

e-z Theory: Gradation of Tone

In this section, we will look at dynamic markings and in particular gradation of tone where music changes in dynamic.

1

Crescendo and Diminuendo

We have already looked at the different levels of dynamics in music and how to write them, but what about when the composer wants the music to become louder or softer?

By now, you should have heard and used the instruction **crescendo** which means 'getting louder'.

Sometimes it is written as an abbreviation: *cresc.*

Diminuendo can also be written as an abbreviation: *dim.* This means 'getting quieter'.

You can see this in the example below:



Here we can see that the music starts quietly, has a crescendo and then becomes quiet once again.

The symbol for quiet is at the beginning. What is the Italian word it represents?

How loud does it become in the second full bar?

In which bar does it become quiet again?

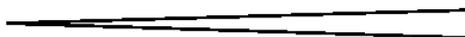
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Other dynamic symbols

We can also use **symbols** to show a **crescendo** or **diminuendo**. These markings are sometimes called **hairpins**.

For a **crescendo**, we can use:



For a **diminuendo**, we can use:



See the example below:



Here, the **crescendo** begins as soon as the music starts and becomes louder until the A in the second complete bar. Then a **diminuendo** begins after the D in the same bar, bringing the music back to **piano** in the fourth complete bar.

A little practice

Have a look at the following melodies. We have provided the **dynamics**. You need to decide where the **crescendos** or **diminuendos** begin and end, and draw the correct marking to make it work. **Don't** use the **abbreviations**, but use the symbols above.

