

# Listening to Music with Understanding - 1

## ABRSM Aural Tests “Musical Features” : Vocabulary for Grades 1 to 3

In grades 1 to 3 the test is conducted using common English words. Foreign words and technical language are not required, although they aren't discouraged, and are useful later. I use technical language and foreign words with my students as a matter of course: “Education is for life, not just for exams”!

### From Grade 1:

#### Loud and quiet playing

As well as checking if the candidate has heard changes in volume, they are expected to know if the changes were sudden or gradual, and what the dynamic profile was (e.g. That the piece started quietly, then was suddenly loud, before becoming gradually quieter, and ending quietly)

Keywords: loud, quiet, gradually, suddenly

NB try not to use the word ‘soft’ - for children, the opposite of soft is ‘hard’, not ‘loud’

Technical language :

dynamics	volume
gradation of tone	gradual changes in volume
forte	loud
piano	quiet
crescendo	getting gradually louder
diminuendo	getting gradually quieter
subito	suddenly

Typical questions:

“Where was the loudest point of the music?”, “That music started quietly. Did it finish quietly?”

Smooth and detached notes

This is about how notes are joined together (and not joined), and where in the music different articulations are found.

Keywords: smooth, detached

Technical language :

articulation	how the notes are joined together.
staccato	detached
legato	smoothly joined

Typical Question:

“At the beginning, were the notes smooth or detached?”

### From Grade 2:

#### Tempo Change

Does the music speed up or slow down? Or did it stay the same? Where in the music did it change?

Keywords: speeds up, slows down,

Technical language :

tempo	speed
accelerando (accel.)	getting gradually faster
ritardando (rit.)	getting gradually slower
rallentando (rall.)	getting gradually slower

### From Grade 3:

#### Major or minor key

Mode describes whether the music is major or minor. (The ABRSM calls this ‘tonality’, wrongly in my opinion, but that’s another story)

Keywords: major, minor

Typical Question: Is the music in a major or minor key? Did the music begin in a major or minor key?