

2. A Song is a Musical Framework

2a. Form

Now we are going to dive deep into form, how it works, and how the principal of **Contrast Is Key** plays out to create interesting songs.

2a.1 Cyclical Songs

Cyclical songs have sections that repeat in **cycles**.

2a.1.1-10 Song Section Names

I = Intro

An intro is the introduction of a song. There can be instruments and singing/words.

V = Verse

V' = Secondary Verse

A verse is where the story of the song is told. "Once upon a time...Happily ever after..."

C = Chorus

A chorus is the repeated part of the song that happens in between verses, typically using the same words each time it repeats. This is the catchiest part of the song that everyone remembers. The chorus can sum up the "main idea" of the song. The chorus celebrates the idea of the song, it throws a party for the whole thing the song is about!

R = Refrain

A refrain is sung words repeated at the end of a section each time that section is heard.

B = Bridge

A bridge can help tell the story of the song, or be nonsense. It is usually sounds different compared to the rest of the song. A bridge is a change of pace, a new flavor, a shift in gears.

Inst = Instrumental

Intr = Interlude

An instrumental is a section of a song with only instruments. When an instrumental section creates a short pause between sections of a song, we call it an interlude. Interludes can include voices.

Instrumental = Long duration

Interlude = Short duration

S = Solo

A solo is an instrumental that is highlighted by a featured instrumental performer playing a solo that could be improvised on the spot, written out beforehand, or a mix of both.

O = Outro/Fade Out

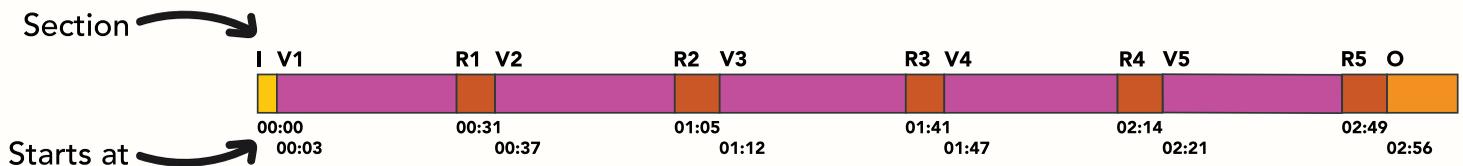
An outro is the end of a song, sometimes similar to the intro, but often very different. When the song ends with the volume of the music being reduced to silence over time, it is called a "fade out."

Song Maps

Song maps are the key to being able to quickly understand form using real songs. Song maps show the order of sections (the form) and sometimes the energy of each section.

How to Read Song Maps: Form

Song Maps show the Form of a song. Each section is labeled with the short version of the section name. Below the Song Map are timestamps at the start of each section so you can know for sure what section you are in at all times. There are numbers after the short version of some section names so we can tell which verse, refrain, or chorus we are in. Intros, bridges, and outros don't repeat and we won't keep track of instrumentals, interludes, and solos. In the song map below, verse 1 starts at 00:03, refrain 1 starts at 00:31, verse 2 starts at 00:37, and refrain 2 starts at 01:05.



How to Read Timestamps

The timestamp shows how many seconds or minutes into the song sections begin.

03:29
minutes:seconds

energy maps

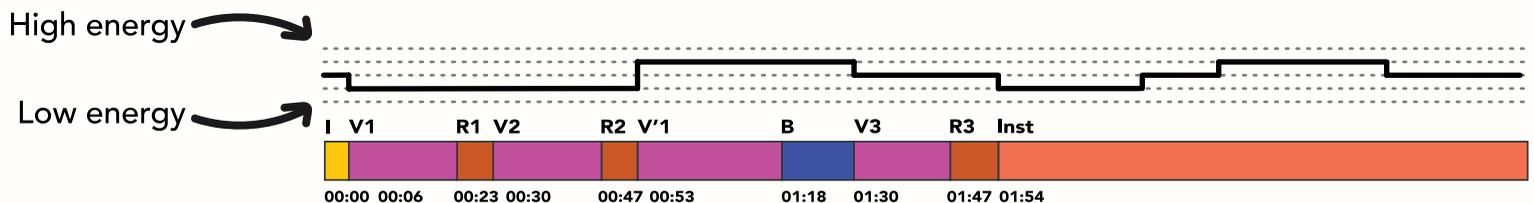
Definitions

Song. A song is words set to a melody.

