

Sound Library Search Lexicon

A comprehensive, public, free keyword toolkit for searching sound libraries

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Purpose: help you find the right sound faster by separating (1) literal sound events, (2) character descriptors, and (3) practical search methods. Use this as a living list—add your own studio-specific terms.

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1. ACTUAL SOUNDS (Physical / Literal Events)

These keywords describe what physically happens: impacts, friction, movement, liquids, fire, UI events, footsteps, body sounds, destruction, electricity/energy, and environmental ambience.

1.1 Impacts

Short / Tight / Dry

- **Click** — sharp mechanical press
- **Clack** — hard hollow impact
- **Tick** — tiny high-frequency contact
- **Tap** — light surface contact
- **Tock** — slightly lower tick
- **Pat** — soft hand impact
- **Flick** — finger snap-like hit
- **Knock** — mid hollow impact
- **Rap** — fast repeated knock
- **Pop** — short air or surface burst
- **Poke** — soft point impact
- **Peck** — tiny repeated hit

Medium Body Impacts

- **Hit** — generic contact
- **Punch** — fast weighted impact
- **Thump** — low-mid dull hit
- **Bump** — soft collision
- **Smack** — fleshy impact
- **Whack** — harder smack
- **Clap** — hand impact
- **Slap** — sharp hand hit
- **Pat** — soft surface touch

Heavy / Aggressive Impacts

- **Bang** — loud explosive hit
- **Slam** — forceful closing impact
- **Crash** — chaotic impact
- **Smash** — destructive hit
- **Blast** — explosive force
- **Boom** — low-frequency explosion
- **Drop** — object falling
- **Fall** — body or object collapse
- **Detonate** — explosive event

- **Implode** — inward collapse

1.2 Metal-Specific Texture

- **Clang** — resonant metal strike
- **Clink** — light metal contact
- **Chink** — tiny metallic hit
- **Ting** — high pitched metal
- **Ping** — sharp resonant metal
- **Ring** — sustained resonance
- **Rattle** — loose metal vibration
- **Jangle** — chaotic metallic movement
- **Jingle** — light multi-metal contacts
- **Clatter** — multiple impacts
- **Tremble** — unstable vibration
- **Vibrate** — sustained oscillation
- **Resonate** — ringing sustain
- **Scrape** — dragged friction
- **Grind** — heavy friction
- **Skid** — sliding friction
- **Screech** — high friction
- **Shear** — tearing metal

Search modifiers (combine with the above):

- hollow
- pipe
- steel
- aluminum
- chain
- debris
- sheet
- plate
- rod
- bolt
- spring
- rail
- grate

1.3 Wood / Organic

- **Crack** — sharp split
- **Snap** — small break

- **Crunch** — dry compression
- **Creak** — stress movement
- **Groan** — long wood strain
- **Splinter** — wood fragmenting
- **Rattle (wood)** — loose wooden parts
- **Thud (wood)** — dull wood impact
- **Knock (wood)** — door-like
- **Clop** — wood on wood

1.4 Stone / Concrete / Debris

- **Chunk** — heavy piece impact
- **Clunk** — dense impact
- **Crack** — brittle break
- **Shatter** — brittle destruction
- **Skitter** — small debris scatter
- **Scatter** — multiple pieces
- **Collapse** — structural failure
- **Rumble** — low rolling debris
- **Gravel** — small stones movement
- **Pebble** — small rock impacts

1.5 Liquids

- **Drip** — single drop
- **Drop** — generic liquid fall
- **Plop** — rounded drop impact
- **Splash** — water impact
- **Slosh** — container movement
- **Gurgle** — air + liquid mix
- **Bubble** — air rising
- **Froth** — light foam movement
- **Gush** — heavy flow
- **Pour** — controlled flow
- **Spray** — atomized water
- **Mist** — fine dispersion
- **Trickle** — slow thin flow
- **Stream** — steady flow
- **Flood** — heavy volume
- **Sizzle** — liquid on heat
- **Steam** — vapor release

Search modifiers (liquids):

- shallow
- deep
- muddy
- clean
- cavern
- sewer
- pool
- puddle
- bucket
- bottle
- sink
- bath
- underwater
- rain
- drain

