

e-z Theory: Dynamics

In this section, we will look at dynamic markings, which tell us how loudly or quietly we play music.

1 Soft, loud or moderate?

You might have already looked at the worksheet which deals with **tempo** markings. We use these to help us play music at the speed the composer wants.

These use a variety of Italian words or **terms**, such as **Allegro**, **Lento**, **Presto** and **Vivace**.

Although these are important, there are other Italian terms and markings that are also useful. This worksheet lets us discover some of these and will help you when you are playing a piece of music.

We call these **dynamic markings**.

We normally use six, which can take the music from very quiet to very loud. They are all Italian words:

pianissimo, which means **very quiet**

piano, which means **quiet**

mezzo piano, which means **moderately quiet**

mezzo forte, which means **moderately loud**

forte, which means **loud**

fortissimo, which means **very loud**

These can be written out in full, as you can see in the example below:



where the composer wants the music to be played **mezzo piano**.

But sometimes, the composer uses **abbreviations** instead, which you can see below:



On the next page, we shall look at what these **abbreviations** mean.



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Dynamic markings?

Do you remember the last example on the first page? Instead of having words to tell us how loud the music should be played, there were letters instead.

These mean exactly the same as the full **dynamic markings** and are often found in music. The reason for this is that when there are lots of **performance instructions**, using an **abbreviation** makes the music look a lot tidier.

Below are the Italian words again. Next to them are the abbreviations. On the line to the side of these, write in the meaning in English.

pianissimo *pp* _____

piano *p* _____

mezzo piano *mp* _____

mezzo forte *mf* _____

forte *f* _____

fortissimo *ff* _____

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Even louder?

But what happens when a composer wants a piece of music to be even louder or softer?

This is very easy to write. If the music has to go quieter than **pianissimo**, we simply add another **p** to the **abbreviation**. So **pp** becomes **ppp**.

If adding an extra **p** to **pp** makes it even quieter, how would you show that you want the music to become louder than **ff** ?

Write your answer on the line below:

ff becomes _____

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