

Mastering the Elements of Music with Max

Learning objective: To identify and define the key musical elements (interrelated dimensions of music) and apply them to descriptive analysis.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of musical vocabulary. Max the Monkey has provided these definitions to help you become a musical expert. Read the front of the card, attempt to define the term, then flip to check your answer.

Tempo

The speed at which a piece of music is played, often measured in beats per minute (BPM).

Dynamics

The volume levels of music, ranging from very quiet (pianissimo) to very loud (fortissimo).

Pitch

How high or low a note sounds, determined by the frequency of the sound vibration.

Timbre

The unique quality or 'colour' of a sound that allows us to distinguish between different instruments or voices.

Texture

The way different layers of sound (melodies and harmonies) are combined, such as thick or thin layers.

Duration

The length of time that a sound or a silence lasts, relating to rhythm and note values.

Structure

The overall plan or 'blueprint' of a piece of music, such as verse-chorus form or A-B-A form.

Ostinato

A short, rhythmic or melodic pattern that is repeated continuously throughout a section or piece of music.

Melody

A sequence of musical notes that are musically satisfying; the 'tune' that we often sing along to.

Silence

The absence of sound; used intentionally by composers to create tension or punctuation within a piece.