How to Describe What You Hear in Music

KS2 MUSIC KS3 MUSIC Ages 10-14 ⏰ 3 min read

Why Do We Need Music Words?

When you listen to music, you hear lots of different sounds happening at the same time. Your brain picks up on rhythm, melody, volume, and mood all at once. To talk about music properly, we need **special vocabulary** so everyone understands exactly what we mean.

Think of it like describing a painting: instead of just saying "it's nice," you'd talk about the colours, shapes, and how they make you feel. Music works the same way!

The Big Five: Pitch, Rhythm, Dynamics, Tempo, and Tone

These are the most important things to describe. **Pitch** means how high or low a sound is—a bird's chirp has high pitch, while a drum has low pitch. **Rhythm** is the pattern of beats and how notes are timed together. **Dynamics** means how loud or soft the music is—this can change throughout a song. **Tempo** is the speed of the music: fast, slow, or somewhere in between. **Tone** (or timbre) is the colour or quality of a sound—a piano sounds different from a trumpet even when playing the same note.

Think of it like describing a person: pitch is like their height, rhythm is like their walking pattern, dynamics is like how loud they speak, tempo is how fast they move, and tone is like the sound of their voice.

More Musical Words to Know

Melody is a tune—a sequence of single notes that sound pleasing together and you can remember. **Harmony** is when different notes are played at the same time to support the melody. **Texture** means how thick or thin the music sounds—does it feel crowded with instruments or sparse and simple? **Articulation** describes how notes are played: smoothly connected or short and sharp.

Describing How Music Makes You Feel

Musicians also use words about mood and style. Music can sound **happy, sad, energetic, calm, mysterious, angry** or **peaceful**. You might hear **classical, jazz,**

pop, rock, folk or **electronic** styles, and each has its own characteristics. Some composers use **repetition** to create patterns you recognize, while others use **variation** to keep you surprised.

The best way to learn these words is to listen carefully, pick a piece of music you like, and try describing what you hear using these terms. Soon, talking about music will feel natural!

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