1.6 Fire / Heat

- **Crackle** — small fire pops
- **Sizzle** — hot surface
- **Burn** — sustained flame
- **Blaze** — large fire
- **Roar** — heavy fire
- **Flare** — sudden ignition
- **Ignite** — start of fire
- **Ember** — small glowing sound
- **Torch** — directional flame
- **Fwoosh** — fire burst

1.7 Air / Motion

- **Whoosh** — fast air movement
- **Swoosh** — stylized whoosh
- **Swish** — lighter whoosh
- **Whip** — sharp air cut
- **Rush** — fast pass
- **Gust** — wind burst
- **Breeze** — light wind
- **Howl** — wind through space
- **Whirl** — circular motion
- **Spin** — rotating object
- **Flutter** — light rapid motion
- **Flap** — cloth movement

- **Snap (fabric)** — sharp cloth hit

1.8 Fabric / Cloth

- **Rustle** — soft fabric movement
- **Shuffle** — dragging fabric
- **Brush** — soft surface contact
- **Slide** — controlled movement
- **Fold** — cloth compression
- **Stretch** — tension
- **Rip** — tear
- **Tear** — longer rip
- **Velcro** — hook and loop separation
- **Zip** — zipper

1.9 Electrical / Sci-Fi

- **Zap** — short electric discharge
- **Buzz** — steady vibration
- **Hum** — sustained low tone
- **Drone** — atmospheric sustain
- **Crackle** — electrical arc
- **Spark** — quick arc
- **Glitch** — digital error
- **Distort** — signal corruption
- **Fuzz** — noisy texture
- **Pulse** — rhythmic energy
- **Throb** — low rhythmic pulse
- **Warp** — time/space shift
- **Phase** — phasing effect
- **Scan** — sweeping tone
- **Beam** — directed energy
- **Charge** — build-up sound
- **Power-up** — rising energy
- **Power-down** — falling energy
- **Boot** — startup
- **Shutdown** — system off
- **Engage** — activation
- **Deploy** — mechanical extension
- **Initialize** — system start

1.10 UI / Game Feedback

- Click

- Tick
- Blip
- Beep
- Boop
- Bloop
- Chime
- Ding
- Dunk
- Confirm
- Accept
- Error
- Reject
- Alert
- Notify
- Hover
- Select
- Navigate
- Scroll
- Switch
- Toggle
- Lock
- Unlock
- Open
- Close
- Swipe
- Flip
- Spin
- Reveal
- Achievement
- Level-up
- Reward
- Loot
- Pickup
- Drop
- Inventory
- Craft
- Upgrade

UI search tips:

- Search: "UI tactile soft plastic"

- Search: "minimal digital blip short"
- Try adding: "clean", "dry", "no reverb", "short tail"

1.11 Movement / Footsteps

- Step
- Footstep
- Stomp
- Tread
- March
- Shuffle
- Scuff
- Skid
- Slide
- Run
- Sprint
- Dash
- Jump
- Land
- Impact
- Roll
- Crawl
- Climb
- Vault
- Crouch
- Turn
- Pivot

Material modifiers (footsteps / movement):

- gravel
- sand
- snow
- metal grate
- tile
- wood floor
- carpet
- mud
- ice
- leaves
- water
- concrete

- stairs
- ladder

1.12 Body Sounds

- Breath
- Exhale
- Inhale
- Pant
- Sigh
- Groan
- Grunt
- Gasp
- Cough
- Sniff
- Snore
- Swallow
- Chew
- Crunch
- Chomp
- Spit
- Hiccup
- Yawn
- Stretch
- Crack (joints)

1.13 Destruction Variations

- Break
- Smash
- Shatter
- Burst
- Explode
- Detonate
- Implode
- Collapse
- Fragment
- Splinter
- Scatter
- Debris
- Impact
- Shockwave
- Aftershock

1.14 Musical / Cinematic Impact Terms

- Hit
- Stinger
- Impact
- Boom
- Braam
- Riser
- Downer
- Sweep
- Reverse
- Reverse cymbal
- Transition
- Swell
- Build
- Drop
- Accent
- Cue
- Tag

1.15 Ambience / Environment (Expanded)

Use location + time + motion + texture + mood (see Section 3).

