

Dynamics:

The Volume – how loud or quiet the music is.

Dynamics Key Terms	Definition
P (Piano)	Piano means quiet.
Mp (mezzo piano)	Mezzo piano means médium quiet
F (forte)	Forte means loud
Mf (mezzo forte)	Mezzo forte is médium loud
Crescendo	Crescendo means to get louder
Diminuendo	Diminuendo means to get quieter
Sforzando	Sforzando means suddenly loud and can be abbreviated to sfz which is fun
Terraced dynamics	A weird term that the AQA use to describe dynamics that we find, often, in the Baroque period. It refers to where the composers only changed dynamics at the beginning of a section. If I played section A quietly (p) I would often be instructed to play the repeat of section A loudly (f). This added some variety but was nothing like the passionate use of dynamics we expect in the Romantic period.

Top tips about dynamics:

If you have forgotten all of the lovely Italian terms you will still get marks for describing the volume (see the examples of answers on this sheet). You can simply describe the dynamics as loud/quiet/getting louder etc. You really just need to remember that the dynamics are the volume and you are set.

In addition you may notice that there are lots of possible answers (i.e. you would get a mark for saying mp or p or pp) this is because it is difficult for humans to all agree on how loud something is. My piano might be your mezzo piano. We just need to be roughly in the right place. I will not get a mark for writing forte if the examiner thinks it is quiet...

Dynamics: Questions and Answers from Past Papers

Q: Identify two features of the dynamics that are typical of their use in Film Music

Answers:

- loud/very loud/f/ff/forte/fortissimo
- loud music makes the effect dramatic
- sudden drop in dynamics – sense of surprise/anticipation
- crescendo to create suspense

Q: Which term best describes the dynamics at the beginning of this excerpt?

Answers:

- mp/p/pp/mezzo piano/piano/pianissimo/very quiet

Q: Which term best describes the dynamics at the end of this excerpt?

Answer:

- f/ff/forte/fortissimo/loud/very loud