Vocal Ranges according to *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*

Definitions for use in music cataloging

RDA does not define the ranges of vocal types. General practice is to follow the instructions given in the Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings section H 1917.5: Base vocal range on the verbal indication on the item. If no vocal range is indicated, use the ranges specified in the New Harvard Dictionary of Music:

These ranges correspond to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High voice</th>
<th>Medium voice</th>
<th>Low voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soprano: C4-A5</td>
<td>Mezzo soprano: A3-F5</td>
<td>Alto: F3-D5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: these definitions, from the New Harvard Dictionary of Music, are used in music cataloging, using the Library of Congress Subject Headings [3] and RDA [4].*

Vocal ranges for solo or choral works may differ, as evidenced from the different ranges found in other sources. For example, see:

° The Wikipedia article on [vocal range](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocal_range), which gives different ranges for operatic works and choral works.

° Catherine Schmidt-Jones’ [article](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1177/006622160002100410) and [chart](https://www.catherinefhjones.com/voice-chart).

° Grove Music Online definitions:

  - soprano: C4 to A5
  - mezzo-soprano: A3 to F#5
  - alto: G3 to E5 (and contralto as F3-D5)
  - tenor: roughly C3 to A4
  - baritone: A2 to F4
  - bass: F2 to E4

**Octave designation:** The International Standards Organization (ISO) system for register designations assigns “C4” to middle C (the first ledger line below the staff in treble clef). A commonly found British standard assigns “c1” to middle C.
Octave designations

International Standards Organization (ISO) system:

```
\[\text{\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{ccccccc}
\hline
& C1 & C2 & C3 & C4 & C5 & C6 & C7 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}}\]
```

British system:

```
\[\text{\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{ccccccc}
\hline
& C2 & C1 & c & c1 & c2 & c3 & c4 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}}\]
```

Source URL: https://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/vocal-ranges

Links
[1] http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music
[7] http://cnx.org/content/m12381/latest/vocalranges.png