



CARSHALTON BOYS SPORTS COLLEGE

Music Department

Year 12 and 13 Vocabulary Booklet

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Musical Vocabulary

Academic Years 2026–2028

Excellence • Character • Aspiration

A Note for Learners

This booklet contains the key Tier 2 (academic) and Tier 3 (subject-specific) vocabulary for the BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Music Performance, covering Unit 1 (Practical Music Theory and Harmony), Unit 2 (Professional Practice in the Music Industry), Unit 3 (Ensemble Music Performance) and Unit 6 (Solo Performance). Knowing these words — not just recognising them, but being able to use them accurately and confidently in written coursework, rehearsal logs and performance evaluations — is one of the most important things you can do to reach the top of the Pass/Merit/Distinction mark scheme. Assessors reward precise, correctly used vocabulary.

Words marked E (Expected) are the core vocabulary every learner must know. Words marked A (Aspirational) are stretch vocabulary that support Merit and Distinction-level work. All learners are encouraged to learn the A words.

E	Expected — core vocabulary every pupil must learn.
A	Aspirational — stretch vocabulary for higher-level performance in extended writing.

How to Learn Vocabulary: Metacognitive Strategies

Research consistently shows that the most effective vocabulary learning does not come from re-reading a list. The strategies below are those with the strongest evidence base for long-term retention. We strongly recommend rotating between them rather than relying on a single approach.

- **Look–Cover–Write–Check:** Look at the word and its definition carefully. Cover both. Write the word and definition from memory. Uncover and check. Repeat immediately for any word you could not recall.
- **The Leitner Flashcard System:** Write the word on the front of a card, the definition and an example on the back. Sort cards into three piles: ‘know well’ (review once a week), ‘know fairly well’ (review every other day), ‘don’t know yet’ (review every study session).
- **Dual Coding:** Draw a diagram, notated example or simple symbol next to each word to create a visual memory anchor alongside the written definition.
- **Self-Quizzing with a Partner:** Ask a friend, tutor or family member to test you by reading out the word while you give the definition, then reverse roles.
- **Use in Coursework and Reflection:** Once you can define a word, use it deliberately in your rehearsal logs, evaluations and written assignments. Assessors reward precise, correctly used vocabulary.
- **Spaced Retrieval:** Do not try to learn all words in one sitting. Study the current unit's words every night for ten minutes, revisiting previous units' words at least twice a week.

Suggested Weekly Routine

Spend 10 minutes per night, five nights per week, on vocabulary for the current unit. On at least two of those nights, also revisit words from a previous unit. Rotate through the strategies above. Before submitting any assignment, check that you have used the relevant Tier 3 vocabulary accurately and precisely.

Unit 1: Practical Music Theory and Harmony — Vocabulary

Word	Type	Tier	E/A	Definition	Musical Example
Staff notation	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The standard Western system of writing music using a five-line stave, note heads, stems and clefs to represent pitch and rhythm.	<i>Learners transcribed their improvised rhythm into staff notation so another musician could read and perform it.</i>
Alternative notation	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	Any system of representing music other than traditional staff notation, such as tablature, graphic scores, chord charts or lead sheets.	<i>A guitarist might prefer tablature as a form of alternative notation showing exactly which string and fret to use.</i>
Simple time signature	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A time signature in which each main beat divides into two, such as 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4.	<i>Most pop songs are written in the simple time signature of 4/4.</i>
Compound time signature	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A time signature in which each main beat divides into three, such as 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8.	<i>The band moved from a simple 4/4 groove into a compound 12/8 feel to change the song's character.</i>
Syncopation	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A rhythmic device that places emphasis on off-beats or weak beats rather than the expected strong beats.	<i>The samba rhythm studied in class relied heavily on syncopation across several interlocking parts.</i>
Key signature	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The sharps or flats placed at the start of a stave to indicate the key of a piece of music.	<i>Learners worked out that a key signature with one sharp indicated the piece was in G major.</i>
Melodic sequence	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	The repetition of a melodic idea at a higher or lower pitch than its original statement.	<i>A rising melodic sequence was used to build tension before the final cadence.</i>
Melodic inversion	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	A compositional device in which a melody is flipped upside down, so rising intervals become falling ones and vice versa.	<i>The composer used melodic inversion to develop a contrasting second theme from the opening idea.</i>
Countermelody	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	A secondary melody played simultaneously with the main melody, complementing it without overpowering it.	<i>Adding a countermelody in the cello part gave the arrangement a richer, more independent texture.</i>
Primary chords	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The tonic (I), subdominant (IV) and dominant (V) chords of a key, forming the harmonic backbone of most Western music.	<i>Learners harmonised their melody using only primary chords before experimenting with more complex options.</i>
Secondary chords	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	Chords other than the primary chords of a key, such as ii, iii and vi, used to add harmonic variety.	<i>Introducing a secondary chord (vi) gave the progression a more emotional, less predictable quality.</i>

