

**Oregon Department of Education  
Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Field Services**

**THE ARTS VOCABULARY LISTS**

These vocabulary lists have been created by arts teachers and other practitioners from around the state of Oregon. Research provides information and data about the advantage of common language when learning is taking place.

The words and definitions are for district and school use. There may not be agreement with definitions but the list of words provides a starting place for development of common vocabulary at the district level.

# Dance/Movement

## Basic Vocabulary

<b>AB</b>	A two-part compositional form with an A theme and a B theme; the binary form consists of two distinct, self-contained sections that share either a character or quality, i.e. same tempo, movement quality or style.
<b>ABA</b>	A three-part compositional form in which the second section contrasts with the first section. The third section is a restatement of the first section in a condensed, abbreviated or extended form.
<b>Abstract</b>	To remove movement from a particular or representative context and, by manipulating it with elements of space, time and force, create a new sequence or dance that retains the essence of the original.
<b>Action</b>	A movement event.
<b>Aesthetic criteria</b>	Standards on which to make judgments about the artistic merit of a work of art.
<b>Alignment</b>	The relationship of the skeleton to the line of gravity and the base of support.
<b>Axial movement</b>	Any movement that is anchored to one spot by a body part using only the available space in any direction without losing the initial body contact. Movement is organized around the axis of the body rather than designed for travel from one location to another; also known as nonlocomotor movement.
<b>Call and response</b>	A structure that is most often associated with African music and dance forms, although it is also used elsewhere. One soloist/group performs with the soloist/group entering “in response” to the first.
<b>Canon</b>	Choreographic form that reflects the musical form of the same name, in which individuals and groups perform the same movement/phrase beginning at different times.
<b>Chance</b>	A choreographic process in which elements are specifically chosen and defined but randomly structured to create a dance or movement phrase. This process demands high levels of concentration in performance to deal effectively with free association and surprise structures that appear spontaneously.
<b>Choreographic</b>	Describes a dance sequence that has been created with specific intent.
<b>Choreographic</b>	The specific compositional forms in which movement is structured

<b>Structure</b>	to create a dance.
<b>Classical</b>	Dance that has been developed into highly stylized structures within a culture. Generally developed within the court or circle of power in a society.
<b>Discuss</b>	To engage in oral, written or any other appropriate form of presentation.
<b>Dynamics</b>	The expressive content of human movement, sometimes called qualities or efforts. Dynamics manifest the interrelationships among the elements of space, time and force/energy. See also movement quality.
<b>Elements</b>	The use of the body moving in space and time with force/energy.
<b>Elevation</b>	The body's propulsion into the air away from the floor, such as in a leap, hop, or jump.
<b>Folk</b>	Dances that are usually created and performed by a specific group within a culture. Generally these dances originated outside the courts or circle of power within a society.
<b>Improvisation</b>	Movement that is created spontaneously, ranging from free-form to highly structured environments, but always with an element of chance. Provides the dancer with the opportunity to bring together elements quickly, and requires focus and concentration. Improvisation is instant and simultaneous choreography and performance.
<b>Initiation</b>	Point at which a movement is said to originate. This particularly refers to specific body parts and is generally said to be either distal (from the limbs or head) or central (from the torso).
<b>Kinesphere</b>	The movement space, or the space surrounding the body in stillness and in motion, which includes all directions and levels both close to the body and as far as the person can reach with limbs or torso.
<b>Kinesthetic</b>	Refers to the ability of the body's sensory organs in the muscles, tendons and joints to respond to stimuli while dancing or viewing a dance.
<b>Levels</b>	The height of the dancer in relation to the floor.
<b>Locomotor movement</b>	Movement that travels from place to place, usually identified by weight transference on the feet. Basic locomotor steps are the walk, run, leap, hop and jump and the irregular rhythmic combinations of the skip (walk and hop), slide (walk and leap) and gallop (walk and leap).

