

TEMPO

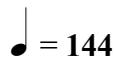
A tempo is the rate of speed at which a piece of music is performed. This can be stated in broad or exact terms. For broad indications, Italian names are often used:

largo, lento	very slow
adagio	slow
andante, moderato, allegretto	medium
allegro	fast
vivace, presto	very fast

Italian names are also used to indicate changes in tempo:

rallentando (rall.), ritardando (rit.)	gradually slow down
accelerando (accel.), stringendo (string.)	gradually speed up
meno mosso	suddenly slower
più mosso	suddenly faster
rubato	speed up and slow down at will
a tempo	return to original tempo

A much more exact way to describe tempo is in beats per minute. Since a metronome can supply or check any tempo accurately, many composers will indicate the speed at the beginning of a piece in beats per minute. This is what the notation looks like:



The note tells you that the quarter note is the basic pulse. If the piece were in cut time, this would be a half note. The number tells you how many quarter notes are played in one minute. Here is a chart to help you determine tempos if a metronome is not handy:

60 bpm	one beat per second
90 bpm	walking speed
120 bpm	two beats per second (march tempo)

Generally, you will encounter tempos from 52 (very slow) to 200 (very fast).