



National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

Definitions of Music Adjudication Terms

Edited and Published – February 2024



Terms used with permission of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA®) and taken from the NYSSMA® Handbook.

Band Orchestra - Definitions of Terms

TONE - The sound produced by the instrument.

- Quality/Clarity - The beauty of sound.
- Control - The maintenance of quality throughout the scope of dynamics and ranges.
- Blend - The ability to produce a unified melding of sound.

INTONATION - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other and/or to a fixed standard.

- Full Ensemble - Overall agreement on pitch and tonality by the entire ensemble.
- Melodic Line - The maintenance of pitch within the harmonic context.
- Soloist/Individual - The pitch relationship between soloist and ensemble.
- Sections - The agreement on pitch and tonality within individual sections and the harmonic structure.

BALANCE - The dynamic level within and between sections.

- Full Ensemble - The appropriate weighting of the instruments in the ensemble according to the score.
- Individual Sections - The appropriate weighting of the instruments in the individual sections.
- Soloist with Full Ensemble - The volume relationship between soloist and ensemble.

TECHNIQUE - The physical ability and mechanical dexterity required to produce notes correctly.

- Facility - The ease of execution of technical passages.
- Flexibility - The ease of maneuverability throughout the range of the instrument
- Posture - The generally correct position of the body for proper tone production.

ACCURACY/EXECUTION - The exact realization of the notated music.

- Accuracy of Notes - The performance of pitches as written.
- Attacks and Releases - The musically appropriate beginnings and endings of written sound (notes).
- Articulation - The accuracy and agreement of the performance of the separation and/or connection of the notes as written (tonguing, slurring, bowing).
- Unity of Ensemble - The ensemble's ability to play together as a cohesive unit.

RHYTHM - The duration of notes in relation to a pulse.

- Steadiness of Pulse - The performance of the natural accents implied by the meter of the composition.
- Accuracy of Rhythm - The appropriate performance of rhythm as written.

INTERPRETATION - The performer's/conductor's realization of the composer's aesthetic intent and the ensemble's artistic expression.

- Dynamics - The contrast between loud and soft.
- Style - The understanding of the composer's musical intent consistent with the historical period of the composition.
- Tempo - The speed of the music according to the metronomic, stylistic and/or expressive markings of the music.
- Phrasing - The shaping of a musical idea.
- Expression - The signs or words used to indicate the emotional aspect of a work.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- Discipline/Appearance - The appropriate maturity and decorum of the ensemble.
- Appropriate Choice of Music - The proper selection of music for this group's apparent level of achievement, strengths and weaknesses.

Choral - Definitions of Terms

TONE - The sound produced by the voice.

- Quality/Clarity - The beauty of sound.
- Purity of Vowel - The correct and uniform vowel formation.
- Blend - The ability to produce a unified melding of sound.
- Projection - The ability, within the natural limits of the voice, to project the tone into the performance arena.
- Consistency - The evenness of the vocal sound.

INTONATION - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other and/or to a fixed standard.

- Consistency Throughout - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other throughout vocal ranges.
- Between Sections/Parts - The accuracy of pitches in relationship to other voice parts.
- Accompanist/Soloist - The agreement on pitch and tonality between solo line and harmonic structure.

BALANCE - The dynamic level within and between sections.

- Unity of Ensemble - The appropriate weighting of the voices in the ensemble according to the score.
- Chorus with Soloists/Instruments - The volume relationship between soloist/ensemble/instrument.

TECHNIQUE - The physical ability required to produce notes correctly.

- Facility/Flexibility - The ease of execution of technical passages.
- Breathing (support/control) - The physical process of producing the vocal sound through the proper use of air.
- Posture - The generally correct position of the body for proper tone production.

ACCURACY/EXECUTION - The exact realization of the notated music.

- Accuracy of Rhythm - The appropriate performance of rhythms as written.
- Accuracy of Pitch - The performance of pitches as written.
- Accuracy of Attacks and Releases - The musically appropriate beginnings and endings of written sound (notes).

DICTION - The production of vowels and consonants.

- Clarity/Consonants - The appropriate articulation of consonants for singing.
- Correct & Consistent Vowels - The use of uniform and correct vowels for the requirements of the text.

INTERPRETATION - The performer's/conductor's realization of the composer's aesthetic intent and the ensemble's artistic expression.

- Dynamics - The contrast between loud and soft.
- Style - The understanding of the composer's musical intent consistent with the historical period of the composition.
- Tempo - The speed of the music according to the metronomic, stylistic and/or expressive markings of the music.
- Phrasing - The shaping of a musical idea.
- Expression - The signs or words used to indicate the emotional aspect of a work.
- Projecting the Mood -The aural and visual expression of the thoughts and feelings of the text.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- Discipline/Appearance - The appropriate maturity and decorum of the ensemble.
- Appropriate Choice of Music - The proper selection of music for this group's apparent level of achievement, strengths and weaknesses.

Instrumental Jazz - Definitions of Terms

Entire Ensemble

OVERALL TONAL TEXTURE - This term is intended to include Balance, Blend, Intonation, Quality of Sound, and other intangibles which contribute to the overall sound of the Ensemble.

- Balance & Blend - The ability to produce a unified melding of sound. The appropriate weighting of voices in the ensemble.
- Intonation - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other and/or to a fixed standard.
- Quality of Sound - The beauty of sound.

AUTHORITY AND PRECISION - These terms have to do with the manner in which phrases are attacked and released.

- Attacks and Releases - The musically appropriate beginnings and endings of written sound (notes).
- Accuracy of Notes - The performance of pitches as written.
- Unity of Ensemble - The ensemble's ability to play together as a cohesive unit.
- Articulation - The accuracy and agreement of the performance of the separation and/or connection of the notes as written (tonguing, slurring, etc.).