Production. A production is the wrapping paper for a song...it is the drums, guitars, bass guitars, instruments, sound effects, background vocals...everything besides the words sung by the main singer.

How to Read Song Maps: Energy

Energy Maps are above song maps and show the energy of each section so you can see how Form is not just about the section names—it's also about what happens in the sections! The intensity of the sections in recordings can be a little misleading. Sometimes the production changes levels of energy to make up for a lack of energy change in the words and melody of a song. Because of this "production energy" that can be different than the "song energy", the energy maps are not perfect, but they show a general idea of the energy of a section.



What contributes to energy? We will unpack this question a bit more in other books and courses—for now just see if you can hear the change in energy.

form examples

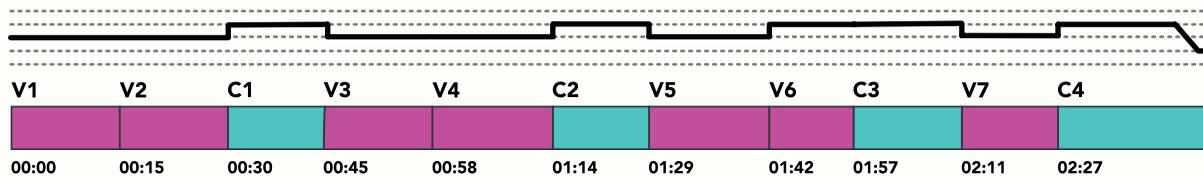
Form Examples

These examples are already set up for you in your course. Listen through the songs and follow along with the maps so you can tell what section of the song is happening at all times. After going through several maps you will start to spot the patterns and understand how the different sections make up the form of songs. You can listen through these songs as many times as you want until you feel like you are hearing the change between sections.

Blow the Man Down - The Longest Johns

Song duration: 02:48

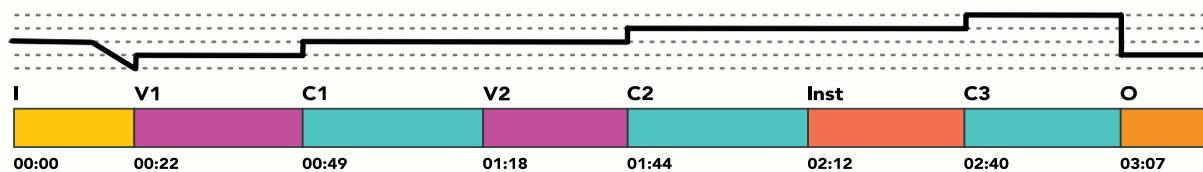
Each verse tells part of the story. Each chorus repeats the main idea of the song.



Greensleeves - The Celtic Ladies

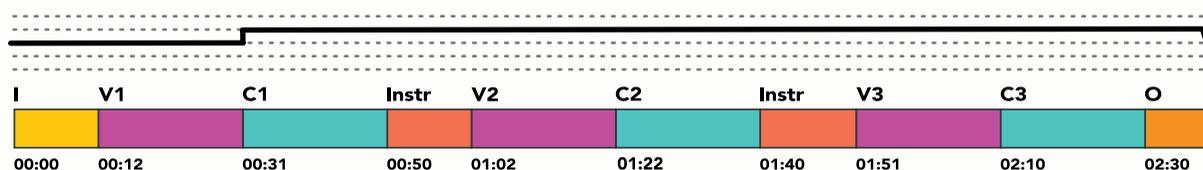
Song duration: 03:20

The intro sets the feeling for the song. Each verse tells part of the story. The choruses repeat the main idea of the song, a broken love. The instrumental provides a break between choruses where the instruments keep the energy going! The Outro wraps the song up.



