

# Lesson 03: Elements: Sound and Pitch

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will define sound and how it is produced and heard.  
Students will define the four main musical properties of sound.  
Students will learn about pitch and its effect.  
Students will define tone and interval.

No matter what kind of music you listen to, all music has some things in common. We call these common things "elements." We will be learning about the things that make up all the music in the world. The first element is sound. What is sound? Sound begins with the vibration of something. The something could be a blade of grass blown between your thumbs, a guitar string that is plucked, a drum head hit with a stick, or your vocal chords vibrating back and forth. Every sound is made by something that is vibrating.



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All of the objects in the pictures above make sounds by vibration. The vibrations are sent to our ears by a medium, usually air, and our eardrums start vibrating, too. The sound is then sent to our brain where we organize and interpret them.

How can we tell the difference between a musical and a non-musical sound? We can do this by learning the four main properties of musical sounds. They are 1) pitch (the highness or lowness); 2) dynamics (loudness or softness); 3) tone: color (quality); and 4) duration, or rhythm (time).

Pitch is how high or low a sound is. When you sing the beginning of the Star-Spangled Banner, for example, the pitch on the word "see" is higher than the pitch on the word "say."

This song is here for reference only--you do not need to listen to it if you don't want to. If you do listen, you'll notice that both the first and fourth

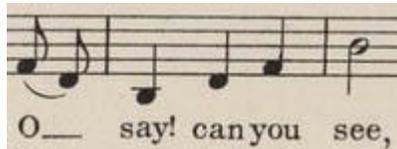
verses of the song get sung. Today, most people only know the first verse, and don't even realize the song has four verses. (If you don't see a play button below, you may not have Adobe Flash installed. Please be sure to read the [Teacher Message](#) for more information.)

**[Listen to "The Star Spangled Banner" sung by Margaret Woodrow Wilson \(1915\).](#)**

The faster that something is vibrating the higher the pitch. In order to hit the high note on "see" the singer's vocal chords have to vibrate faster than for the note on the word "say." Smaller objects will vibrate faster and have a higher pitch. A small flute has a higher pitch than a big tuba.

In music, a sound that has a definite pitch is called a tone. It vibrates at a set number of cycles each second. Noise-like sounds, like a hammer hitting a nail, or cymbals crashing, do not have a definite pitch.

Two tones will sound different when they have different pitches. The distance in pitch between two tones is called an interval.



## Grading Rubric:

Grading for this Lesson:

**To get a 10:** In the first submission, assignment questions are completed, facts are correct, responses are thoughtful, presentation is clear, grammar and spelling are correct.

**To get a 9:** In the first submission, a few assignment questions are incomplete OR a few facts are incorrect OR a few responses are careless OR there are a few grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions.

**To get an 8:** In the first submission, many assignment questions are incomplete OR many facts are incorrect OR many responses are careless OR there are numerous grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions.

**To get a 7:** After prompting, a few assignment questions remain incomplete OR a few facts remain incorrect OR a few responses remain careless OR a few grammar and spelling errors remain.

**To get a 6:** This grade is reserved for administrative use.

**To get a 5:** Plagiarism, purposeful or mistaken, which will lower your final grade for the course (so be very careful when posting your work!) OR lack of effort, disrespect, or attitude (we are here to communicate with you if you don't understand something). Lesson requirements have been met.

Also be aware that you will have a chance to revise your work. Since revisions result in a lower grade, remember to read the directions carefully and make sure you meet the requirements.

## Assignment:

**You are to answer the following questions in your own words. Please post the questions with your answers in the text box below to submit your work. Remember to use complete sentences, use proper grammar, and don't forget to proofread and spell check your work before submitting it. This may require additional internet research, so be sure to cite your sources.**

Do not submit text that you have copied from sources, including websites. All of your work should be in your own words. Using copied text would be considered plagiarism. For more information, review our page on [Plagiarism and Citation](#).

1. What is sound?
2. After something vibrates what happens to the sound?
3. What are the four main properties of musical sounds?
4. What is pitch?
5. What makes a pitch sound higher?
6. What will sound lower, a small instrument or a large instrument?
7. What is a tone?
8. Name three sounds that have no tone.
9. Name two sounds not made by standard musical instruments that do have a tone.
10. What is an interval?
  - **Did you proofread your work?**
  - **Did you spellcheck your work?**

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