Word	Type	Tier	E/A	Definition	Musical Example
Cadence	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A short sequence of chords that ends a musical phrase, giving a sense of rest or conclusion.	<i>A perfect cadence at the end of the phrase gave it a strong, conclusive ending.</i>
Chord progression	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A series of chords played in a specific order, forming the harmonic foundation of a piece.	<i>The band explored the 12-bar blues as a standard chord progression before writing their own melody over it.</i>
Transposition	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	Rewriting a piece of music at a different pitch, either for a transposing instrument or to suit a performer's range.	<i>Learners transposed a melody for B♭ trumpet, moving every note up a tone from the original.</i>
Lead sheet	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A simplified score showing the melody, lyrics (if any) and chord symbols of a piece, without full harmonic detail.	<i>The session musician was handed a lead sheet and expected to work out an appropriate accompaniment on the spot.</i>

Unit 2: Professional Practice in the Music Industry — Vocabulary

Word	Type	Tier	E/A	Definition	Musical Example
Professional behaviour	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	Conduct that meets the standards expected in a workplace, such as reliability, punctuality and appropriate communication.	<i>Turning up prepared and on time to every rehearsal is a basic expectation of professional behaviour in the music industry.</i>
Contingency planning	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	Preparing in advance for things that might go wrong, so a project can still succeed if problems arise.	<i>The group's contingency plan for a broken string included a spare instrument and a backup arrangement.</i>
Copyright	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The legal right of a creator to control how their original work is used, copied or performed by others.	<i>Learners researched how copyright affects a band's ability to release a cover version of a song.</i>
Licensing	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	The legal process of granting permission to use copyrighted material, usually in exchange for a fee.	<i>A venue must have the correct licensing in place before hosting live original or covered music.</i>
Networking	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	Building and maintaining professional relationships and contacts that can lead to opportunities.	<i>Attending local gigs is one way musicians build a networking base of contacts within the industry.</i>
Freelancer	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	A self-employed person who works on a project-by-project basis rather than for a single employer.	<i>The visiting session guitarist explained what it is like to work as a freelancer, moving between different projects.</i>
Brief	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	A set of requirements or constraints given for a task or project, which the response must address.	<i>Learners read the brief carefully before pitching their proposal, to be sure it met every requirement.</i>
Quality standard	<i>noun</i>	T2	A	An agreed benchmark for how good a piece of work needs to be within a professional context.	<i>The group discussed what quality standard a recording would need to reach before it could be sent to a record label.</i>
Bid/proposal	<i>noun</i>	T2	A	A formal, persuasive document offering to carry out a piece of work, usually in response to a brief.	<i>Learners produced a professional bid explaining how their band could deliver a school concert within budget.</i>
Income stream	<i>noun</i>	T2	A	A distinct source of money coming into a business or individual, such as ticket sales, streaming royalties or merchandise.	<i>A touring musician typically relies on several income streams rather than a single source of pay.</i>
Evaluate	<i>verb</i>	T2	E	To assess the success or effectiveness of something using evidence, reaching a supported judgement.	<i>The written task asked learners to evaluate two contrasting approaches to promoting a live event.</i>

