

Easy-Listening Music

For centuries man has studied himself and others to determine why he does the things he does. Today, the term that describes this type of self-study and the study of others is termed *psychology*. Professional psychology developed throughout the twentieth century and has become an extremely important tool in determining how to improve work and business environments.

One of the things psychologists discovered was that music played at a certain level in a certain style with the right combination of *timbres* or *tone colors* helped people to relax and feel good about where they were. Likewise, other studies have indicated that the combination of the elements of music, including rhythm, volume, timbre, melody, and harmony, can affect the listener and cause him or her to act in a certain way based on these combinations.

The study of the effect of music on people, combined with improved technologies and distribution capabilities, have resulted in a fine-tuned approach to marketing and customer satisfaction for businesses the world over. Two specific locations have proven to be highly uncomfortable for many people. Many people do not feel comfortable in elevators—they feel cramped and may feel that they have little or no control over a mechanism that is moving them at fast speeds up and down often to great heights. Another location that has proven to give people who visit it a great amount of anxiety is the dentist's office. Most people do not like to go and have their teeth worked on by dentists. Many people associate a visit to a dentist's office with pain of some sort. Because of these fears and many like them, musicians teamed up with psychologists to create what has come to be a multi-billion dollar business known as *easy-listening music*. We often hear it referred to as *elevator music* because that is one of the first places where this music was used to try to calm the nerves of people who found themselves in these uncomfortable and stressful situations.

The melodies and songs typically chosen for use in arrangements of easy-listening music are popular songs and songs that bring back fond memories to people. They are generally set to soothing string and woodwind sounds and an occasional lilting trumpet or trombone solo designed to put the nerves and fears of the listener at ease. So popular has easy-listening music become that many radio stations have dedicated their programming to this style of music. Just for fun, the next time you are in an elevator or a dentist's office, listen to the music and see if it helps you relax.

The study of the effect of music on humans has been extended past the easy-listening stage and applied to virtually all areas of marketing, including jingles (the music that accompanies commercials) and the music that you hear in stores (it will vary depending on the type of store). Remember, if you hear music, it's usually there for a specific reason.



Easy-listening music helps people relax at home, at the office, or in stores or other businesses.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Questions for Consideration

1. What is psychology?

2. What have psychologists discovered about the effects of music on people?

3. In what two areas have businesses used these discoveries?

4. What are two places where music is used to calm people's nerves?

5. What is easy-listening music also known as?

6. Name the elements of music that in certain combination can affect listeners and cause them to act in particular ways.

7. What types of songs are chosen for easy-listening music?

8. What is a jingle?

9. If a department store is playing fast-paced, upbeat music, what do you think the desired effect on customers is?

10. If a bookstore is playing light, slow-paced music, what do you think the desired effect on customers is?