Wabash Cannonball - Johnny Cash

Song duration: 02:40

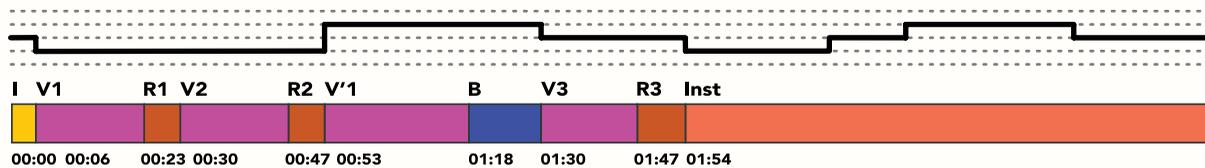


form examples

Cheek to Cheek - Fred Astaire

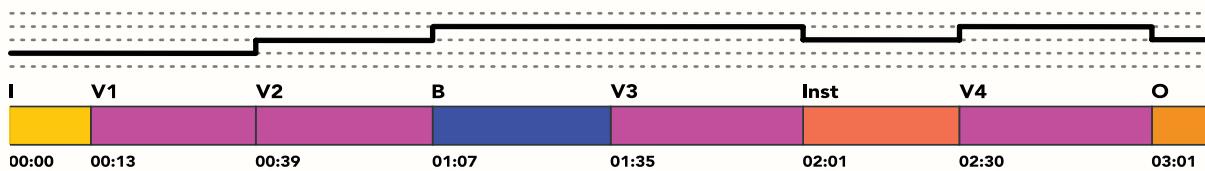
Song duration: 03:17

R = "When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek."



The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas To You) - Nat "King" Cole

Song duration: 03:11



Respect - Aretha Franklin

Song duration: 02:29

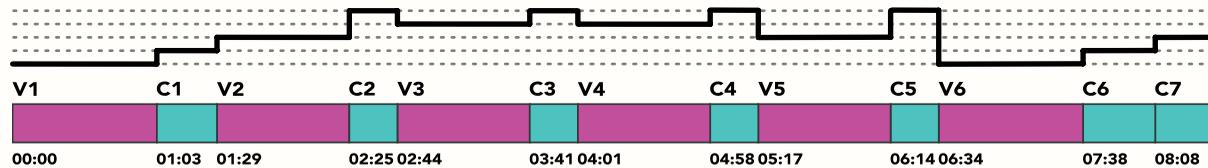
This song does not have a chorus. There is a section after each verse that is "kinda" a chorus, so we will call it a chorus. There is no bridge, but there is a breakdown section where Aretha sings "R-E-S-P-E-C-T..." that we will call a bridge.



form examples

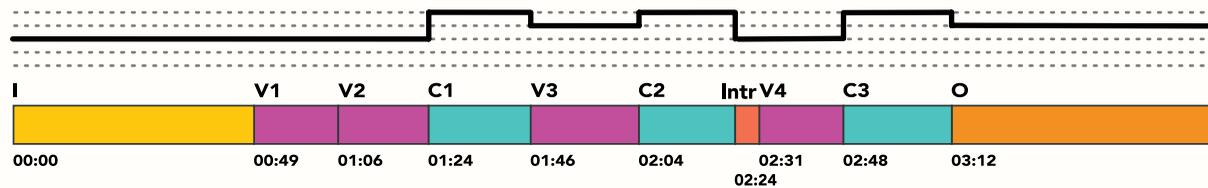
American Pie - Don McLean

Song duration: 08:30



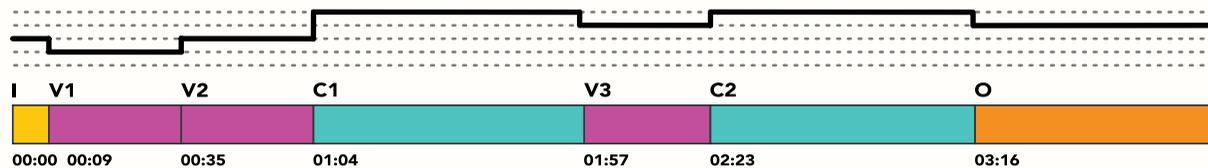
Eye of the Tiger – Survivor

Song duration: 04:05



Something About The Way You Look Tonight - Elton John

Song duration: 04:06



Now we will explore some more combinations of sections from famous songs.

