

ABRSM Grade 5 Music Theory Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

1. Which term refers to a tempo that is even faster than prestissimo?
 - A. allegro
 - B. appassionato
 - C. presto
 - D. no such term exists
2. What does a 'tenuto' marking above a note indicate?
 - A. To play the note staccato
 - B. To hold the note for its full value
 - C. To play the note loudly
 - D. To repeat the note
3. What is the definition of 'decrescendo' (decresc.) in music?
 - A. Gradually getting louder
 - B. Sweet and soft
 - C. Gradually getting quieter
 - D. With determination
4. When a musician sees 'D.C.' in the sheet music, they should:
 - A. Play sweetly
 - B. Gradually get quieter
 - C. Repeat from the beginning
 - D. Play with determination
5. Which term would you use to describe a piece that is played cheerfully and briskly?
 - A. Appassionato
 - B. Allegro
 - C. Amabile
 - D. Animato

- 6. If a piece of music is described as 'sad', which term might be used?**
- A. Misterioso**
 - B. Mesto**
 - C. Maestoso**
 - D. Massig**
- 7. What emotion is expressed by the term "traurig"?**
- A. Joyful**
 - B. Sad**
 - C. Exuberant**
 - D. Neutral**
- 8. Which term refers to a gradual broadening and slowing in a piece of music?**
- A. Adagio**
 - B. Allargando**
 - C. Accelerando**
 - D. Agitato**
- 9. What does 'con brio' indicate when playing a piece of music?**
- A. With grief**
 - B. With spirit or animation**
 - C. With vigor**
 - D. At a comfortable speed**
- 10. What term describes the speed of a piece of music?**
- A. Dynamics**
 - B. Tempo**
 - C. Texture**
 - D. Rhythm**

Answers

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1. D
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. B
6. B
7. B
8. B
9. C
10. B

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Explanations

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1. Which term refers to a tempo that is even faster than prestissimo?

- A. allegro**
- B. appassionato**
- C. presto**
- D. no such term exists**

The choice identifying that there is no term for a tempo faster than prestissimo is accurate because "prestissimo" already signifies one of the fastest possible tempos in music. Typically, prestissimo is defined as being performed at a speed of around 168 beats per minute or faster. In classical music terminology, there are various terms for differing speeds, but once reaching prestissimo, there is no further standard term to indicate a tempo that exceeds that pace. The other options suggest tempos that are actually slower than prestissimo. Allegro indicates a lively and fast pace, but it is not as quick as prestissimo. Appassionato refers to a style of playing with intense emotion rather than a tempo. Presto is indeed a fast tempo, but again, it is slower than prestissimo. Thus, stating that no such term exists is consistent with the established definitions of tempo in music theory.

2. What does a 'tenuto' marking above a note indicate?

- A. To play the note staccato**
- B. To hold the note for its full value**
- C. To play the note loudly**
- D. To repeat the note**

A 'tenuto' marking above a note instructs the musician to hold the note for its full value, which means to sustain it for the entire duration that the note is written. This can create a sense of emphasis and allows the note to resonate fully within the context of the music. By holding the note, it contrasts with other articulations like staccato, which require a more detached attack, and loud dynamics, which focus on volume rather than duration. The tenuto marking emphasizes the importance of the note in a phrase, often enhancing the musical expression. In this context, it's clear that the other options do not align with the definition of tenuto. The marking does not imply staccato playing, does not indicate dynamics such as loudness, nor does it suggest repetition of the note. Instead, it reinforces the value and character of the note being performed.

3. What is the definition of 'decrescendo' (decresc.) in music?

- A. Gradually getting louder**
- B. Sweet and soft**
- C. Gradually getting quieter**
- D. With determination**

Decrescendo, often abbreviated as "decresc.", indicates that the music should gradually become quieter. This term is derived from the Italian word "decretere," meaning to lessen or decrease. In a musical context, it instructs performers to reduce the volume over a specific passage, creating a sense of fading or softness. This dynamic contrast can enhance emotional expression within a piece, allowing for dramatic shifts in intensity and creating a more nuanced performance. It's essential to understand that this term specifically refers to the act of diminishing sound, as opposed to the other options that describe different dynamics or emotional expressions in music.

4. When a musician sees 'D.C.' in the sheet music, they should:

- A. Play sweetly**
- B. Gradually get quieter**
- C. Repeat from the beginning**
- D. Play with determination**

When a musician sees 'D.C.' in the sheet music, they should understand that this marking stands for "Da Capo," which translates from Italian to "from the head" or "from the beginning." In practice, this means that they need to return to the start of the piece and play it again, often up until a specified point, such as "D.C. al Fine," which instructs them to play back to the beginning and continue until a certain section marked 'Fine.' Understanding this term is essential for performing music correctly, as it directs the flow and structure of the piece. The choice to repeat from the beginning reinforces the concept of form in music, illustrating how certain sections can be revisited to create a cohesive and structured performance. Other responses do not relate directly to the established meanings behind 'D.C.' in musical terms, focusing instead on performance styles or techniques that are not pertinent to the instruction provided by this marking.

