

Glossary: Words and Terms of Music, Bass and Musician

A **glossary** is “an alphabetical list of words and terms about a specific subject, followed by their definition.” A glossary is like a brief dictionary. A words definition can change over time!

In ancient Greece, **glossa** meant “a word or term which needed to be defined or explained.” Then, around 1550, glossa meant “the definition or explanation of a *difficult* word or term.” And we all know, if it’s difficult - it’s probably important. Over time, glossa was shortened to gloss, and today **gloss** means “to define, explain, interpret, translate, or paraphrase a word or term.”

Ary derives from the Medieval Latin, *aris* and *arius* meaning “belonging to” and “connected with.” So, **gloss** (words and terms) + **ary** (belonging to music and connected with the bass) = **glossary**.

Abridged means “not complete,” and since every word and term used to communicate music, bass and musician can’t be listed - here are a few words and terms to get you started.

1st Dimension - width, 1D, how wide something is, interval

2nd Dimension - height, 2D, how high something is, treble

3rd Dimension - depth, 3D, how deep something is, bass

4th Dimension - time, 4D, how much “space” is between two sounds, motion, rhythm

Able, Ability - capable of technique, skill

Accidentals - natural (♮), flat (♭) and sharp (♯) signs

Again - more than one time, repeat, represent, refer

Analog - does not stop, continuous, connected from the beginning to the end

Anchor Finger - the left hand finger that is “linked” to the key letter, form

Arpeggio - harmony of three or more different letters sounded one at a time

Attention - “perceiving” only one

Audition - hearing, listening; a music competition

Aware(ness) - “perceiving” more than one

Bass - instrument of 4, 5 or 6 strings and 12 frets in one octave, low frequency, 3D

Beat - a steady counted pulse; tempo, rhythm

Beginning - the only place you should start

B.P.M. - beats per minute, steady and even tempo, metronome mark

Bridge - bass part opposite the nut; song part that connects the verse to the chorus

Change - to become something different, variable

Chorus - song part that usually states the title

Chromatic - flat (♭) and sharp (♯), *not* natural (♮)

Clock - steady and even 60 beats per minute, regular, does not change

Choice, Choose - using reason to decide “which one”; logic, philosophy, mind

Chord - harmony of three or more different letters sounded at the same time

Coda - “ending”, stop

Combine - to add, join or link together

Count - give beat numbers to a steady pulse, meter, time signature

Diagonal - 45 degree angle, slanted line
Different - not the same, variation, enharmonic
Digital - not connected, discrete, separated, fraction, fragment
Down - right hand strum, low to high pitch, thick string to thin string; stroke or ghost
Duration - the "length of time" a sound or silence lasts, rhythm

End - the opposite of "start at the beginning," coda, stop
Enharmonic - a different symbol for the same sound
Even - regular, equal, same, no variation
Exponential - two or more thoughts or ideas multiplied by each other

Flat Sign (\flat) - *not* natural (\natural) or sharp (\sharp), one fret higher from any letter or tone number
Form - pattern created by "linking" the musician's anchor finger to a bass string, fraction
Fraction - a part or a piece, the disconnected and separated form, *not* the whole
Fragment - "fraction of a fraction", a part or a piece of the form
Fret - vertical metal strip on the bass fretboard
Fret Zero - the "sound at the nut" played by using a left hand finger
Frequency - the number of vibrations per second, oscillation, pitch
Fundamental - tone 1, scale degree 1, root, tonic

Genre - category: rock, blues, jazz, classical, etc.; style
Ghost Strum - a right hand motion, down or up, which does *not* make sound

Half-Step - interval of one fret, 1D
Harmony - interval, arpeggio or chord; letter or numeral symbol
Hearing - touching at a distance, listening, audition
Holistic - connected fragments and form fractions, *not* the "whole"
Horizontal - east and west, sideways, bass strings

Idea - the knowledge that "thought" carries, theory, mind
Improvise - "free to choose," variable, reason, mind
Interlude - "play in the middle," usually between the chorus and the verse; bridge
Interval - distance or difference between two sounds or symbols, steps, 1D
Isotonic - one sound with one location on the fretboard
Isotonic Thinking - one thought with one idea, theory, mind

Key - the letter of tone 1
Key Letter - the letter of tone 1, scale degree 1, root, fundamental or tonic
Key Signature - the *letters* of tones 1 through 7; key *plus* signature
Key Tone - tone 1, scale degree 1, root, fundamental or tonic
Knowledge - that which is learned as an idea, carried back to the thinker as thought, mind

Layer - one "on-top" of the other, music symbols "seen" on the bass fretboard
Learn - understand, comprehend, memorize and remember, mind
Left Hand - finger numbers 1 2 3 4, which "fret" the strings
Letter - first music symbol of pitch
Lick - "tone row" of high sounds, 2D
Listening - awareness and attention to sound, more than just hearing
Location - the string and fret "place" of a pitch on the bass fretboard, position

Logic - thoughts and ideas “in-order,” using reasoning to “choose,” philosophy, mind

Mark - written symbol or sign; rhythm symbol of harmony

Measure - “group of beats” set by the meter, time signature

Meter - “to measure,” number of beats per bar or measure, top number of the time signature

Metronome - variable clock, steady and even pulse, tempo, bpm

Metronome Mark - beats per minute number, tempo, time

Melody - “in-order” scale played “out of order,” sounds one at a time, can’t be changed

Mind - musician, location of the “thought carries idea” process, theory, thinking, philosophy

Modulate - change the key for only a part of the song

Music - Art: sound of Nature, artificial: sound of man, artifact: recording of man’s sound

Musician - the one who thinks music symbols to play music’s sound, mind

Natural Sign (\natural) - *not* flat (\flat) or sharp (\sharp), the original 7 letters and tone numbers

Note - rhythm symbol of duration, connected to a tone number or placed on the staff

Number - numeric symbol for place and order

Numeral - third symbol of pitch, numeric symbol of harmony which indicates type

Numeric - the word, number and numeral for place or order: one, 1, I

Nut - bass part opposite the bridge, turned into *fret zero* or *open* by the musician

Octave - the same letter 12 frets apart, a first octave tone number *plus 7* (1+7=8, 2+7=9, etc.)

