

RIM2130

Pop Music Song Form -- Section Definitions

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Sources: ¹ ²

Intro: The introduction is usually a short 4 or 8 bar instrumental statement of the melodic hook, or the most memorable musical phrase that the song is written around. It helps set up the mood of the song and resolves/leads to the first verse.

V – Verse: The verse is the section that describes consequences or tells the story line of a song. There are usually 2 or 3 different verses in a typical pop song.

C – Chorus: The chorus is the section that delivers the musical hook and is usually the basis for the song. The chorus is often repeated after each verse and a couple of times at the end of the song to reinforce the ***hook***.

Hook: The hook doesn't necessarily refer to a specific section of a song, except to say it's the catchiest part of a song. Most of the time, it will be your chorus, if your song has one. If your song doesn't have a chorus your hook will most likely be your refrain.

Pre-Ch - Pre-Chorus: The pre-chorus is an add-on before the chorus. It usually repeats the same lyrics each time it's used, the same way a chorus does. Musically, a lot of times it creates a nice build up to what's coming in the chorus.

Link: A link is a short 4 or 8 bar instrumental restatement of the melodic hook. Sometimes the same as the introduction, or sometimes an instrumental version of the last line or two of the chorus. They usually happen after the chorus linking the song to another verse. This section sometimes is referred to as a "turn around", but in RIM1230 we are referring to it as a "Link".

B – Bridge: The bridge is a section in a song that acts as an interlude, connecting two separate sections of a song (bridging them together). Often times the bridge acts as a harmonic departure within the song -- moving to another part of the songs original key, or even remote harmonic area outside the key. A bridge only happens once in a song, usually about two thirds of the way through, building the song to a climax, often times to the chorus.

¹ *The Nashville Number System*, Chas Williams

² *Understanding the Most Common Song Structures*, Anthony Ceser, Article appeared at: <http://www.songwriting.net>

Solo: A solo is an instrumental section usually over the chords of the verse or chorus. If there is a certain instrument that is playing the solo, it is written at the beginning of this section (guitar/steel guitar) Solo. Here the guitar takes the first half of the solo and the steel plays the second half.

Remember that if you hear instruments playing without vocals it may not be the solo, it might be another link. Use your ear to guide you. Is it something you've already heard earlier in the song? There are times where a link will appear more than once. If the instrumental section is completely different than the rest of the song AND there is not a lead solo instrument, then it may be an **Instrumental bridge**.

Outro: The ending section of the song that finalizes the form. Many times it is an extension of the chorus, with the instruments playing the variations of the hook or/chorus melody. Other times it may be a return to ideas drawn from the introduction. Some outros may be short, only 2 or 4 bars long. Others, like the extension of the chorus, may be as long as 16 bars. The main difference between a final chorus and an extension type ending is that the vocals stop singing the complete lyrics of the melody. If the vocals are improvised, both melodically and lyrically, it becomes an outro.

Tag - Tag Ending: A tag is usually the last line or two of the final chorus repeated to signal the end of the song. It sort of puts a cap on the song and further reinforces the hook. Be sure to label if the tag is instrumental instead of vocal.

No Ending: A song does not have to include an ending section. For example. If the chorus repeats as a "double chorus", then simply ends on a sustained chord or short stop near the end of the chorus, don't mark it as an ending. The song simply ends at the end of the last chorus.

Fade: Means the song fades out at the end. But for live purposes, this is usually impractical so an ending does need to be worked out. This is your chance to use one of the above style endings.