form examples

Verse + Refrain + Chorus

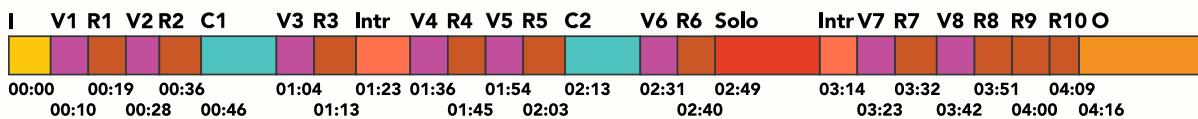
I Feel Fine - The Beatles

Song duration: 02:19



Wake Me Up When September Ends - Green Day

Song duration: 04:47



All My Loving - The Beatles

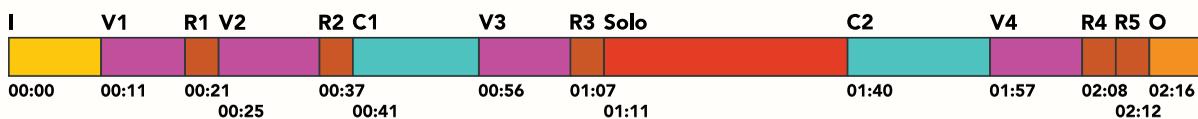
Song duration: 02:09

Is the chorus really a chorus or is it a bridge? What do you think?



On The Road Again - Willie Nelson

Song duration: 02:23



form examples

Verses Only

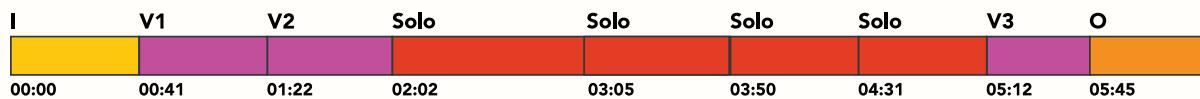
Words of Love - Buddy Holly

Song duration: 01:53



Money - Pink Floyd

Song duration: 06:23



Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer - Stieve Wonder

Song duration: 02:52



form examples

Verse + Chorus

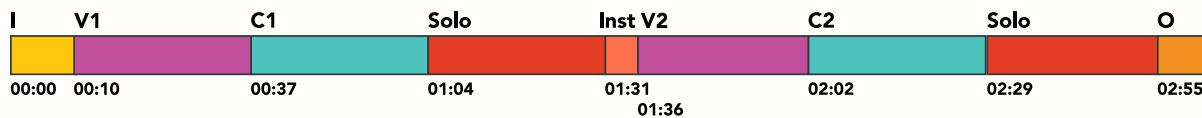
Single Verse and Chorus

Ready To Go Home - Hank Williams Sr.