Urban / City

- City
- Urban
- Downtown
- Street
- Alley
- Rooftop
- Plaza
- Subway
- Station
- Mall
- Parking garage
- Construction site
- Industrial zone
- Traffic bed
- Distant siren
- Horn
- Crosswalk signal
- Crowd murmur

- Foot traffic
- HVAC hum
- Neon hum
- Ventilation

Nature / Outdoor

- Forest
- Jungle
- Meadow
- Field
- Mountain
- Desert
- Canyon
- Swamp
- Beach
- Shore
- Cliff
- Wind through trees
- Leaves rustle
- Insects
- Birds distant
- Creek
- River flow
- Ocean wash
- Thunder distant
- Rain light
- Rain heavy

Interior

- Office empty
- Fluorescent hum
- Computer room tone
- Hospital corridor
- School hallway
- Warehouse
- Basement
- Apartment tone
- Elevator hum
- Air conditioner
- Fridge buzz
- Clock tick

Sci-Fi / Fantasy

- Spaceship interior
- Reactor core
- Engine room
- Cryo chamber
- Alien planet wind
- Energy field hum
- Magical aura
- Ritual chamber
- Portal room
- Void ambience
- Dimensional rift
- Cyberpunk city

Ambience Modifiers

- dawn
- dusk
- night
- day
- stormy
- calm
- windy
- humid
- dry
- frozen
- foggy
- empty
- busy
- distant
- close
- wide
- mono
- reverberant
- tight
- subtle
- evolving

2. CHARACTER TAGS (Descriptors / Qualities)

These are adjectives and higher-level tags that shape search results. They describe intensity, material feel, space, motion, mood, and processing.

2.1 Emotional / Designer Tags (from original)

- Tense
- Dark
- Light
- Warm
- Cold
- Heavy
- Soft
- Hard
- Dry
- Wet
- Crunchy
- Sticky
- Slime
- Gritty
- Clean
- Dirty
- Mechanical
- Organic
- Synthetic
- Analog
- Digital
- Lo-fi
- Hi-fi
- Distorted
- Glassy
- Metallic
- Plastic
- Rubber
- Hollow
- Solid
- Resonant
- Muted
- Muffled
- Punchy
- Boomy
- Sharp
- Dull
- Snappy
- Tight

- Wide
- Epic
- Cinematic
- Minimal
- Subtle
- Aggressive
- Smooth

2.2 Perspective / Distance

- Close
- Intimate
- Near
- Medium distance
- Distant
- Far
- Offscreen
- Foreground
- Background
- Pass-by
- Approach
- Depart
- Interior
- Exterior
- Occluded
- Through door
- Through wall
- Underwater
- Overhead
- Below
- Behind
- In front
- Mono
- Narrow stereo
- Wide stereo
- Surround
- Binaural
- Phone
- Radio
- Intercom
- PA system

- CCTV
- Helmet
- Mask

2.3 Intensity / Energy

- Faint
- Quiet
- Soft
- Gentle
- Light
- Subtle
- Moderate
- Solid
- Present
- Hard
- Heavy
- Intense
- Aggressive
- Brutal
- Explosive
- Overdriven

2.4 Size / Scale

- Tiny
- Small
- Mini
- Micro
- Toy
- Compact
- Medium
- Large
- Huge
- Giant
- Massive
- Colossal
- Titanic
- Epic
- Monumental

2.5 Motion Character / Rhythm

- Slow

- Fast
- Rapid
- Snappy
- Stutter
- Rhythmic
- Pulsing
- Intermittent
- Continuous
- Looping
- Repeating
- Random
- Irregular
- Mechanical timing
- Organic timing
- Evolving
- Swelling
- Rising
- Falling
- Oscillating
- Wobbling
- Fluttering

2.6 Space / Acoustics

- Dry
- Dead
- Tight
- Boxy
- Roomy
- Echoey
- Reverberant
- Long tail
- Short tail
- Slapback
- Metallic reverb
- Cavernous
- Tunnel
- Hall
- Cathedral
- Open field
- Void

