GarageBand: Glossary of Terms

Audio
Sound, especially when recorded or transferred to an electrical signal.

Beat
The regular, repeating rhythmic pulse of a song.

bpm
Abbreviation for beats per minute, the measure of the tempo of a song.

Chorus
An effect in which copies of the original sound are played back later. Each copy is played back slightly out of tune from the original. Used to create the sound of several voices or instruments playing together.

Clipping
Distortion caused when the volume level exceeds the maximum that can be accurately reproduced. See **distortion**.

Compressor
An effect in which the difference between the loudest and softest parts of a song or track is decreased. Compression can add punch and focus to a song, and make the song sound better when played on equipment with a narrower dynamic range.

Decibel
Abbreviated as *dB*. A unit of measure for the volume or loudness of a sound. The decibel scale is a logarithmic scale in which 1 dB is approximately the smallest change in volume audible to human ears.

Distortion
The effect produced when the volume level exceeds the maximum that can be accurately reproduced. Heard as a sharp, crackling sound, which is undesirable in most circumstances.

Dynamic
1. A change occurring over time. 2. The range from the lowest to the highest volume level, called *dynamic range*.

Echo
An effect in which copies of the original sound played back later in time, enough to be heard distinctly from the original. Also sometimes called *delay*.

Effect
A device, or computer algorithm, used to produce a change to an audio signal. Popular music styles use a variety of effects to add character to sounds. Examples of common effects include compression, equalizer (EQ), echo, and reverb.

Equalizer
A widely used effect in which specific frequencies of a sound are increased or decreased in volume. Using an equalizer can produce both subtle and dramatic changes in the quality of a sound. Also called EQ (short for *equalization*).

Fanger
An effect similar to a chorus, but in which the copies of the sound are also played back more out of tune from the original signal. See *phaser*.
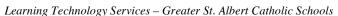
Gain
Equivalent to **volume**. Specifically, increasing the level of an electric audio signal.

Key
Musical term for a musical scale starting on a specific note or pitch. That note is called the *root* or *tonic* of the scale.

Measure
A regular group of beats, heard together as a larger rhythmic unit.

Metronome
A device that marks regular intervals of time, such as musical beats, by sounding a click.

MIDI
Acronym for *Musical Instrument Digital Interface*. A standard protocol used for communication between electronic musical instruments and computers. You can play the Software Instruments in GarageBand using a MIDI-compatible music keyboard.

Note
Musical term for the pitch or frequency of a sound. There are seven notes in both the major and minor scales, and 12 in the chromatic scale.

Octave
Musical term for a note either twice or half the pitch of another note. There are 12 semitones between notes an octave apart.

Pan
Short for *panorama*. The position of a sound in the stereo field between the left and right speakers. An instrument's pan position helps create the sense of where the instrument exists in space.

Phaser
An effect in which copies of the original sound are played back slightly later in time, and also played out of phase with the original. Creates a characteristic "whooshing" sound, something like a jet plane flying by.

Pitch
The perceived highness or lowness of a sound. In music, the pitch of a sound is expressed as a musical *note*. Scientifically, pitch corresponds to the sound's frequency.

Reverb
Short for *reverberation*. An effect that recreates the sound of an acoustic space by playing back many copies of the original signal, at slightly varied times and volume levels.

Scale
Musical term for a group of related notes that forms the basis for a melody, a series of chords, or an entire song. The most common scales are the *major scale* and *minor scale*.

Semitone
Musical term for the smallest distance between two notes. Larger distances, called *intervals*, are measured by the number of semitones. There are 12 semitones between each octave.

Tempo
The speed or rate at which rhythmic beats occur in a song, measured in *bpm* (beats per minute).

Timing
The precision with which notes and other musical events align with the beats and measures of a song, or with another note value.

Transpose
Musical term for moving notes or scales up or down by a specific number of semitones, resulting in their being in a new key.

Velocity
For a MIDI-compatible keyboard, velocity is a measure of how hard you press each key as you play. Software Instrument notes played at a higher velocity sound different than notes played at a lower velocity.

Volume
The perceived loudness of a sound, measured in *decibels*.