

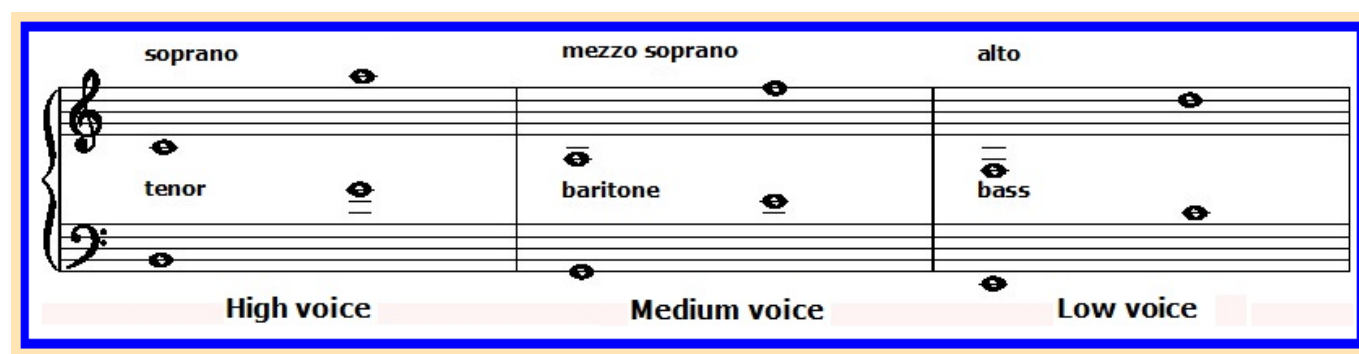
Vocal Ranges

[Music Cataloging at Yale](#) [1] ? [General music cataloging resources](#) [2]

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:

High voice

Soprano: C4-A5

Tenor: B2-G4

Medium voice

Mezzo soprano: A3-F5

Baritone: G2-E4

Low voice

Alto: F3-D5

Bass: E2-C4

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](#) [5], which gives different ranges for operatic works and choral works.

° Catherine Schmidt-Jones' [article](#) [6] and [chart](#) [7].

° 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.

Vocal Ranges

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Octave designations

International Standards Organization (ISO) system:

A musical staff with a bass clef on the left and a treble clef on the right. The staff contains seven notes: C1 (below the bass clef), C2 (below the first line), C3 (below the first space), C4 (middle C, below the first line), C5 (below the second line), C6 (below the second space), and C7 (below the third line). Each note is represented by a letter 'C' with a subscript number and a vertical line of three short horizontal strokes above it. The notes are positioned at the following approximate vertical levels: C1 (bottom), C2 (below first line), C3 (below first space), C4 (middle C), C5 (below second line), C6 (below second space), and C7 (below third line).

C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7

British system:

A musical staff with a bass clef on the left and a treble clef on the right. The staff contains seven notes: C2 (below the bass clef), C1 (below the first line), c (below the first space), c1 (middle C, below the first line), c2 (below the second line), c3 (below the second space), and c4 (below the third line). Each note is represented by a letter 'C' or 'c' with a subscript number and a vertical line of three short horizontal strokes above it. The notes are positioned at the following approximate vertical levels: C2 (bottom), C1 (below first line), c (below first space), c1 (middle C), c2 (below second line), c3 (below second space), and c4 (below third line).

C2 C1 c c1 c2 c3 c4

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

Links

[1] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music> [2] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/general-music-cataloging-resources> [3] <http://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/> [4] <http://web.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/rda> [5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocal_range [6] <http://cnx.org/content/m12381/latest/> [7] <http://cnx.org/content/m12381/latest/vocalranges.png>