

MIDI Basics

Music

What MIDI actually is, and the messages behind every note you enter.

A protocol from 1983 for sending performance data between instruments: which note, how hard, when to stop. It contains no audio, which is why a MIDI file can be re-voiced with any instrument.

VELOCITY
0–127

MIDDLE C
note 60

CHANNELS
16

- Note on / note off carry pitch and velocity.
- Velocity is 0–127 and usually maps to loudness.
- Note numbers are 0–127; middle C is 60.
- 16 channels per port, each addressing a different instrument.
- CC messages carry everything else: modulation, sustain, expression.
- Program change selects a patch.

LOOK FOR IT

A MIDI piano part can be turned into a string part without re-recording anything.

MIDI 2.0 adds higher resolution and two-way communication, but MIDI 1.0 is still what almost everything speaks.