

Band Music Grade Levels

From Music44:

What is the Grade Level on a piece of music? This is a complex question. The grading system generally ranges from 1-6 increasing in difficulty level. Unfortunately there is not an agreed upon scale for this grading system and it varies by publisher. They don't really publish the policy, but experienced players have provided the interpretation as follows:

Grade 1 (Beginner) Music for 1st-2nd year players. Mainly quarter note values and longer are used, with eighth notes occasionally. Limited number of pitches used.

Grade 2 (Intermediate) More advanced than Grade 1. Uses more interesting rhythms incorporating dotted-quarter-eighth-note figures, with more pitches used than in Grade 1.

Grade 3 (Late Intermediate) Uses some sixteenth notes in addition to all other note values. Syncopation can be used. More key changes and accidentals are utilized, may call for full range of the instrument.

Grade 4 (Early Advanced) This is a grade level for people with ability who really want to play some cool charts. Players who feel comfortable with their instrument and have a good rhythmic abilities will be able to perform music at this level.

Grade 5 (Advanced) Most works at this level are going to take exactly that -- Work! They are not unplayable, however, you don't want to sit down at a gig and sight read one of these charts.

Grade 6 (Advanced +) This is a class of music for people who want to play something hard because a) they like to play something really difficult b) they really love the music, and don't mind putting in the work that it takes to play it well.

Band Music Grade Levels

From Safemusic Ltd

Level 1 (Easy) Band music that has a rating of 1 is for 1st year beginner players, or elementary students. Arrangements have very basic rhythms with restricted ranges. These pieces are for undeveloped playing technique.

Level 1.5 (Easy) Arrangements still have simple rhythms and ranges and there is plenty of doubling. There is still a lot of uniformity in the rhythms from one instrument to the next.

Level 2 (Easy) Arranged for 2nd-3rd year players with semi-fluent technique, these pieces have intermediate rhythms with some syncopation, duplet and triplet rhythms. The ranges are less restricted, and some changing meter work is introduced.

Level 2.5 (Easy-Medium) Geared more toward 3rd year players, these pieces require a more fluent technique. Rhythms vary more as do the ranges that will be played. Changing meters may also be more frequent.

Level 3 (Medium) Fourth year players, or junior high-level students may require these arrangements to be properly challenged. These generally have free use of syncopation as well as section and solo scoring. Cues and cross cues will also be used less.

Level 3.5 (Medium) The more advanced 4th year players and some 5th year players will find this level to be more suitable to their playing technique with some extreme ranges being used.

Level 4 (Medium) A level 4 difficulty rating brings very challenging rhythms to the piece. Syncopation will be freely used, as will the more extreme ranges for all instruments.

Level 4.5 (Medium-Hard) Taking full advantage of syncopation and solos, this difficulty rating is recommended for students in the 6th year of playing, or reasonably advanced ensembles.










































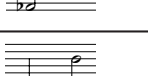




Level 5 (Hard) Arrangements with a difficulty 5 begin to introduce polyrhythm's and asymmetrical meters. Changing meters are much more frequent and instrumentation may be more diverse, and include piano, harp, or unusual instruments.

Level 5.5 (Hard) Solo writing, non-metric notation, more polyrhythm's, and virtuoso writing throughout are sure signs of the arrangement having a difficulty of 5.5. This music is recommended for more advanced ensembles.

Level 6 (Hard) Pieces that have a rating of 6 are for college-level or professional grade players. These arrangements are extremely difficult in all phases of the performance.

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American Band College Music Grading Chart

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Meter	Simple: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, c, e	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, c, e, 6/8 (easy compound)	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, c, e, 6/8, 9/8. easy changing/asymmetrical meter	Add: 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, asymmetrical (5/8, 7/8), changing meter	Any meter or combination of meter.
Key Signature	One to three flats (Key of C-end of year)	None to four flats	None to five flats	One sharp to six flats	Any key
Tempo	Andante-Moderato (72-120)	Andante-Allegro (72-132) ritard, accel.	Largo-Allegro (56-144) ritard, accel., rall.	Largo-Presto (44-168) ritard, accel., rall.	Largo-Prestissimo (44-208) ritard, accel., rall.
Note/Rest Value		As in Grade 1 plus simple 16th note patterns and triplets	All values in duple excluding complex syncopation plus easy compound rhythms.	All values in duple All values in compound	Complex duple and compound rhythms
Rhythm	Simple; mostly unison rhythm (dotted rhythm end of year)	Add simple syncopation & well-prepared dotted rhythms. More use of non-unison rhythms.	Basic duple and triple syncopation, dotted rhythms.	All rhythms except complex compound or complex 16th note syncopation.	All rhythms
Dynamics	<i>p</i> to <i>f</i>	<i>p</i> , <i>mp</i> , <i>mf</i> , <i>f</i> short cresc, decresc.	<i>pp</i> to <i>ff</i> cresc., decresc., sfz, fp	<i>ppp</i> to <i>fff</i> broad cresc, decresc.	<i>ppp</i> to <i>fff</i> , cross dynamics, broad cresc., decresc.
Articulation	Attack, release, slurs, staccato, accent	Attack, release, slurs, staccato, accent, legato	Attack, release, slurs, staccato, accent, legato, tenuto.	Two or more articulations simultaneous in the ensemble.	All forms of articulation.
Ornaments	None	Simple trills and single grace notes.	Trills with entry or exit grace notes, double or triple grace note figures.	Trills, turns, mordents	Trills, turns, mordents
Scoring	Limited color combinations (clar-tpt, sax-tpt) Very limited part division within sections	Independent contrapuntal lines, limited exposed parts, 1 (possibly 2) horn parts.	Solos (fl, cl, sax, tpt, bar) Exposed woodwind or brass. 2-part horns.	Full range of instrumentation, exposed parts for any instrument.	Full range of instrumentation, exposed parts for any instrument, multiple solo/contrapuntal lines.
Length	1 to 3 minutes	2 to 5 minutes	3 to 7 minutes	6 minutes +	Any length
Things to Avoid	Exposed solos, divisi tbn or horn parts, clarinet crossing the break, frequent meter changes, key changes, changing syncopated rhythms.	Frequent key changes, frequent meter changes, wide range for 3rd parts.	Extreme low and high registers, technical playing for 3rd players. Difficult oboe or bassoon solos.	Extremes of range	Limited only by player ability.
Percussion Usage	Pitched: bells. Non-pitched: triangle, tambourine, cymbals, woodblock, snare, bass drum. Limited use of special effects.	Add: Pitched: chimes, xylophone. Non-pitched: timpani. Special effects on cymbals.	All common non-pitched Latin and traditional percussion. Limit range of special effects.	All instruments. Wide range of special effects.	All instruments. Wide range of special effects with diverse requirements for each member of section.
Flute <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Oboe					
Bassoon <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Clarinet <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Alto/Bass Clarinet <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Saxophones <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Trumpet <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Horn <small>Whole notes indicate end-of-year, advanced range.</small>					
Trombone/Baritone					
Tuba	