I Shall Be Released - Bob Dylan

Song duration: 03:03



Johnny B. Goode - Chuck Berry

Song duration: 02:42



Fire and Rain - James Taylor

Song duration: 03:32

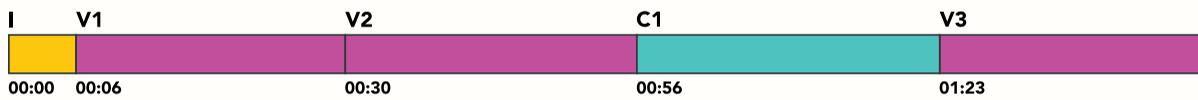


form examples

Double Verse

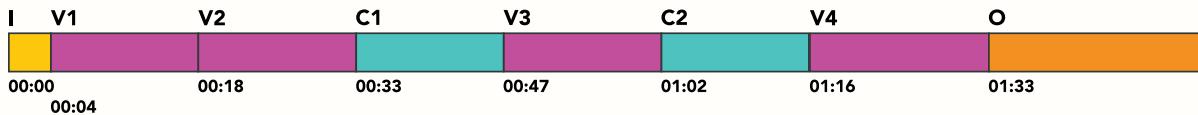
I'm In Love With A Girl - Big Star

Song duration: 01:47



The Letter - The Box Tops

Song duration 01:54



Triple Verse

Buy Me a Pony – Spiderbait

Song duration: 01:41



form examples

Double Chorus

I Will Always Love You - Whitney Houston

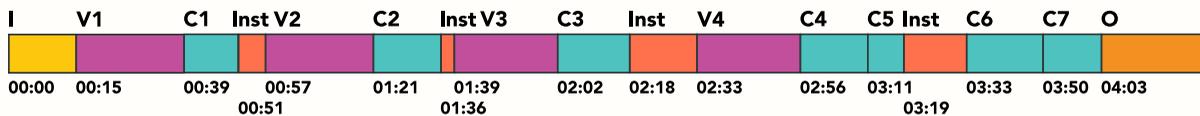
Song duration: 04:32



Bang a Gong - T-Rex

Song duration: 04:27

C5 feels like a false start...it's a 1/2 chorus that leads into the instrumental section...how exciting!



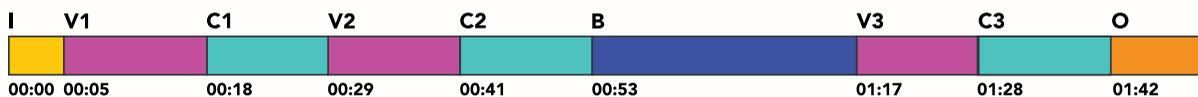
form examples

Verse + Chorus + Bridge

Single Verse + Chorus

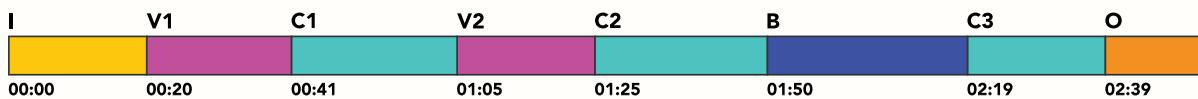
Koka Kola - The Clash

Song duration: 01:49



Tracks of My Tears - Smokey Robinson

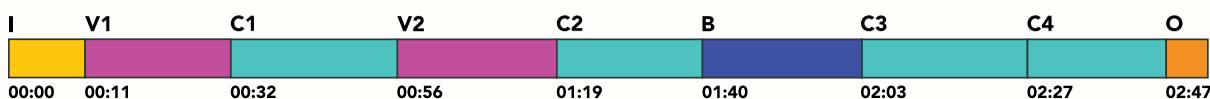
Song duration: 02:54



Double Chorus

Stay With Me - Sam Smith

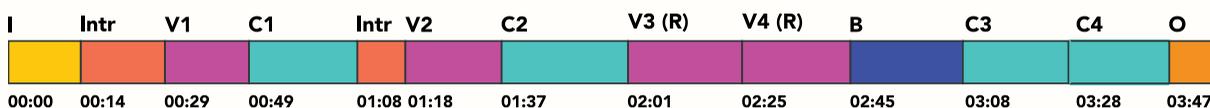
Song duration: 02:53



Crazy in Love - Beyoncé

Song duration: 03:56

The instrumental sections in this song contain both an interlude (with vocals) and a purely instrumental section. V3 and V4 are performed as a rap by Jay-Z.



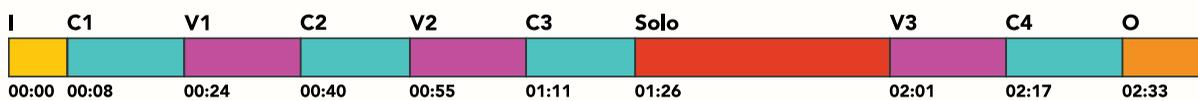
form examples

Chorus first

You can start any song with a chorus.

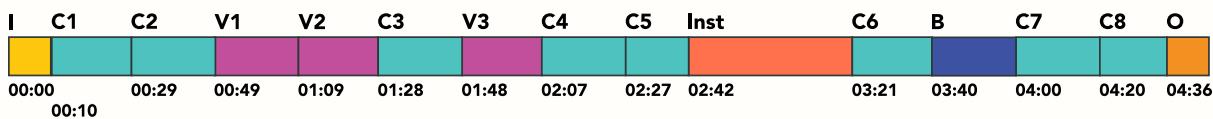
Louie Louie - The Kingsman

Song duration: 2:45



Shout - Tears For Fears

Song duration: 04:46



Le Freak - Chic

Song duration: 03:31

