

MUSICAL FORMS: A Quick Reference

1-unit forms...

STROPHIC

section	A	A or A'	A or A''	A or A'''
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VERSE-CHORUS

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