Open - the “sound at the nut” *not* played by a left hand finger

Order - in or out of place, numeric

Oscillation - a single swing in one direction of a bass string, vibration, frequency, pitch

Pattern - a group of things; letter pattern, tone pattern, rhythm pattern

Perform(ance) - the result of practice, playing for others, technique, skill

Philosophy - “thinking about thinking,” choice, logic, reason, mind

Pick - “plectrum” held by the right hand to strum the strings; stroke and ghost

Pitch - frequency, vibration, oscillation, letter, number, numeral and staff

Place - string and fret location on the bass fretboard, position

Play - will, ability, technique, skill

Position - a four-fret and 4, 5 or 6 string area on the bass fretboard; location, place

Practice - repetition which leads to performance, technique, skill

Process - the analog “flow” of thought and idea, theory, mind

Pulse - a “sound in time” that is *not* a beat because it is *not* counted; metronome

Reason(ing) - method used to decide “what to choose,” logic, philosophy, mind

Re - again, one more time

Refer - to bring the answer back to the question

Regular - equal distant, steady and even like a clock, metronome, tempo, rhythm, bpm

Repeat - more than one time, a music sign meaning “to do again”

Represent - present the sound *again* as symbol; letter, tone number, numeral, staff-note

Result - a consequence or outcome

Re-Write® - to convert staff-note into tone number to create Tone Note®

Rhythm - beat *plus* notes or marks, two or more analog patterns at the same time

Riff - “tone row” of low sounds, 3D

Right Hand - finger letters: T i m a c, which “strum” the strings

Root - tone 1, scale degree 1, fundamental, tonic, key tone or key letter

Same - *not* different, no variation

Separated - digital, fragment, form fraction

Scale - “in-order” sounds connect by steps; half-step (one fret) and whole-step (two frets)

Scale Degree - numeric tone number; also used to locate harmony numeral

Sharp Sign (♯) - *not* natural (♮) or flat (♭), one fret higher from any letter or tone number

Sign - a “call to action,” tells you to do something, direction; repeat, accidentals

Signature - “what something is,” key signature, time signature

Skill - ability and technique, practice, perform

Stack - one “above” the other, time signature

Staff - 5 horizontal parallel lines, pitch as letters, *not* TAB

Staff-Note - a connection of a rhythm note with a staff letter; Re-Write® to Tone Note®

Start - there are many places to start but only one beginning; “start at the beginning”

Steady - regular and even like a clock, tempo, beat, metronome

Steps - half step (one fret) and whole step (two frets), interval

Stop - at the end, coda

Strings - Bass has 4, 5 or 6

Stroke - a right hand strum down or up which makes sound

Strum - a right hand motion down or up; stroke or ghost

Style - a “sub-category” of a genre, such as: classic rock, smooth jazz, heavy metal, etc.

Symbol - represents sound as: letter, number, numeral, note, etc.

TAB - 4, 5 or 6 horizontal parallel lines (bass strings) with “layered” fret numbers, *not* staff

Technique - skill and ability, gets better over time; repeat, practice, perform

Tempo - rate of speed (slow or fast) of the steady beat, bpm, metronome mark

Theme - the original melody or “tone row”

Theory - to think, thought connected to idea, mind

Think(ing) - process of connecting thought with idea, awareness and attention

Thought - “carries” an idea (knowledge) back to the thinker; refer, theory, mind

Tie - a “curved line” that “connects” sound (tones and notes); silence (*rests*) do *not* get tied

Time - rhythm, 4D, motion, when a sound or silence occurs, pulse, beat, tempo, count

Time signature - meter and value numbers “stacked” one *above* the other

Tonic - tone 1, scale degree, fundamental, root

Tone Note® - the connection of a rhythm note with a tone number

Tone Number - second music symbol of pitch, scale degree

Tone Row - series of connected pitches as tone numbers; melody, lick, riff, etc.

Transpose - change the key of the entire song

Treble - high frequency, 2D

Type - what “kind” of scale, arpeggio or chord; major, minor, whole tone, etc.

Unison - the same sound in more than one location on the bass fretboard

Unison Thinking - one thought with two or more ideas

Up - right hand strum, high to low pitch, thin string to thick string; stroke or ghost

Value - “one beat,” bottom number of the time signature, note that gets one beat changes

Variation - to change the original, different, *not* the same

Variable - able to change; metronome, improvise

Verse - song part that tells the story

Vertical - north and south, up and down; nut, bridge and frets

Vibration - repeated back and forth motion, oscillation, frequency, pitch

Whole - all, complete, undifferentiated fragments, forms fractions; *not* separated

Whole Step - interval of two frets, 1D

Will - self directed action behind thought and idea, play

Zero - the number 0 before 1, as in “fret zero,” *not* the letter O as in “open”

Mike Overly is a regular contributor to *BassBooks.com* and author of *Bass EncycloMedia*, *BEM Jam audio disc 1*, *Bass Fretboard Facts* and *Bass Fretboard Flashcards for 4, 5 & 6 String Bass*.

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