<b>Movement quality</b>	The identifying attributes created by the release, follow-through and termination of energy, which are key to making movement become dance. Typical terms denoting qualities include sustained, swing, percussive, collapse and vibratory; and effort combinations such as float, dab, punch and glide.
<b>Movement theme</b>	A complete idea in movement that is manipulated and developed within a dance.
<b>Musicality</b>	The attention and sensitivity to the musical elements of dance while creating or performing.
<b>Narrative</b>	Choreographic structure that follows a specific story line and intends to convey specific information through that story.
<b>Palindrome</b>	A choreographic structure used with a phrase or longer sequence of movement in which the phrase, for example, is first performed proceeding from movement 1 to movement 2, etc.; when the last movement of the phrase is completed, the phrase is retrograded from the penultimate movement to the first movement. (A commonly used example in prose is “Able was I ere I saw Elba.” In this example, the letters are the same forward to the “r” in “ere” as they are backward to the “r.”)
<b>Personal space</b>	The “space bubble” or the kinesphere that one occupies; it includes all levels, planes and directions both near and far from the body’s center.
<b>Phrase</b>	A brief sequence of related movements that has a sense of rhythmic completion.
<b>Projection</b>	A confident presentation of one’s body and energy to vividly communicate movement and meaning to an audience; performance quality.
<b>Reordering</b>	A choreographic process in which known and defined elements (specific movements, movement phrases, etc.) are separated from their original relationship and restructured in a different pattern.
<b>Rhythmic acuity</b>	The physical, auditory recognition of various complex time elements.
<b>Style</b>	A distinctive manner of moving; the characteristic way dance is done, created or performed that identifies the dance of a particular performer, choreographer or period.
<b>Technology</b>	Electronic media such as video, computers or lasers used as tools to create, learn, explain, document, analyze or present dance.
<b>Theatrical</b>	Dance genres primarily developed for the stage such as jazz and tap.

**Traditional dance** The term “traditional” is used to denote those dances and dance forms that have arisen out of the tradition of a people, such as the dances of bharata natyam, noh or the folk dances of indigenous peoples of Europe or other areas.

**Warm-up** Movements and/or movement phrases designed to raise the core body temperature and bring the mind into focus for the dance activities to follow.

# Music

## Basic Vocabulary

<b>accelerando</b>	An Italian term indicating a tempo that gradually becomes faster.
<b>accent</b>	A stress or emphasis given to a certain tone or beat.
<b>allegro</b>	An Italian term indicating a lively tempo.
<b>articulation</b>	The way a tone is begun, shaped and ended.
<b>beat</b>	A repeating pulse that can be felt in some music.
<b>binary form</b>	A simple form of two sections, represented as AB, each of which is usually repeated.
<b>chord</b>	Three or more different tones that, taken as a group, form a meaningful unit of harmony. The tones may be sounded at the same time or successively.
<b>consonant</b>	A combination of pitches that, because of its relative stability or lack of tension, does not demand resolution.
<b>contour</b>	The shape of a melody, or how it rises and falls.
<b>crescendo</b>	An Italian term indicating a dynamic level that gradually becomes louder.
<b>diminuendo</b>	An Italian term indicating a dynamic level that gradually becomes softer.
<b>dissonant</b>	A combination of pitches that, because of its relative instability or feeling of tension, demands resolution.
<b>duple meter</b>	Beats grouped into sets of two, strong/weak.
<b>dynamics</b>	The degree and range of loudness or softness (volume) of music.
<b>elements of music</b>	The building blocks or expressive aspects of music such as rhythm, melody, harmony, form, tempo, dynamics, timbre and texture.
<b>ensemble</b>	A group of musicians that perform together in either vocal, instrumental, or mixed combinations.

<b>form</b>	Form in music refers to the overall structural organization of music and the interrelationships of musical events within that structure, incorporating repetition, contrast, unity and variety.
<b>forte</b>	An Italian term indicating a loud dynamic level.
<b>harmony</b>	Two or more different tones sounding at the same time.
<b>improvisation</b>	The spontaneous creation of music at the same time that it is performed, as opposed to performing from memory or from notation.
<b>instrument families</b>	The grouping of instruments based on how they create sound: by vibrating a column of air (e.g. flute, trumpet, clarinet); by being struck, scraped, or shaken (e.g. percussion such as cymbals and maracas); by striking or rubbing a membrane stretched across a resonating air chamber (e.g. drums); by striking, rubbing, or plucking a string (e.g. violin, guitar, piano); or by using an electronic process (e.g. synthesizers).
<b>interval</b>	The distance in pitch between two tones sounded either successively (melodic) or at the same time (harmonic).
<b>largo</b>	An Italian term indicating a slow tempo.
<b>legato</b>	Notes that are articulated in a smooth, connected manner.
<b>melody</b>	A logical succession of high and low tones sounding one after another in rhythm, which together are perceived as a meaningful whole. The tones may move up, down, or stay the same, and they may progress by step or skip
<b>meter</b>	The way beats are grouped, according to underlying, regularly occurring accents. The meter is indicated at the beginning of a composition by the meter signature.
<b>mezzo</b>	An Italian term literally meaning “half.” It is commonly used as meaning “medium” or “moderately,” as in mezzo forte and mezzo piano.
<b>music</b>	The art of organized sound.

