MUSICAL FORMS: A Quick Reference

1-unit forms...

STROPHIC

section	A	A or A'	A or A''	A or A'''

VERSE-CHORUS

section	A	B	A or A'	B	A or A''	B (*etc.*)

THEME AND VARIATIONS

section	(introduction)	A	A'	A''	A'''	... *etc.*
harmony	I (i)	I (i)	I (i)	i (I)	I (i)	...

- proceeds with optional introduction, which is unrelated to the theme
- typically one variation will be in the opposite mode: if theme in I, variation in i, and vice versa

2-unit forms...

BINARY

section	A	:|| ||:	B		
harmony	I (i)		V (III)	-	I (i)

TERNARY

section	A	B	A (*da capo*)
harmony	I (i)	x	I (i)

- unlike rounded binary, A and B are more contrasting in ternary
- A and B are clearly divided
- B can be in more distant keys (such as IV)
- the return of A is a literal repeat

ROUNDED BINARY

section	A	:|| ||:	B	A (or shortened A, A')	:||
harmony	I (i)		V (III)	I (i)	

SONATA (sonata allegro): basic chart

section	Exposition			Development	Recapitulation			Coda
structure	A	-	B :||	(||:) X	A	-	B (:||)	
harmony	I (i)	-	V (III)	x	I (i)			I (i)

- the exposition usually closes with a repeat
- the development and recapitulation may or may not be surrounded by a second set of repeats

SONATA (sonata allegro): mega chart

section	Exposition				Development		Recapitulation			Coda
subsection	First subject group (P)	Transition	Second subject group (S)	(Codetta) *optional*		Retran-sition	First subject group (P)	Trans-ition	Second subject group (S)	
structure	A	-	B	:‖	(‖:) X		A	-	B (:‖)	
major key	I	V/V	V	V	any	V	I	V	I	I
minor key	i	V/III or V/V	III or V	III or V	any	V	i	V	i	i

multi-unit forms...

RITORNELLO

section	A	B	A'	C	A''	D	A
harmony	I (i)	x	x	x	x	x	I (i)

– unlike rondo form, A can return in fragments and in different keys

RONDO

section	A	B	A	C	A
harmony	I (i)	x	I (i)	x	I (i)

ARCH

section	A	B	C	B	A

oddballs...

FUGUE

	exposition			episode	subject area (subject or answer format)	... etc. *(repeat as necessary)*	(coda)
1st voice	**subject**	**(countersubject)**	*... etc. (repeat as necessary)*				
2nd voice		**answer**					

THROUGH-COMPOSED

– no formal divisions, repeats
– for songs: different music for every verse