

MUSIC TEMPO MARKS



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1. MUSIC TEMPOS AS PER METRONOME (basic tempos)

Italiano	English	Metronome (♩ =) BPM – Beats Per Minute
Larghissimo	Very, very slow	24 bpm and under
Grave	Very slow	25 – 45 bpm
Largo	Broadly	40 – 60 bpm
Lento	Slowly	45 – 60 bpm
Larghetto	Rather broadly	60 – 66 bpm
Adagio	Slow and stately	66 – 76 bpm
Adagietto	Slower than andante	72 – 76 bpm
Andante	At a walking pace	76 – 108 bpm
Andantino	Slightly faster than Andante	80 – 108 bpm
Marcia moderato	Moderately, in the manner of a march	83 – 85 bpm
Andante moderato	Between andante and moderato	92 – 112 bpm
Moderato	Moderately	108 – 120 bpm
Allegretto	Moderately fast	112 – 120 bpm
Allegro moderato	Close to but not quite allegro	116 – 120 bpm
Allegro	Fast, quickly, and bright	120 – 168 bpm
Vivace	Lively and fast	168 – 176 bpm
Vivacissimo	Very fast and lively	172 – 176 bpm
Allegro vivace or Allegro vivace	Very fast	172 – 176 bpm
Presto	Very, very fast	168 – 200 bpm
Prestissimo	Even faster than Presto	200 bpm and over

2. TERMS FOR TEMPO CHANGE

Italiano	English
Rallentando	Gradually slowing down
Ritardando	Gradually slowing down (but not as much as rallentando)
Ritenuto	Immediately slowing down
Stringendo	Gradually speeding up (slowly)
Accelerando	Gradually speeding up (quickly)

3. ADDITIONAL TERMS

Italiano	English
A piacere	The performer may use his or her own discretion with regard to tempo and rhythm; literally "at pleasure"
A tempo	resume previous tempo
L'istesso, L'istesso tempo, or Lo stesso tempo	At the same speed; L'istesso is used when the actual speed of the music has not changed, despite apparent signals to the contrary, such as changes in time signature or note length (half notes in 4/4 could change to whole notes in 2/2, and they would all have the same duration)
Tempo comodo	At a comfortable (normal) speed
Tempo di...	The speed of a ... (such as Tempo di valse (speed of a waltz ♩ = 60 bpm), Tempo di marcia (speed of a march ♩ = 120 bpm))
Tempo giusto	At a consistent speed, at the 'right' speed, in strict tempo
Tempo semplice	Simple, regular speed, plainly
Tempo primo	Resume the original (first) tempo

4. COMMON QUALIFIERS

Italiano	English
Alla	In the manner or style of
Alla breve	In short style, i.e., duple time, with the half note (minim) rather than the quarter note (crotchet) as the beat; cut time; 2/2 instead of 4/4; often marked as ¢
Alla marcia	In the manner of a march (e.g., Beethoven, op.101)
All' ongarese	In Hungarian style

Alla (danza) tedesca	In the style of the Ländler, and similar dances in rather quick triple meter (see Beethoven, op. 79, op. 130)
Alla turca	In the Turkish style, that is, in imitation of Turkish military music (Janissary music), which became popular in Europe in the late 18th century (e.g., Mozart, K. 331, K. 384)
Alla zingarese	In the style of Gypsy music
Assai	Very much, as in allegro assai, quite fast
Ben	Well, as in ben marcato (well marked or accented)
Con	With
Con bravura	With skill
Con brio	With vigor and spirit
Con dolcezza	With softness; delicately
Con fuoco	With fire
Con moto	With motion
Deciso	Decidedly, decisively
Fugato	In fugal style, usually part of a non-fugal composition; such passages often occur in the development sections of symphonies, sonatas, and quartets
In modo	In the manner of, in the style of: in modo napolitano (in Neapolitan style), in modo di marcia funebre (in the manner of a funeral march)
Meno	Less, as in meno mosso (less quickly)
Appena	Almost none, as in appena forte (almost not at all loud)
Misterioso	Mysterious
Molto	Much, very, as in molto allegro (very quick) or molto adagio (very slow)
Non troppo	Not too much, e.g. allegro non troppo (or allegro ma non troppo) means "fast, but not too much"
Non tanto	Not so much
Più	More, as in più allegro (more quickly); used as a relative indication when the tempo changes
Piuttosto	Rather, as in piuttosto allegro (rather quick)
Poco	Slightly, little, as in Poco adagio
Poco a poco	Little by little
Polacca	Generic name for Polish dances, usually the polonaise, as in tempo di polacca; note, however, that the "Polacca" in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No.1 shows little resemblance to the polonaise
Primo	Principal or early, as in tempo primo, the same tempo as at the beginning

Quasi	Almost, nearly, as if (such as Più allegro quasi presto, "faster, as if presto")
Senza	Without, as in senza interruzione (without interruption or pause), senza tempo or senza misura (without strict measure)
Sostenuto	Sustained, prolonged
Subito	Suddenly
Note: In addition to the common allegretto, composers freely apply Italian diminutive and superlative suffixes to various tempo indications: andantino, larghetto, adagietto, and larghissimo.	

