorter than the surrounding sections and contains material that contrasts from both the verse and the chorus.

primary triads

Triads built on the first (tonic), fourth (subdominant) and fifth (dominant) scale degrees in any major or minor key. Major: I, IV, V and minor: i, iv, V.

repertoire

The collection of pieces, songs or musical works that a musician or group of musicians are able to perform.

rest











A measured period of silence.

rhythm

Organisation of sound and silence using beat, note values/durations and tempo. See rhythm nomenclature.

rhythm nomenclature

The various methods for naming rhythm units or duration of notes.

British	semiquaver	quaver	crotchet	minim	semibreve
American	sixteenth	eighth	quarter	half	whole
beat value in $\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	4
note					
rest					

riff

Short, repeated musical idea which can be rhythmic, melodic or harmonic. Most often used in jazz and contemporary music. Similar to motif.

rondo

Organisation of a musical work into sections with one section repeating and alternating with contrasting sections (ABACA etc.).

round

A musical work for three or more voices/parts. Consisting of a repeating canon in which all voices are musically identical.

scale

An ordered series of pitches with a particular combination of intervals, based around a tonic or home note. See blues, chromatic, major, minor, mode and pentatonic.

score

The notated form of a musical work. Scores can be handwritten, printed or digital. Sometimes referred to as sheet music. Common types of scores include:

- full score: a score containing every instrument/part in full (e.g. orchestral score, big band score). This type of score is uncommon for jazz and contemporary music works
- lead sheet: melody and its accompanying harmonic progression, usually notated as a single staff for the melody with chord symbols (e.g. C⁷) above. Most often used for jazz and contemporary music works

- piano score/reduction: a piano version of a musical work originally composed for an ensemble, or solo instrument other than piano. 'Reduction' implies that two or more parts have been combined into a single piano part, often requiring some modification to the original work
- piano, vocal, guitar (PVG): a score consisting of a piano part (sometimes a reduction), a vocal line (melody with lyrics) and guitar chord symbols and/or TAB. Most often used in contemporary music.


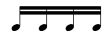
semitone

An interval of a minor second, or half a tone (e.g. E-F).

sequence

A melodic, rhythmic or harmonic pattern. A melodic sequence is a pattern of notes that is repeated at a different pitch. It can also describe the process or product of arranging music digitally using software.

simple time

Simple time (e.g. $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ C) is organised into non-dotted or simple beats (e.g. crotchet or minim) which subdivide evenly into groups of two or four (, .

slur

A curved line connecting two or more notes of different pitch and indicating that they are to be played or sung in a legato manner. For string players, it indicates that all the notes are to be played in the same single bow direction, and for wind and brass players, it indicates that only the first note is to be tongued.

soundscape

A musical work that depicts a picture or event, or creates a mood or atmosphere through sound. These can be composed using graphic, invented or conventional notation.

staccato

Playing or singing notes short and detached, or separated from each other. Represented in notation by a dot above or below the note head.


staff/stave

The five lines and four spaces on which music is written using notation.

style

Musical type or category. Style terms (e.g. jazz, bebop, classical, grunge, rock, flamenco) group music works primarily by the characteristic use of the elements of music. Some style terms are both style and era; for example, classical refers to both a time period (era) and characteristics of the music of that time period (style).

swing

In rhythm, the conversion of even subdivisions (usually the quavers) into long-short pairs. The ratio of the two notes may vary, but typically, the first note is twice the duration of the second, so dividing the beat into thirds. Represented in notation by the symbol . The opposite of swing is straight, where the quavers are to be performed evenly.

syncopation

The displacing of beats and irregular accents resulting from weak beats being emphasised rather than strong beats.

tab notation

Form of notation that illustrates finger position on the strings of a fretted instrument (e.g. guitar) to represent pitch patterns, both melodic and harmonic. Can be combined with rhythmic notation symbols.

technical skills

Proficiencies developed with practise in order to sing or play instruments.

technique

The capacity to control a voice or instrument in order to produce a desired sound.

technologies

The tools and equipment that can be materials for making and responding.

tempo

The speed or pace at which a musical work is performed. Some common tempo indications include: very slow (*largo*), slow (*adagio*), immediately getting slower (*ritenuto/rit.*), gradually getting slower (*rallentando/rall.*, *ritardando/ritard.*), moderate (*moderato*), at an easy walking pace (*andante*), moderately fast (*allegretto*), gradually getting faster (*accelerando/accel.*) fast (*allegro, vivace*), very fast (*presto*). Can be indicated as a metronome marking indicating beats per minute (e.g. ♩=144, or 144BPM).

ternary

Organisation of a musical work into three sections, with a contrasting section in between two repeated sections (ABA).

texture

The layers of sound in a musical work, and the relationship between them. See homophonic, monophonic and polyphonic.

theme and variations

A musical form where a theme is used as the basis of a set of variations (AA¹A²A³, etc.). The theme can be varied in many different ways; for example, by augmentation or diminution, or by changing the rhythm, tonality, key or dynamics.

theory skills

Musical concepts surrounding the elements of music in a written context, rather than an aural context.

tie

A curved line that joins two or more notes of the same pitch, indicating that they should be performed as one unbroken note of the combined value.

timbre

The particular tone, colour or quality that distinguishes one sound from another (e.g. violin from flute). Includes various instrumental techniques (e.g. muting, picking, flutter tonguing), vocal techniques (e.g. *false* *setto*, growling) and electronic effects (e.g. reverb, distortion).

time signature/metre

Indicates how many beats occur in a bar of music and how the rhythm is organised or grouped. See compound time, irregular metre and simple time.

tonality


The character of a musical work as determined by the key or scale upon which the work is based. See atonal, chromatic, major, minor, mode and pentatonic.

tone

May refer to

- interval: the interval of a tone is defined as a major 2nd, or two semitones (e.g. C-D, E ♭ -F)
- pitch: the terms tone, pitch and note are used interchangeably to mean a single musical sound
- timbre: see timbre.


treble clef

The clef used by higher instruments/parts, also called the G clef () as it indicates the location of the G note on the staff.

triad

A chord consisting of three notes: the root note and two notes stacked above (usually a third and a fifth above the root). Triads can have different combinations of major and minor thirds to create different qualities, such as major, minor, diminished or augmented.

triplet

In simple time, three notes played in the time of two of the same value (e.g. ).

unison

Two or more instruments or voices singing or playing at the same pitch, or the same note at a different octave, simultaneously.

verse

See chorus.

western art music

Western art music involves the European tradition of art music and its development over time. This can include music composed outside of Europe but still in the European art music tradition.