



# Exploring Dynamics

What are dynamics and how do they help us understand music?



# Warm-Up Activity

Sing “Happy Birthday” three times (make up who you want to sing to, or just say ‘dear Someone’)

- 1) The first time, sing it very quietly
- 2) The second time, sing it very loudly
- 3) The third time, trade off - one phrase quiet, then one loud, etc.

# Dynamics: The way we talk about loud and soft in music

In music, when we want to talk about how loud or soft the music is being played or sung, we call those **dynamics**.

When you are listening to music at home, you probably know that the volume on a device changes how loud and soft the music plays. You may describe it as “turning the music up or down” or “turning the music higher or lower”

When we perform music, we usually use the words “up and down” and “higher and lower” to talk about pitches of notes, so we have a different set of words to talk about **dynamics**.

## Definition time:

Dynamics: how loud and soft a piece of music is performed.

Dynamics can describe how loud or soft a section of music is, and it can describe the volume level changing (getting softer and getting louder)

The words we use to describe dynamics come from the Italian language.

The two main dynamic levels are ***forte*** (which means “loud”) and ***piano*** (which means “quiet”)

Look to the chart on the right to see all of the main dynamic levels you will see in music ----->

<b><i>fff</i></b>	as fortissimo as possible
<b><i>ff</i></b>	fortissimo (very loud)
<b><i>f</i></b>	forte (loud)
<b><i>mf</i></b>	mezzo forte (moderately loud)
<b><i>mp</i></b>	mezzo piano (moderately soft)
<b><i>p</i></b>	piano (soft)
<b><i>pp</i></b>	pianissimo (very soft)
<b><i>ppp</i></b>	as pianissimo as possible

# Activity: Identify dynamic levels in a piece of music as you listen to it

Listen to the opening movement of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana". The movement is titled "O Fortuna", and is a very well-known piece of music, famous for its changes in dynamics.

As you listen, notice every time the dynamic level changes. With each change, use the dynamic chart on the previous slide to describe the dynamic level (how loud it is) using the dynamic level terminology.

Video: [O fortuna](#)

# Practice more with dynamics!

Follow-Up activity #1: Pick more songs that you know, and as you listen, write down what dynamic levels you hear the music being performed at.

Follow-Up activity #2: Record yourself singing a song, and sing it using every dynamic level on the chart!