MUSIC COMPOSITION

MUSIC COMPOSITION is the process of creating a new piece of music. The composer (e.g., student submitting the entry) is a person who expresses their own thoughts and ideas through the use of sound. *Entries in the middle and high school grade divisions must include music score/notation.*

To Portray Your Original Composition

- **Consider the following musical styles and instrumentation:**
  - A Cappella, Blues, Choral, Country, Electronic, Hip hop, Jazz, Latin, Musical, Orchestral, Pop, R&B, Religious, Rock, Symphonic/Concert Band, Traditional

- **To show a clear relation to the theme,** use structure, melody, rhythm, instruments, lyrics, emotion, etc.

- **Explore new methods** and make use of instruments, sounds, styles, and combinations. *All are accepted.*

Entry Checklist & Reminders

National-Level Requirements:
- **Student Artist:** The student submitting the entry must be the composer.
- **Performers:** The composer may be the performer or one of the performers, but does not have to perform in the entry.
- **Music Recording:** Required for all entries.
- **Music Score/Notation:** Required for middle and high school grade divisions only.
- **Copyright:** Use of copyrighted material is prohibited. *Plagiarized entries will be disqualified.*
- **Lengths and Size:** Audio files must not exceed 5 minutes or 1,000 MB (1,000 megabyte).
- **Accepted formats:** Audio recording: MP3, WAV. Notation: PDF.

Reminders:
- **Entry Originality:** Performing another's composition (e.g., recitals), and/or singing over unoriginal musical accompaniment is not accepted.
- **Songs:** This category focuses on original music compositions, rather than song-writing or performance skills. The composition must be the primary focus, and entries are scored on musical elements and style.
- **Vocals-Only Entries:** A cappella compositions are accepted; however, entries without musical accompaniment (vocals-only) must showcase a complete musical piece, including musical elements like pitch, tone, key, rhythm, and harmony.
- **Supported Editing:** Edits, mixing, and adjustments must be suitable for the student's grade and/or support needs. Guardians or friends should not make adjustments without specific direction from the student artist.

Category Tips: Artist Statement and Title

Titles and artist statements can be useful in sharing details specific to your music composition that help capture your creative process and theme interpretation. Consider the following:

- **Delve** into the creation process of your piece, highlighting unique elements, techniques, new approaches, or new fusions of style/traditions.
- **Reflect** on the significance of the musical influences, historical background, cultural elements or personal connections you have to the music or instruments.
- **Share** why and how you used specific musical elements (rhythm, melody, harmony, instrumentation), especially if your piece is a song without instrumental accompaniment.

Music Notation

Entries in the **middle and high school grade divisions must include music score/notation,** either traditional or tablature, or a written reflective statement. To meet this requirement, consider the following:

- **Notation software may be used to create a score.** Whether the score is hand-written or software-generated, appropriate instrumentation and voicing are required for the performance.
- **In place of traditional music score/notation, artists may submit a reflective statement.** Reflective statements provide a musically technical explanation of how the music was created (100 words or less).
- **A reflective statement does not replace the required entry artist statement.** Whereas the artist statement emphasizes the Reflections theme, a reflective statement emphasizes the musical elements in the creative process. *A Reflective Statement must be distinct from the artist statement.*

Audio Quality Tips

Tips for creating, finalizing, and saving a high-quality audio file for your submission:

- **Find a good room:** Choose a room that does not have too many hard surfaces or tight spaces. An uncluttered room works best.
- **Use a good microphone:** If you can, use an external microphone or a portable recorder for better sound quality.
- **Turn off noise reduction:** If you're using your computer's microphone, turn off noise reduction. It can make your instrument sound weird.
- **Remove background noise:** Make the room quiet by turning off things like air conditioners, fans, and phones. Also, watch out for squeaky floors and noisy electronics.
- **Do a test recording:** Record a short test and listen to it. Make sure the record volume is not too high or too low.
- **Test microphone placement:** Do not put the microphone on top of instruments or speakers. Try different positions and distances to find the best sound.
- **Start and end with silence:** Leave two seconds of silence at the beginning and end of your recording.

Digital Tools and Technology

Digital technology and/or software may not provide the primary design and/or concept, but can be used to develop, enhance, and/or present an entry. Entries may not be exclusively created with generative tools (e.g., AI), and/or composed exclusively of elements generated or provided by a technology platform.

Accepted:
- A sound library generated performance of the student's original, composed score.
- Use of audio editing platforms to mix, enhance, or completely transform original audio.

Not Accepted:
- Algorithmic composition techniques in music submissions.
- Use of templates, formulas, etc. provided by a platform/technology.

Guidelines:
- **Use Description:** If digital technology software/tools are used in the creation process, including any generative elements (AI), entrants should use the back of the student entry form to briefly describe these methods in 10 to 50 words. This description will be used to assist judging during the evaluation process.
- **Verify Prohibited Technology:** Check if your state PTA prohibits the use of any digital platforms and/or methods (i.e., artificial intelligence). *Ohio PTA does not prohibit the use of digital platforms beyond permitted usage stated in the National PTA Entry, Category, and Division Guidelines.