<b>notation</b>	Any system used for writing down music. Traditional notation uses notes to indicate the relative duration of tones, and the placement of those notes on the musical staff to indicate their pitch.
<b>note</b>	A symbol used to write music on a staff, indicating the relative duration and pitch. The durations are indicated by a note being black or white, and the presence or absence of stems and flags. Typical note values are whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, etc.
<b>perform</b>	To execute the written directions of musical notation or to improvise with the intent of creating a musical expression, usually in front of an audience as opposed to rehearsing or practicing.
<b>phrase</b>	A portion of a melody that is heard as a meaningful unit, comparable to a sentence or clause, and ending in a cadence.
<b>piano</b>	An Italian term indicating a soft dynamic level.
<b>pitch</b>	The highness or lowness of a tone. In notation, pitch is indicated by the placement of a note on the musical staff.
<b>range</b>	The musical distance between the highest and lowest pitches of a melody, voice (vocal ranges are classified as soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass), or instrument.
<b>round</b>	A melody composed in such a way that performers create a desired effect by beginning the melody at different, predetermined times.
<b>rhythm</b>	The organization of long and short sounds and silences that convey a sense of movement in music. Rhythm can be regular or irregular, simple or complex.
<b>ritardando</b>	An Italian term indicating a tempo that gradually becomes slower.
<b>scale</b>	A pattern of consecutive pitches arranged in ascending or descending order and identified by the specific arrangement of the intervals between the notes.
<b>staccato</b>	Notes that are articulated in a crisp, detached manner.
<b>tempo</b>	The speed of the underlying beat of music.
<b>ternary form</b>	A simple form of three sections, represented as ABA, in which the first part is repeated after a middle section of different content.

<b>texture</b>	The distinguishing character of music resulting from the ways in which the horizontal (melodic) and vertical (harmonic) elements are combined. Common textures include monophonic, polyphonic, homophonic, and heterophonic.
<b>timbre</b>	The distinctive tone quality (or color) that helps to distinguish one voice or instrument from another. Timbre may be described as bright, dark, smooth, harsh, hollow, etc.
<b>tonality</b>	A feeling in melody or harmony that one tone, the tonic, is more important than the others. The relationship of the other tones to the tonic defines the tonality, mode, scale, and/or key of a piece.
<b>tone</b>	A sound of definite pitch, character, and duration that is produced by a regular number of vibrations per second (frequency), as distinct from noise. Sometimes referred to as a note.
<b>triple meter</b>	Beats grouped into sets of three, strong/weak/weak.

# Theatre

## Basic Vocabulary

<b>act</b>	The major sections of a play.
<b>actor</b>	The artist portraying a role on-stage.
<b>audience</b>	The group that reacts and responds to a theatrical performance.
<b>audition</b>	An opportunity through which a performer is able to demonstrate talent.
<b>backstage</b>	The area of the stage that is out of sight of the audience.
<b>blocking</b>	Actors' movement on-stage.
<b>cast</b>	The ensemble of actors who portray the roles in a play.
<b>center stage</b>	The center area of the stage.
<b>characterization</b>	The process of creating a character whose words and actions are determined by the elements of the play.
<b>comedy</b>	A light and amusing play that typically has a happy ending.
<b>conflict</b>	The action when two opposing forces meet.
<b>cue</b>	The signal an actor receives or uses to begin a line or movement.
<b>diction</b>	The actor's ability to be understood.
<b>director</b>	The person who oversees the entire process of staging a production.
<b>down stage</b>	The area of the stage closest to the audience.
<b>dramatic mediums</b>	Telling stories through stage, film, television, radio or technology.
<b>dress rehearsal</b>	A full rehearsal with complete technical accompaniment during the final production phase before an opening night performance.
<b>fourth wall</b>	An imaginary wall between the actors and the audience.
<b>house</b>	The area in a theatre/auditorium where the audience sits.

<b>improvisation</b>	The spontaneous movement and speech creating a specific character in a particular situation.
<b>intention</b>	What the character wants from the other character(s) in a scene.
<b>interpretation</b>	Choices the actor, director and designer make together to clarify the role or play.
<b>monologue</b>	Part of a play in which one character speaks alone.
<b>pantomime</b>	Performing without words, expressing meaning through physical actions/gestures.
<b>performance</b>	A live event shared between theatre artists and an audience.
<b>play</b>	A piece of work written in dialogue form usually with a beginning, middle and end, broken into one to three acts.
<b>playwright</b>	A person who writes dialogue in the form of a play.
<b>plot</b>	The sequence of events in a play, generally including rising action, a climax and a resolution.
<b>props</b>	Physical items an actor interacts with on stage.
<b>proscenium arch</b>	An opening in a wall that stands between the stage and the house that becomes the frame through which the audience sees the play.
<b>rehearsal</b>	Time allocated to practice and prepare the actors cast in a a play for performance.
<b>role</b>	A part or character that an actor interprets in a performance.
<b>scene</b>	The basic structural element of a play.
<b>set</b>	Physical environment in which the actors perform.
<b>stage</b>	The acting area.
<b>stage business</b>	Small actions performed by an actor which may enhance character or develop plot.
<b>stage crew</b>	The group of people working on set construction, props, lighting, sound, costumes, and make-up.
<b>stage left</b>	The area of the stage to the actor's left.

