



Guitar Virtual Learning

# Exploring Dynamics

April 20, 2020



## Guitar

Lesson: April 20, 2020

### **Objective/Learning Target:**

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.



# Alternative Warm-Up Activity

Clap eight beats with your hands, or strum them on a guitar

1. The first time, clap the beats very quietly
2. The second time, clap them very loudly
3. The third time, trade off - one beat 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”





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

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 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 ----->

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



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

Listen to the Ana Vidovic perform “Asturias” by Isaac Albéniz. This is a well-known classical guitar piece that features many different dynamic levels.

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: [Asturias performed by Ana Vidovic](#)



# Practice more with dynamics!

**Follow-Up activity #1:** If you have a guitar at home, practice strumming the following chord progression at each dynamic level:

**G / / / / C / / / / / D / / / / Em / / / /**



# Practice more with dynamics!

**Follow-Up activity #2:** Record yourself playing a piece of music on guitar, and play using every dynamic level on the chart!

If you don't have a guitar at home, recording yourself clapping along to your favorite song, and clap at every dynamic level to hear the difference.



# Online activities with dynamics!

**Online activity #1:** Click on [this link](#) to watch a Youtube video with pointers about how to play different dynamic levels on your guitar.

If you have your own instrument, try these pointers out yourself!



# Online activities with dynamics!

**Online activity #2:** Find four different recordings from one of your favorite bands or guitar players. For each recording:

1. Find one recording that is mostly played piano or pianissimo
2. Find one recording that is mostly played mezzo-piano
3. Find one recording that is mostly played mezzo-forte
4. Find one recording that is mostly played forte or fortissimo



## Extension activity for more challenge:

**Contrast** is a word used to describe the level of difference between different dynamic levels.

Find a recording of a guitar player on YouTube who, in the same song or piece of music, does a good job playing at both a piano level and a forte level. Usually that contrast helps make the music exciting! In the comments of the video, leave a positive remark about how well the player used dynamic contrast!