

BACKstage

Technical Theatre for High Schools

Audio Terminology

Audio Amplifier: Electronic equipment that increases the level of a sound signal

Synonym: Amp, Amplifier, Power Amplifier

Audio Assistant: Person who works under the direction of the Audio Department Head

Synonym: A2

Audio Department Head: Person in charge of the audio crew

Synonym: A1

Audio Mixer Console that receives audio inputs for selecting, processing and blending the output to other audio equipment

Synonym: Audio Board, Audio Desk, Board, Console, Mixer, Mixing Board

Auxiliary Send: A path for sending audio from a channel strip to an additional destination beyond its main assigned path

Synonym: Aux Send

Auxiliary Return: A path used for bringing a signal back into a mixer. Often used to bring the output of external effects, such as echo, delay, and reverb into a console.

Synonym: Aux Return, Aux Input

Balanced Cable: Used with balanced signal. A microphone cable.

Balanced Signal: Type of audio signal with two conductors plus shield

Synonym: Balanced Line

Block Diagram: A line and box-based visualization of audio and control signal paths in a system.

Cardioid: A unidirectional microphone pickup pattern characterized by its inverted heart shape.

The narrowest pattern is Hyper-cardioid

Compressor: Reduces the level of an audio signal if its amplitude exceeds a certain threshold.

Decibel: a unit used to measure the intensity of a sound or the power level of an electrical signal by comparing it with a given level on a logarithmic scale.

Synonym: dB

Direct Input Box (DI): An electronic device used to convert high impedance unbalanced signal to low impedance balanced microphone level.

Diversity: A radio reception technique in which signal is obtained by selecting the stronger of two independent sources at any given time.

Dropout: Loss of transmission signal used by a wireless mic.

Dynamic Microphone: Common electro-mechanical sound pickup device

Equalization: The process of using equalization to suppress resonances in a sound system that may otherwise cause feedback.

Synonym: EQ

Floor Surface Microphone: Microphone designed to be placed directly on the floor

Synonym: Dance Mic, Floor Mic, PMZ

Foldback Monitor: Stage area loudspeakers positioned for the performers to hear themselves and/or other sound sources

Synonym: Monitor, Stage Monitor, Wedge

Frequency: the rate at which a sound vibration occurs that constitutes a wave, usually measured per second. Scientific name for pitch.

Front of House Mixer: Person in charge of the audio mix heard by the audience.

Harmonics: an overtone accompanying a fundamental tone at a fixed interval, produced by vibration of a string, column of air, etc. in an exact fraction of its length.

Headroom: The amount by which the signal-handling capabilities exceed the desired operating level.

Hertz: A measurement of sound vibrations (frequency) per second.
Synonym: Hz

High Impedance: Electronic input/output circuits with an impedance of several thousand ohms or more
Synonym: High Z, Hi Z

Intermodulation: Results when two or more wireless signals, of different frequencies, are mixed together and additional signals are formed.
Synonym: Intermod, IMD, IM

Kilohertz: A unit of frequency equal to one thousand cycles per second.
Synonym: kHz

Lavaliere Microphone: Small microphone worn on a performer
Synonym: Body Mic, Lapel, Lapel Mic, Lav, Lavalier

Limiting: A dynamic effect. Process by which the amplitude of a signal is prevented from exceeding a predetermined value.

Line Check: Process of testing every input signal device on stage, usually without performers present

Low Impedance: Electronic input/output circuits with an impedance of a few hundred ohms
Synonym: Low Z, Lo Z

Microphone: Electro-mechanical device that converts acoustic energy into electrical energy
Synonym: Mic, Mike, Pickup

Microphone Boom Arm: Adjustable extension for a microphone stand
Synonym: Boom

Microphone Stand: Freestanding, telescoping, vertical assembly on a base to support microphones
Omni-Directional: Microphones that pick up sound with equal gain from all sides or directions.

Parametric Equalizer: Frequency manipulation device which allows: 1. control over frequency levels (boosting or cutting decibels); 2. selection of the center/primary frequency; 3. manipulation of bandwidth/range (also known as Q or quotient of change) of each frequency

Personal Monitor: Earphone style audio monitor that is fitted into the artist's ear
Synonym: Earwig, IFB, In-Ear, Ears

Phone Connector: Ring and tip 1/4" diameter audio connector most often used for line level signals
Synonym: Phone Jack, TRS, 1/4"

Pop Screen: Protective screen placed in the front of a microphone to reduce the popping and breathing noises produced by close vocal work

Program Microphone: A microphone mounted in a venue to capture sound of a performance, which is then relayed backstage for performers to monitor, shared with Assisted Listening Devices, and/or recorded.

Radio Frequency Interference: A disturbance generated by an external source on an electrical circuit via electromagnetic induction.
Synonym: RF, RFI

Voltage Control Amplifier: Mixer application involving signal routing. Assigning control of a group of faders to a single fader while maintaining the relative levels throughout the group.
Synonym: Variable Gain Amplifier, VCA

Snake: Thick cable containing a combination of many individual audio cables inside a common, sturdy outer jacket.

Sound Designer: Individual responsible for all creative and technical aspects of sound for a production.

Sound Supervisor: Department head for sound at a theatre company.

Subwoofer: Speaker designed to reproduce very low frequencies; typically 20-200 Hz.
Synonym: Subs

Transducer: Device that converts acoustic energy into electrical energy (microphone) or electrical to acoustic (loudspeaker).

XLR: Trade Name (ITT-Cannon); multi-pin locking connector. Synonyms: 3 Pin, XLR