<b>stage right</b>	The area of the stage to the actor's right.
<b>stage manager</b>	The person in charge of all elements of a play during the run of a performance.
<b>tableau</b>	A still image, frozen moment, or a "photograph." Created by posing still bodies.
<b>technical theatre</b>	Designers and artists who collaborate to create and produce the visual and aural elements of a play.
<b>theme</b>	The underlying meaning of a play or literary work.
<b>tragedy</b>	A form of a play or theatre where the main character suffers a reversal or downfall.
<b>upstage</b>	The area of the stage farthest from the audience.
<b>volume</b> (voice production)	The actor's ability to be heard.

# Visual Art

## Basic Vocabulary

<b>abstract</b>	To simplify, rearrange or distort an image; a non-representational form of art.
<b>aesthetics</b>	The philosophy or study of the nature of beauty, the value of the arts and the inquiry processes and human responses associated.
<b>analysis</b>	In art criticism, the step in which you determine how the principles of art are used to organize the element of art. In art history, the step used to determine the style of the work.
<b>art criticism</b>	An organized approach for objectively studying a work of art consisting of four stages: description, analysis, interpretation and judgment.
<b>balance</b>	A principle of art that is concerned with the sense of stability of the visual elements. There are three types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial.
<b>color</b>	A visual element that refers to what the eyes see when light is reflected off an object. Hue, value and intensity are three properties of color.
<b>color wheel</b>	An artists tool of the color spectrum bent into a circle displaying primary, secondary and intermediate/tertiary colors and useful in organizing color schemes.
<b>composition</b>	A arrangement of the visual elements in an artwork often used to refer to a work of art itself.
<b>content</b>	The message the work communicates. The content can relate to the subject matter or be an idea or emotion. Theme is another word for content.
<b>contrast</b>	A principle of art that uses the differences between the visual elements to create variety, emphasis or interest. Contrast in value is the difference between light and dark.
<b>creativity</b>	Using imagination rather than imitating something else. Generation of ideas, images and/or solutions.
<b>emphasis</b>	A principle of art that stresses one element of art, defines a center of interest or draws attention to certain areas with a work of art.

<b>form</b>	The visual element that is three-dimensional; having height, width and depth.
<b>harmony</b>	The related qualities of the visual elements of a composition. Harmony is achieved by repetition of characteristics that are the same or similar.
<b>line</b>	A visual element that is the path of a moving point through space. It has the properties of direction, width and length.
<b>medium (media)</b>	The materials used to create a work of art.
<b>movement</b>	A principle of art used to guide a viewer's eye throughout the work; a trend.
<b>negative space</b>	Spaces surrounding shapes or forms in two- and three-dimensional art.
<b>pattern</b>	Repetition of elements or motif.
<b>perspective</b>	A formula for projecting the illusion of three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional surface.
<b>positive space</b>	Shapes or forms in two-dimensional and three-dimensional art.
<b>principles of design</b>	Refers to the ways artists organize the visual elements of art: generally found to include balance, emphasis, contrast, unity, movement and rhythm. May also include: proportion, scale, repetition, pattern, and variety.
<b>proportion</b>	A principle of art concerned with the relationships in size, one part to another or to the whole.
<b>repetition</b>	An art element repeated over and over that can produce visual rhythm.
<b>rhythm</b>	A principle of art in which the appearance of movement is created by the recurrence of elements.
<b>scale</b>	When proportional relationships are created relative to a specific unit of measurement.
<b>shape</b>	The visual element that has two-dimensions: height and width. A space with a defined or implied boundary. Two basic groups: geometric and organic.

<b>space</b>	The visual element that refers to the area between, around, above, below and within objects.
<b>style</b>	The identifying characteristics of the artwork of an individual, a group of artists, a period of time or an entire society.
<b>symbol</b>	A visual image that represents something other than itself.
<b>technique</b>	Specific methods or approaches when working with materials in creating works of art.
<b>texture</b>	The visual element that refers to the way something feels or looks like it feels and can be actual or implied.
<b>unity</b>	A principle of art that is concerned with the sense of wholeness or completeness.
<b>value</b>	The visual element that refers to lightness and darkness.
<b>variety</b>	A principle of art through which different elements are used to add visual interest.
<b>visual elements of design</b>	The basic ingredients artists use to create works of art: line, shape, form, color, texture and space.