INTERPRETATION - The performer's/conductor's realization of the composer's aesthetic intent and the ensemble's artistic expression.

- Dynamics - The contrast between loud and soft.
- Style - The understanding of the composer's musical intent consistent with the historical period of the composition.
- Tempo - The speed of the music according to the metronomic, stylistic and/or expressive markings of the music.
- Phrasing - The shaping of a musical idea.
- Expression - The signs or words used to indicate the emotional aspect of a work.

Rhythm Section

BALANCE - Rhythm sections should be balanced within themselves and in terms of the Ensemble.

- Blend - The ability to produce a unified melding of the sound of the rhythm section. Demonstrating an understanding of the individual role of each rhythm section instrument (piano, bass, guitar, vibes, drums).
- Intonation - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other and/or to a fixed standard.
- Quality of Sound - The beauty of sound.

FILLS & BAND BACK-UP - The fills used should be appropriate to the musical style. The band back-up refers to rhythmic awareness and support of the Ensemble phrases.

- **Appropriate Music Style** - Fills and back-up should be in keeping with the style of the selection and should enhance the general performance.
- **Rhythmic Awareness** - The patterns played should be an effort by the total rhythm section. The appropriate performance of rhythm.
- **Support of Ensemble Phrases** - The ability to phrase together as a cohesive unit.

TIME & RHYTHMIC FEEL - The rhythm section must provide the basic pulsation for the ensemble. The patterns played should be an effort by the total rhythm section and should be balanced or structured to support the Ensemble. The term "time" refers to the manner in which rhythmic patterns are played within the phrase.

- **Basic Pulsation** - The duration of notes in relation to a pulse.
- **Steadiness of Pulse** - The performance of the natural accents implied by the meter of the composition.
- **Accuracy of Rhythm** - The appropriate performance of rhythm as written.

Other

IMPROVISATION

- **Solos** – All solos will be evaluated based on soloist's awareness of stylistic and harmonic content, ability to communicate ideas and the ability to make creative, personal, musical statements.
- **Appropriate Style** - Solo should be in keeping with the style of the selection (Jazz, Swing, Bebop, Rock, etc.)
- **Rhythm Concept** - The student's ability to balance the note rhythms to enhance the melodic line.
- **Melodic Concept** - The student's ability to improvise (compose a melodic line which contains interest, direction, horizontal and vertical elements of musical texture).
- **Harmonic Structure** - The use of correct scales as related to the chord progression. The use of horizontal and vertical elements.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- **Discipline/Appearance** - The appropriate maturity and decorum of the ensemble.
- **Appropriate Choice of Music** - The proper selection of music for this group's apparent level of achievement, strengths and weaknesses.
- **Appropriate Choice of Music** - The proper selection of music for this group's apparent level of achievement, strengths and weaknesses.

Vocal Jazz - Definitions of Terms

TONE - The sound produced by the voice.

- Quality/Clarity - The beauty of sound.
- Blend - The ability to produce a unified melding of sound.
- Projection - The ability, within the natural limits of the voice, to project the tone into the performance arena.
- Consistency - The evenness of the vocal sound.

INTONATION - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other and/or to a fixed standard.

- Consistency Throughout - The accuracy of pitches in relation to each other throughout vocal ranges.
- Between Sections/Parts - The accuracy of pitches in relationship to other voice parts.
- Accompanist/Soloist - The agreement on pitch and tonality between solo line and harmonic structure.

BALANCE - The dynamic level within and between sections.

- Unity of Ensemble - The appropriate weighting of the voices in the ensemble according to the score.
- Chorus with Soloists/Instruments - The volume relationship between soloist/ensemble/instrument.

TECHNIQUE - The physical ability required to produce notes correctly.

- Facility - The ease of execution of technical passages.
- Breathing (support/control) - The physical process of producing the vocal sound through the proper use of air.
- Posture - The generally correct position of the body for proper tone production.

RHYTHM/TIME - Everything pertaining to the temporal quality (duration) of the musical sound.

- Steadiness of Pulse - The performance of the natural accents implied by the meter of the composition.
- Accuracy of Rhythm - The appropriate performance of rhythm as written.

DICTION - The production of vowels and consonants.

- Consonants - The appropriate articulation of consonants for singing.
- Vowels - The use of uniform and correct vowels for the requirements of the text.

INTERPRETATION - The performer's/conductor's realization of the composer's aesthetic intent and the ensemble's artistic expression.

- Dynamics - The contrast between loud and soft.
- Style - The understanding of the composer's musical intent.
- Tempo - The speed of the music according to the metronomic, stylistic and/or expressive markings of the music.
- Phrasing - The shaping of a musical idea.
- Expression - The signs or words used to indicate the emotional aspect of a work.
- Projecting the Mood - The aural and visual expression of the thoughts and feelings of the text.

IMPROVISATION – All solos will be evaluated based on the soloists' awareness of the style of the selection. The solo should exhibit the student's ability to make a musical statement that is creative and personal. The solo should enhance the performance at that point.

- Appropriate Style - Solo should be in keeping with the style of the selection (Jazz, Swing, Bebop, Rock, etc.)
- Rhythm Concept - The student's ability to balance the note rhythms to enhance the melodic line.
- Melodic Concept - The student's ability to improvise (compose a melodic line which contains interest, direction, horizontal and vertical elements of musical texture).
- Harmonic Structure - The use of correct scales as related to the chord progression. The use of horizontal and vertical elements.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- Discipline/Appearance - The appropriate maturity and decorum of the ensemble.
- Appropriate Choice of Music - The proper selection of music for this group's apparent level of achievement, strengths and weaknesses.