

5.1 Finding Cadences

Form describes how measures coalesce (group together) to create larger musical units.

A **phrase** is the smallest grouping of measures. Every phrase ends with one **cadence**.

Cadences are arrival points like punctuation marks in the flow of the music.

****TIP:** If you can find the **cadences**, you know where the **phrases** end and can understand the **form**.**

Below are some **clues to spot cadences**. Note that these are **clues**, not guarantees.

Clue 1: Return of previous material might follow a cadence

In this example by Bach, the opening material returns right after the cadence.

Bach, Gavotte from *English Suite No. 3 in G minor*, BWV 808, mm. 1-5

The musical score shows the first five measures of the Gavotte. The treble clef part begins with a melody labeled 'starting melody'. After a few measures, there is a cadence marked with a downward arrow. Immediately following the cadence, the melody returns, labeled 'starting melody returns'. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment.

Clue 2: Design change: Obvious changes might follow a cadence

In this example by Beethoven, the accompaniment changes dramatically right after the cadence.

This type of obvious change on the musical surface (tempo, rhythm, etc.) is called a **design change**.

Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, II, mm. 7-10.

The musical score shows measures 7-10. The treble clef part starts with sixteenth-note patterns labeled 'Sixteenths in right hand'. After a cadence (marked with a downward arrow), there is a 'CHANGE: both hands have sixteenths', where both the treble and bass clefs play sixteenth-note patterns. The bass clef part changes from a simple accompaniment to a more complex sixteenth-note pattern.

Clue 3: Rests in some or all parts might follow a cadence

Chopin, 24 Preludes, Op. 28, No. 4 in E minor, mm. 10-13.

The musical score shows measures 10-13. The treble clef part has a cadence marked with a downward arrow. Following the cadence, there are rests in both the treble and bass clefs. A note below the rests says 'These are the first rests in the piece!'. The bass clef part consists of chords.

Continued on
next page...

LearnMusicTheory.net
5.1 Finding Cadences, cont.

Clue 4: Agogic accent -- A longer rhythmic value might indicate a cadence

Using a longer rhythmic value to emphasize a note is called **agogic accent**.

This half note at the cadence is the longest note so far!

Bach, *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*, Polonaise, mm. 1-4.

Clue 5: A P5 or P4 in the bass line might be a cadence

Chopin, *Mazurka No. 6 in A Minor from Op. 7/2*, mm. 5-9

Bass leaps a P4 into the cadence!

Clue 6: The end of a sequence might indicate a nearby cadence

A **sequence** keeps repeating a musical idea starting on different notes. Often the cadence comes a few beats **after** the **sequence pattern ends**.

Bach, *Fugue 11 in F Major, BWV 856*, from Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, mm. 31-36.

Multiple clues might point to a single cadence.

1. The **clue 1** example above also has a design change because the right hand leaps up to high G after the cadence **AND** the left hand switches from eighth notes to quarter notes.
2. The **clue 2** example also has a rest in the left hand.
3. In the piece for **clue 3**, the music after the rests is a literal restatement of measure 1 (not shown).
4. In the example for **clue 4**, measure 5 (not shown) is a restatement of measure 1.
5. The example for **clue 5** also restates measure 1 (not shown) after the cadence.
6. The **clue 6** example has an agogic accent (long rhythmic value) in the left hand at the cadence.

Identifying Cadence Types

Cadences are classified into **cadence types** by examining **TWO** chords:

1. The chord **at** the cadence, **AND**
2. The chord **right before** the cadence.

See the "Cadence Types" page for a list of common cadence types.