

Glossary of Terms

"**Music** is an Art, the medium of which is Sound.

All art-forms, such as painting, sculpture, architecture and dancing, are means of self-expression. They differ in the medium of expression. The painter uses lines and color; the musician uses sound.

Musical Sound or **Tone** differs from noise in that it has a regular and fixed number of vibrations per second. Tone possesses four properties—*Pitch*, *Duration*, *Quality* and *Quantity*. Noise is generally lacking in one or more of these properties. There are certain noises which, by their constant repetition, approximate sound; such as those made by a motor or trolley car when speeding up.

The **Pitch** of a sound is determined by the number of vibrations per second. The greater the number of vibrations, the higher the pitch: the fewer, the lower the pitch. If we stretch a rubber band and use a ruler as a movable bridge, we are able, by plucking the band, to make sounds of different pitches. The greater the distance from the ruler to the fixed end of the band, the slower the vibrations and the lower the pitch; the shorter the distance, the faster the vibrations and the higher the pitch. In a piano the longer strings produce the lower sounds.

The **Duration** of a sound is the length of time the vibrations continue.

The **Quality** or **Color** of a sound is determined by the instrument which produces the sound. It is quality which tells us whether, the tone is that of a voice, violin or piano.

The **Quantity** of a sound is determined by the volume; if it is loud or soft.

Musical tones are represented upon paper by **Notes**. The notes are placed upon five parallel, equidistant, horizontal lines, called a **Staff**. Each line and space represents a definite pitch assigned to it by a key-letter called a **Clef**, placed at the beginning of the staff. Only two clefs are commonly used, the G and F, although two types of C clefs are also present*."

*added by editor

(Ear-Training and Sight Singing (Paperback - July, 1921)

by [George A. Wedge](#))

Chord: A combination of 3 or more notes that blend harmoniously when sounded together.

Chord Scale: All of the chord combinations that naturally occur in a major key. For instance, in C Major, the chord scale for worship music is C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, G/B, back to C. These are numbered 1, 2m, 3m, 4, 5, 6m, 5 over 7 and back to 1.

Chromatic: Moving up or down in half steps.

Diatonic: The chords belonging to the key such as C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, Bdim.

Enharmonic: Two identical notes with different names, such as F#/Gb, D#/Eb, etc.

Function: Describes how a chord works in a progression. For example a 5/7 chord (G/B) in the key of C functions as the vii (“7”) chord, which is normally diminished.

Half Step: The closest note above or below any given note.

Inversion: An alternate way to spell a chord in which the third or fifth is the bass note. For example C/E (“C over E”) is the first inversion of the chord as the third is in the bass. A C/G chord is the second inversion of the chord as the fifth is in the bass.

Key or Tone Center: The home notes and chords that belong together. For example, in the key or tone center called “C Major”, the notes that belong are C-D-E-F-G-A-B. The chords that belong are the chords of the chord scale, which are C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, G/B (“G Over B”) and back to C.

Key Signature: The number of sharps or flats indicated in written music notation.

Notes or Notes in the Scale: Musical pitches belonging in the key. Numbers are used to refer to the notes in a scale such as C Major C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C is called 1 (also called “root”)-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 (same as 1).

Number System or Nashville Number System: A way to express notes (such as Mary Had a Little Lamb as 3-2-1-2-3-3-3) or chords in any key (Happy Birthday to You Chords are 1 - 5 - 5 - 1 - 1 - 4 - 5 - 1) that has become standard practice for musicians around the world. Chords in C Major would be numbered 1=C Major, 2m (Two minor)=Dm, 3m (Three minor)=Em, 4=F Major, 5=G Major, 6m (Six minor) =Am, 7diminished gets changed to 5/7 (Five over 7)=G/B (G over B) and back to 1.

Roman Numeral System: Prior to Nashville Number System, chords used to be expressed as upper (Major/Augmented) and lower case (Minor/Diminished) Roman numerals such as I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, vii° and back to I. For whatever reason, the only Roman numeral still used is the I for the “1” chord (the root).

Root: The chord from which a chord is built. Also the lowest note in a triad or chord. (In a C Major chord, C is the root.)

Scale: A group of notes played in sequence. A C Maj. Scale of C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C.

Spelling: To construct a chord by putting different notes together. C Major is spelled C-E-G. C Major7 is spelled C-E-G-B.

Triad: A chord with three notes. Triads are either Major (Root-3-5), Minor (Root-b3-5), Diminished (Root-b3-b5) or Augmented (Root-3-#5).

Whole Step: A series of two half-steps up or down. For example (C to D) or (C to Bb)



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