- Close-mic
- Distant-mic
- Reflections
- Early reflections

2.7 Material Feel

- Metallic
- Glassy
- Wooden
- Stone
- Concrete
- Ceramic
- Plastic
- Rubber
- Leather
- Fleshy
- Bony
- Wet
- Icy
- Frozen
- Dusty
- Sandy
- Grainy
- Gritty
- Sticky
- Slimy
- Crunchy
- Brittle
- Flexible
- Elastic
- Hollow
- Solid

2.8 Processing / Treatment

- Raw
- Clean
- Processed
- Designed
- Layered
- Cinematic
- Trailerized

- Lo-fi
- Hi-fi
- Distorted
- Saturated
- Overdriven
- Filtered
- Lowpass
- Highpass
- Bandpass
- Bitcrushed
- Granular
- Glitchy
- Reversed
- Time-stretched
- Pitch-shifted
- Modulated
- Phased
- Flanged
- Chorus
- Doppler

2.9 Design Intent (Function Tags)

- Warning
- Threat
- Confirmation
- Success
- Failure
- Error
- Reward
- Pickup
- Transition
- Reveal
- Foreshadow
- Mystery
- Suspense
- Shock
- Impact sweetener
- Tension builder
- UI feedback
- Notification

- Objective complete
- Level-up
- Checkpoint

3. HOW TO SEARCH GUIDE (Methods, Formulas, and Workflows)

3.1 Core Principle: Separate Event from Character

Think in two layers:

- Event = what physically happens (Section 1).
- Character = how it feels or behaves (Section 2).

Then stack keywords so the library understands both.

3.2 Keyword Stacking (4–6 words is a sweet spot)

A strong default structure:

- [Event] + [Material] + [Size] + [Intensity] + [Space] + [Perspective]
- Example: "metal door slam heavy large hall distant"

3.3 Search Formulas (Copy/Paste Templates)

- **Physical event**

[Event] + [Material] + [Intensity] + [Space]

Example: "glass shatter sharp small room"

- **Footsteps**

[Action] + [Surface] + [Perspective]

Example: "footstep gravel close"

- **Ambience**

[Location] + [Time] + [Motion] + [Texture] + [Mood]

Example: "abandoned warehouse night subtle metallic drone"

- **Creature**

[Material feel] + [Size] + [Motion] + [Mood]

Example: "organic wet large movement tense"

- **Sci-fi device**

[Energy type] + [Motion] + [Processing] + [Intensity]

Example: "electric pulse glitchy build intense"

- **UI**

[Function] + [Material/Style] + [Length]

Example: "confirm click soft short"

3.4 If You Can't Find It: Replace the Object with Physics

Many libraries won't have your exact fantasy/sci-fi object name. Translate it into physical equivalents:

- Wings → leather flap / cloth snap / whoosh
- Magic → shimmer / sparkle / airy tonal / granular
- Giant creature → heavy movement / low thump / debris

3.5 Search the Function, Not the Object

When the library isn't organized by objects, search by purpose:

Instead of "magic sparkle" → try "reward shimmer soft bright"

Instead of "door UI" → try "close confirm click short"

3.6 Negative Keywords (What you DON'T want)

These save time by filtering out common unwanted traits:

- dry
- no reverb
- no tail
- short tail
- isolated
- solo
- clean
- no debris
- no crowd
- no music
- no wind
- no birds
- no footsteps
- without ambience

3.7 Build in Layers (When the perfect sound doesn't exist)

Layering workflow:

1. Base layer (core event)
2. Transient (attack / click / snap)
3. Texture (grit / scrape / debris / cloth)
4. Tail (reverb, rumble, resonance, decay)

5. Sweeteners (sparkle, air, subharmonics, distortion)

3.8 Practical Examples (Before → After Searches)

- Before: "big metal hit"
- After: "metal clang heavy close reverberant"
- Before: "scary ambience"
- After: "abandoned hospital night subtle drone distant"
- Before: "robot power"
- After: "power-up charge rising glitchy cinematic"
- Before: "wet footsteps"
- After: "footstep mud close squelch slow"
- Before: "stone collapse"
- After: "concrete collapse debris rumble large hall"