5. MOOD MARKINGS WITH A TEMPO CONNOTATION

Italiano	English
Affettuoso	With feeling/emotion
Agitato	Agitated, with implied quickness
Appassionato	To play passionately
Animato	Animatedly, lively
Brillante	Sparkling, glittering, as in Allegro brillante, Rondo brillante, or Variations brillantes; became fashionable in titles for virtuoso pieces
Bravura	Bravely; a brilliant and indulgent demonstration of skill
Cantabile	In singing style (lyrical and flowing)
Calando	Dying away, slowing, diminishing
Caloroso	Heart-warming
Cataclismico	Very loud, short
Dolce	Sweetly
Dolcissimo	Very sweetly and delicately
Dolente	Sadly, sorrowfully
Energico	Energetic, strong, forceful
Eroico	Heroically
Espressivo	Expressively
Furioso	To play in an angry or furious manner
Giocoso	Merrily, funny
Gioioso	Joyfully
Grandioso	Magnificently, grandly

Grazioso	Gracefully
Incalzando	Encouraging, building
Lacrimoso	Tearfully, sadly
Lamentoso	Lamenting, mournfully
Leggiero	To play lightly, or with light touch
Leggiadro	Lightly and gracefully
Maestoso	Majestic or stately (which generally indicates a solemn, slow march-like movement)
Malinconico	Melancholic
Marcato	Marching tempo, marked with emphasis
Marziale	In a march style, usually in simple, strongly marked rhythm and regular phrases
Mesto	Sad, mournful
Misterioso	Mystical, in a shady manner
Morendo	Dying
Nobilmente	Nobly (in a noble way)
Patetico	With great emotion
Pesante	Heavily
Pomposo	Dignified, in grand style
Saltando	Jumpy, fast, and short
Scherzando	Playfully
Smorzando	Dying away, decreasing to nothing in both speed and dynamic
Sospirando	Listless, with little energy; almost indifferent; as if sighing
Sostenuto	Sustained, with a slowing of tempo
Spiccato	Slow sautillé, with a bouncy manner
Tenerezza	Tenderness
Tranquillamente	Adverb of tranquillo, "calmly"
Trionfante	Triumphantly
Vivace	Lively and fast, over 140 bpm (which generally indicates a fast movement)

6. TERMS FOR CHANGE IN TEMPO
Composers may use expressive marks to adjust the tempo

Italiano	English
Accelerando	Speeding up (abbreviation: accel.)
Allargando	Growing broader; decreasing tempo, usually near the end of a piece
Calando	Going slower (and usually also softer)
Doppio movimento / doppio più mosso	Double speed
Doppio più lento	Half speed
Lentando	Gradual slowing and softer
Meno mosso	Less movement or slower
Mosso	Movement, more lively, or quicker, much like più mosso, but not as extreme
Più mosso	More movement or faster
Precipitando	Hurrying, going faster/forward
Rallentando	Gradual slowing down (abbreviation: rall.)
Ritardando	Slowing down gradually; also see rallentando and ritenuto (abbreviations: rit., ritard.)
Ritenuto	Slightly slower, but achieved more immediately than ritardando or rallentando; a sudden decrease in tempo; temporarily holding back. (Note that the abbreviation for ritenuto can also be rit. Thus a more specific abbreviation is riten. Also sometimes ritenuto does not reflect a tempo change but a character change instead.)
Rubato	Free adjustment of tempo for expressive purposes (literally "theft", so more strictly, take time from one beat to slow another)
Stretto	In faster tempo, often near the conclusion of a section. (Note that in fugal compositions, the term stretto refers to the imitation of the subject in close succession, before the subject is completed, and as such, suitable for the close of the fugue. Used in this context, the term is not necessarily related to tempo.)
Stringendo	Pressing on faster (literally "tightening")
Tardando	Slowing down gradually (same as ritardando)

7. TEMPO MARKINGS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

French tempo markings	
French	English
Au mouvement	Play the (first or main) tempo.

Grave	Slowly and solemnly
Lent	Slowly
Modéré	At a moderate tempo
Moins	Less, as in Moins vite (less fast)
Rapide	Fast
Très	Very, as in Très vif (very lively)
Vif	Lively
Vite	Fast
German tempo markings	
German	English
Langsam	Slowly
Lebhaft	Lively (mood)
Mäßig	Moderately
Rasch	Quickly
Schnell	Fast
Bewegt	Animated, with motion

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