

# FORM

## Definition

Like rhythm, form addresses the way music unfolds in time, but instead of focusing on the individual notes it refers to the overall structure or plan of a piece of music, and it describes the layout of a composition as divided into sections.

**In Western popular music**, we use conventional names like "**verse**," "**chorus**" "**Refrain**" and "**bridge**" to describe song composition. Each part of the song is identifiable because it uses a consistent harmonic progression or melody. Common forms include bar form, 32-bar form, verse–chorus form, ternary form, strophic form, and the 12-bar blues.

**Introduction:** The introduction is a unique section that comes at the beginning of the piece. An introduction contains just music and no words.

**Verse:** The verse and chorus are usually repeated throughout a song. When two or more sections of the song have almost identical music but different lyrics, each section is considered a verse. In Western popular music the A section is called verse.

**Chorus/Refrain:** The terms chorus and refrain are often used interchangeably, both referring to a recurring part of a song. The chorus or refrain is the element of the song that repeats at least once both musically and lyrically. It is the most memorable element of the song for listeners, the chorus usually contains the **hook**.

**Bridge:** Bridge refers to a section of a song with a significantly different melody and lyrics. A bridge is usually only used once.

**Solo:** A solo is a section designed to showcase an instrumentalist. The solo section may take place over the chords from the verse, chorus, or bridge, or over a standard solo backing progression, such as the 12-bar blues progression.

**Outro:** The outro of a song signals to the listeners that the song is nearing its close.

**Coda:** A coda is a passage that brings a piece (or a movement) to an end. It is an expanded cadence. It may be as simple as a few measures, or as complex as an entire section.

**In Classical music**, form is notated with letters. A song with a melodic introduction, a variation and a return to the initial melody would be described as having an **ABA** form.

## Grammar/Music Analogy

It is often helpful to draw analogies between music and grammatical syntax, where we might find the following correlation:

Music	Language	Music	Language
Note	Letter	Cadence	Punctuation
Germ	Syllable	Phrase	Sentence
Motive	Word	Period	Paragraph
Sub phrase	Clause	Part	Chapter
Movement	Unit		