These are format characters as defined in the Unicode Standard[[1]](#footnote-1):

Extensive ligature-like beams are used frequently in musical notation between groups of notes having short values. The practice is widespread and very predictable, so it is therefore amenable to algorithmic handling. The format characters U+1D173 musical symbol begin beam and U+1D174 musical symbol end beam can be used to indicate the extents of beam groupings. In some exceptional cases, beams are left unclosed on one end. This status can be indicated with a U+1D159 musical symbol null notehead character if no stem is to appear at the end of the beam.

Similarly, format characters have been provided for other connecting structures. The characters U+1D175 musical symbol begin tie, U+1D176 musical symbol end tie, U+1D177 musical symbol begin slur, U+1D178 musical symbol end slur, U+1D179 musical symbol begin phrase, and U+1D17A musical symbol end phrase indicate the extent of these features. Like beaming, these features are easily handled in an algorithmic fashion.

These pairs of characters modify the layout and grouping of notes and phrases in full musical notation. When musical examples are written or rendered in plain text without special software, the start/end format characters may be rendered as brackets or left uninterpreted. To the extent possible, more sophisticated software that renders musical examples inline with natural-language text might interpret them in their actual format control capacity, rendering slurs, beams, and so forth, as appropriate.

Scoring applications may choose to implement these format characters for beams, slurs, phrase marks and ties or not, as they wish.

1. *Ibid.*, Allen, page 537. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)