5. Which term would you use to describe a piece that is played cheerfully and briskly?

- A. Appassionato**
- B. Allegro**
- C. Amabile**
- D. Animato**

The term "Allegro" is used to describe music that is played cheerfully and briskly. In musical terminology, "Allegro" indicates a fast tempo, generally between 120 and 168 beats per minute, and often conveys a joyful character in the music. This term sets an energetic and lively mood, making it suitable for pieces that are intended to sound upbeat and spirited. The other options refer to different qualities or moods in music. "Appassionato" translates to playing with passion and intensity, which is more about expressing deep emotion rather than maintaining a brisk pace. "Amabile" suggests a gentle or agreeable quality, typically associated with sweetness and tenderness, rather than a lively tempo. "Animato," while it does imply a spirited or animated character, doesn't specifically indicate the same brisk tempo that "Allegro" does. Thus, "Allegro" is the most appropriate term for describing a piece that is played cheerfully and briskly.

6. If a piece of music is described as 'sad', which term might be used?

A. Misterioso

B. Mesto

C. Maestoso

D. Massig

The term 'mesto' is indeed the appropriate choice when describing music that conveys a sense of sadness. This Italian term translates to 'sad' or 'sorrowful' and is commonly used in music to indicate a melancholic mood or character. Composers might use this term to guide performers in interpreting the emotional quality of a piece, encouraging them to evoke a feeling of sadness through dynamics, tempo, and phrasing. In contrast, the other options represent different concepts. 'Misterioso' refers to a mysterious or secretive character, suggesting an enigmatic mood rather than sadness. 'Maestoso' indicates a majestic or dignified manner, often associated with grandeur and nobility, which is quite the opposite of a sad expression. Lastly, 'Massig' (translated from German, meaning 'moderately') describes a tempo or style that is moderate, but it does not convey any specific emotional quality like sadness. Thus, 'mesto' is the term that most directly aligns with the description of a piece of music as 'sad.'

7. What emotion is expressed by the term "traurig"?

A. Joyful

B. Sad

C. Exuberant

D. Neutral

The term "traurig" is a German word that translates directly to "sad" in English. In music, terms like this are often used to convey a particular emotional quality or mood that the composer intends to express through the piece. When a composer indicates "traurig," it signals to the performer to play in a manner that reflects sorrow or melancholy. This mood can be achieved through dynamics, tempo, and articulation, all of which contribute to a more emotive performance that aligns with the feelings of sadness. Understanding the emotional context of musical terms is crucial for interpreting and conveying the intended feelings behind a composition. In this case, recognizing "traurig" as indicative of sadness provides a clear direction for the performer, ensuring that the music resonates with the audience on an emotional level that is faithful to the composer's intentions.

8. Which term refers to a gradual broadening and slowing in a piece of music?

A. Adagio

B. Allargando

C. Accelerando

D. Agitato

The term that refers to a gradual broadening and slowing in a piece of music is "allargando." This term indicates a technique in performance where the tempo not only slows down but also allows for a more expansive, expressive delivery of the music. It suggests a feeling of relaxation and stretching the phrases as they unfold, often contributing to the emotional impact of the piece. Understanding "allargando" is essential in interpreting musical scores, particularly in sections that require a more dramatic or lyrical approach. Musicians use this term to signal a shift in the music's pace and character, allowing for dynamic expression. In contrast, "adagio" refers to a slow tempo, but it does not inherently imply a gradual broadening or slowing. "Accelerando" indicates a gradual speeding up of the music, while "agitato" suggests a restless or agitated character, which is quite the opposite of a broadening and slowing effect. Therefore, "allargando" stands out as the correct answer for describing a gradual broadening and slowing in music.

9. What does 'con brio' indicate when playing a piece of music?

A. With grief

B. With spirit or animation

C. With vigor

D. At a comfortable speed

'Con brio' is an Italian musical term that translates to 'with spirit' or 'with animation.' It is used to indicate that the music should be played lively and energetically, encouraging a bright and spirited performance. While 'with vigor' may seem similar to the actual meaning of 'con brio,' it does not fully capture the essence of musical animation and liveliness that 'con brio' invokes. The emphasis here is on the spirited quality and engaging nature of the performance, rather than just strength or force. The other options refer to different emotional states or characteristics in music. For example, 'with grief' would denote a melancholic or sorrowful playing style, and 'at a comfortable speed' refers to tempo rather than spirit or energy. Understanding 'con brio' helps musicians convey the intended mood of a piece, which is central to expressive performance.

10. What term describes the speed of a piece of music?

A. Dynamics

B. Tempo

C. Texture

D. Rhythm

The term that describes the speed of a piece of music is tempo. Tempo refers specifically to the pace at which a piece is performed, typically indicated at the beginning of a score with terms such as "allegro" (fast), "adagio" (slow), or with a metronome marking that provides a precise beats-per-minute (BPM) measurement. Understanding tempo is crucial for musicians, as it sets the overall mood and energy of a performance.

Dynamics, on the other hand, refer to the volume of the music, indicating how loud or soft sections should be played. Texture describes how the different musical lines and layers interact within a piece, focusing on the arrangement of melodies and harmonies. Rhythm relates to the timing of notes and the patterns they create, but does not directly indicate the overall speed of the piece. Thus, tempo is the correct term for denoting the speed at which music is performed.