

Pop Song Form Vocabulary

Intro – The beginning of the song – Establishes, key, tempo, meter, style – Sometimes contains a “hook” or “riff” by which the song can be identified – can appear again later – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (0:00–0:25)

Verse – melody is introduced, usually a vocal line that explains the narrative, often repeated multiple times with different lyrics – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (0:25–0:49)

Pre-Chorus – New melodic/harmonic idea that precedes and leads into the Chorus – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (0:50–1:06)

Chorus – Primary melody of the song, often contains the title of the song, often in repetition – Could also contain a “hook” or “riff” by which the song can be identified – Sometimes referred to as the “Refrain” – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (1:07–1:30)

Post-Chorus – Continuation of the Chorus that somehow alters the melody/harmony enough to require a separate designation – Charlie Puth “Attention” (2:04–2:26)

Bridge – Completely new material that is presented about 2/3rds of the way through the song – Various “We Are the World” (2:42–3:08)

Solo – Features a particular instrument in the ensemble – Usually played over the harmony of the verse, pre-chorus and/or chorus – Jimi Hendrix “Purple Haze” (1:18–1:35)

Outro or Coda – End of the song – Could present new material or quote material presented earlier in the song – Songs either have a composed ending or a fade out

- Composed – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (4:30–end)
- Fade out – James Brown “Funky Drummer” (6:40–end)

Interlude – Short transition between larger sections – Could contain previous or new material – Nirvana “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (1:30–1:39)

Break – An instrumental section often featuring the drums and percussion that provides a departure from the original material and is often used to build back into the Chorus or to establish the beat in the intro

- Queen “Bicycle Race” (1:46–2:01)
- James Brown “Funky Drummer” (5:35–5:54)