

Disco

Dance, venue & occasion

- People made up their own steps. The beat was simple and just about any steps would fit.
- Individuals could show off with fancy moves
- People could dance on their own – a partner wasn't necessary
- Disco was a social dance, performed in nightclubs and at parties.

Music

- Fast: usually 100 to 140 beats per minute
- In 4/4 time
- Most disco music had a hook. This is a short phrase with a catchy tune that would stick in people's minds.

Technology

- Advances in technology meant that turntables, amplifiers and loudspeakers got loads better in the 70's, so DJ's took over from live bands.
- Flashing lights and other effects were part of the disco experience.
- Drum machines were used together with a drum kit to provide the beat and additional effects like hand claps.
- Bass lines, tunes, chords and rhythms were often looped using sequencers.
- Mixing desks were used to record disco music. The sound from each instrument would enter the mixing desk on a different channel and the volume of each instrument could be individually adjusted to create a balance.
- Remix is when an original recording is altered by changing the dynamics, tempo or some other element of the chosen tracks. This was often used to re-market an old song.
- Overlay is when parts (possibly a looped drum or bass part), sometimes from different songs, are combined to create something new.

Instruments – be sure to say what the instrument is doing in the recording you get given

- Bass guitars often played repeated riffs for the bass line.
- Electric guitars played chords. A funk guitar style, where the strings were muted to create a percussive effect and not allowed to ring, was often used.
- Electric guitars were also used to play lead i.e. solo tunes.
- Brass instruments mostly played stabs (an occasional 'parp parp'), usually on the off beat. Brass instruments often do the same thing in jazz music, which influenced disco.
- Strings were used to create melodies, countermelodies (a secondary melody played together with the main melody) or to provide long notes in the background, filling out the harmonies.
- Synthesizers were often used to create a string effect.
- Drum kit and drum machine kept the beat all the way through the song. Usually the low bass drum plays on every beat, the snare drum plays on every 2nd beat (i.e. beats 2 and 4) and the hi – hat plays inbetween the beats:

Structure

- Starts with an introduction
- Verse - chorus structure, where verses alternate with choruses. The verses have the same tune & the choruses have the same tune.
- A middle 8 or bridge is used as a break from the verses and choruses. It has a different tune or different chords or different instruments playing and is usually only heard once.
- Ends with a coda or outro. This forms a conclusion to the song. It is often faded.