

Year 7 – Waves Glossary

Key term	Definition
absorption	When energy is transferred from sound (or other waves) to a material.
amplify	To increase the amplitude of a sound so that it sounds louder.
amplitude	The maximum amount of vibration, as measured from the middle position of the wave. Usually measured in metres.
angle of incidence	Between the normal and incident ray.
angle of reflection	Between the normal and reflected ray.
converging	Bringing rays of light together.
crest	The top of a wave.
decibel	A commonly used unit of sound intensity or loudness (dB).
diffuse reflection	Reflection from a rough surface.
dispersion	The splitting up of a ray of light of mixed wavelengths by refraction into its components.
focus	Another name for the focal point.
frequency	The number of waves produced in one second, in hertz.
hertz	The unit of frequency (Hz).
image	The point from which rays of light entering the eye appear to have originated.
incident ray	The incoming ray from a source of light.
kilohertz	1kilohertz (kHz) = 1000 hertz (Hz)
law of reflection	The angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection.
lens	A device made of shaped glass that focusses light rays from objects to form an image.
longitudinal wave	Where the direction of vibration is the same as that of the wave.

medium	The material that affects light or sound (or other waves) by slowing it down or transferring the wave.
normal line	An imaginary line from which angles are measured, at right angles to the surface.
opaque	A material that allows no light to pass through it.
oscilloscope	A device able to view patterns of sound waves that have been turned into electrical signals.
peak	The top of a wave.
pitch	How high or low a sound is. A low (high) pitch sound has a low (high) frequency.
plane	A mirror with a flat, reflective surface.
primary colour	The colours red, blue, and green.
prism	A triangular-shaped piece of glass used to produce a spectrum of light.
reflection	The change in direction of light or sound when it hits a boundary and bounces back.
reflected ray	The outgoing ray that has been reflected from a surface.
refraction	Change in the direction of light going from one material into another.
scattered	When light bounces off an object in all directions.
secondary colour	Colours that can be obtained by mixing two primary colours.
spectrum	A band of light produced when light is spread out by a prism.
specular reflection	Reflection from a smooth surface.
translucent	A material that allows some light to pass through it.
transparent	A material that allows all light to pass through it.
trough	The bottom of a wave.
vacuum	A space with no particles of matter in it.
oscillation	A back and forth motion that repeats.
volume	How loud or quiet a sound is, in decibels (dB).
wavelength	Distance between two corresponding points on a wave, in metres.