

Dynamics

Dynamics are indicators of the relative intensity or volume of a musical line.

ppp **Pianississimo**
Extremely soft. Very infrequently does one see softer dynamics than this, which are specified with additional *ps*.

pp **Pianissimo**
Very soft. Usually the softest indication in a piece of music, though softer dynamics are often specified with additional *ps*.

p **Piano**
Soft. Usually the most often used indication.

mp **Mezzo piano**
Literally, half as soft as *piano*.

mf **Mezzo forte**
Similarly, half as loud as *forte*. If no dynamic appears, *mezzo-forte* is assumed to be the prevailing dynamic level.

f **Forte**
Loud. Used as often as *piano* to indicate contrast.

ff **Fortissimo**
Very loud. Usually the loudest indication in a piece, though louder dynamics are often specified with additional *fs* (such as fortississimo – seen below).

fff **Fortississimo¹**
Extremely loud. Very infrequently does one see louder dynamics than this, which are specified with additional *fs*.

sfz **Sforzando**
Literally "forced", denotes an abrupt, fierce accent on a single sound or chord. When written out in full, it applies to the sequence of sounds or chords under or over which it is placed.

< **Crescendo**
A gradual increase in volume.
Can be extended under many notes to indicate that the volume steadily increases during the passage.

> **Diminuendo**
Also **decrescendo**
A gradual decrease in volume. Can be extended in the same manner as crescendo.