Unit 3: Ensemble Music Performance — Vocabulary

Word	Type	Tier	E/A	Definition	Musical Example
Ensemble etiquette	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The unwritten rules of professional conduct expected when rehearsing or performing as part of a group.	<i>Good ensemble etiquette includes arriving prepared, listening to others, and accepting feedback constructively.</i>
Intonation	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The accuracy of pitch when playing or singing, particularly the ability to stay in tune with other performers.	<i>The group spent a whole rehearsal tuning carefully to improve their overall intonation.</i>
Blend	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The way different instruments or voices combine in an ensemble so that no single part dominates inappropriately.	<i>Careful attention to blend meant the lead vocal could be heard clearly above the backing instruments.</i>
Musical direction	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	The act of leading an ensemble through a piece to fulfil the intended interpretation, including creative suggestions during rehearsal.	<i>One member of the group took on musical direction, deciding on dynamics and tempo changes for the performance.</i>
Arrangement	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	Taking an existing piece of music and adapting its instrumentation, structure, tempo or harmony to create a new version.	<i>The ensemble created their own arrangement of the chosen song, changing its instrumentation to suit their line-up.</i>
Stagecraft	<i>noun</i>	T3	E	The practical performance skills involved in presenting music effectively to a live audience, including movement, positioning and audience engagement.	<i>The group worked on their stagecraft, planning where each performer would stand and how to engage the audience.</i>
Technical proficiency	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The level of skill and accuracy a performer demonstrates in playing or singing their instrumental or vocal part.	<i>High technical proficiency allowed the guitarist to play the fast solo section without errors.</i>
Stylistic interpretation	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	Playing or singing music in a manner that is accurate and appropriate to the conventions of the chosen style.	<i>The group's stylistic interpretation of the reggae song included the correct off-beat guitar skank.</i>
Synoptic assessment	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	An assessment that requires learners to draw together and apply knowledge and skills from across an entire qualification.	<i>Unit 3 is a synoptic assessment, requiring learners to apply theory, professionalism and performance skills built across the whole course.</i>
Digital folder	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The organised collection of evidence — recordings, documents and reflections — submitted for assessment.	<i>Each learner submitted a clearly labelled digital folder documenting their process at four milestone stages.</i>

Unit 6: Solo Performance (Optional Unit) — Vocabulary

Word	Type	Tier	E/A	Definition	Musical Example
Stage presence	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The confidence, energy and audience engagement a performer projects while on stage.	<i>The soloist's strong stage presence kept the audience engaged throughout the performance.</i>
Practice routine	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	A planned, structured pattern of individual practice sessions designed to develop specific skills over time.	<i>The learner's practice routine allocated specific days to technical exercises and others to repertoire work.</i>
Interpretation	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	The personal, expressive choices a performer makes in presenting a piece of music, beyond simply playing the correct notes.	<i>Two performers played the same piece, but each gave it a distinct interpretation through their use of dynamics and phrasing.</i>
Technical exercise	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	A practice activity designed to improve a specific physical or musical skill, such as scales or arpeggios.	<i>Daily technical exercises helped the learner improve the speed and accuracy of their finger work.</i>
Warm-up	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	Physical or vocal preparation exercises completed before practice or performance to reduce injury risk and improve readiness.	<i>A vocal warm-up of gentle scales helped protect the singer's voice before the performance.</i>
Self-reflection	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The process of honestly reviewing one's own progress, strengths and areas for improvement.	<i>The learner's practice diary included regular self-reflection on which sections still needed more work.</i>
Repertoire	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The collection of pieces a performer has prepared and is able to perform.	<i>The soloist built a varied repertoire covering three contrasting styles for their final performance.</i>
Musicianship	<i>noun</i>	T3	A	The combined qualities of technical accuracy, expression and interpretation that make a performance convincing and musical.	<i>Strong musicianship, not just correct notes, is what separates a good performance from a great one.</i>
Performance considerations	<i>noun</i>	T2	E	The practical factors — venue, audience, equipment, programme — that affect how a performance should be planned.	<i>Performance considerations for the school hall included microphone placement and the size of the audience.</i>
Distinction criteria	<i>noun</i>	T2	A	The highest-level assessment requirements in a BTEC unit, describing outstanding performance beyond the standard Pass and Merit expectations.	<i>To meet the Distinction criteria, the learner needed to justify their technical choices, not just describe them.</i>

This booklet should be used alongside the Year 12 and 13 Scheme of Work throughout the two-year course. A digital copy is available on Google Classroom. Learners are encouraged to use this booklet little and often, in line with the strategies above.