

Cadences

Cadence is the end of a musical phrase in which the melody or harmony creates a sense of full or partial resolution. It is generally a progression of two or more chords that concludes a phrase, section, or piece of music. A cadence can be labeled "weak" or "strong" depending on the impression of finality it gives.

Moreover, cadences are strong indicators of the tonic or central pitch of a passage or piece of music.

From these definitions, we can deduce several things about cadences :

- they can help to build resolution and hence create better musics
- they can be used to recognise common patterns in part of musics
- they help us to identify tonality

For now, you should already be familiar with the dominant chord and the importance of this chord to pull us back to the tonic. You should be already familiar with the V - I progression. In reality, we call this pattern V-I a cadence. Plus it is the most well known : it is called the authentic cadence !

The goal of this lesson is to make you understand that :

1. small patterns of chord progression (such as the V-I) that you have already seen are actually cadences. You will connect the dots and expand your view.
2. there are other cadences that you can learn to improve your musical knowledge

I recommend you discover the basic cadences in order. I put some more advanced cadences, you can check them out after.

Basic Cadences

- **Authentic Cadence** : It is the most well known. It is also called the Perfect Cadence. A chord that incorporates the dominant triad (based on the fifth tone of the scale) is followed by the tonic triad (based on the first tone of the scale), V-I. Generally, the dominant is a major chord with a minor seventh, we denote it this way : V7-I. A lot of songs use the authentic cadence : it can be found almost everywhere ! All other cadences are inspired by or based on this one because it is so powerful. Therefore learn it well. In modern songs, we can find the authentic cadence at the end of phrases and chord progressions like in Lamento Boliviano of the Enanitos Verdes. The chord progression goes like this : i-v-iv-i/V7 in E natural minor.
- **Imperfect Cadence** : Other arrangements or inversions of the V-I harmonic formula on either the V or I chord are considered less perfect because they are perceived by the listener as less final.
- **Plagal Cadence** : Also called the Amen Cadence for its holy effect it produces. The subdominant (IV) triad leads to the tonic (I). This cadence usually is an extension to an authentic cadence, and its most characteristic and formulaic usage in the West is with the final amen (IV-I) at the end of a hymn in Christian churches. An example of use can be found in Let it be - The Beatles, the verse goes like this : C-G-Am-Fmaj7 or I-V-vi-IV7. It can be found in Dani California by the Red Hot Chili Peppers : Am-G-Dm-Am or i-VII-iv-i.
- **Minor Plagal Cadence** : This is the same as the Plagal Cadence except the IV chord is minor. It is denoted as iv-I. It is common to encounter a three chords cadence with first the major 4th chord followed by the minor 4th before the tonic chord : IV-iv-I. This has a dramatic effect and is really easily identifiable. A common example of its use is in the song Creep by Radiohead : G-B-C-Cm or I-iii-IV-iv.
- **Picardy Third** : This cadence is mostly used in classical music. When an entire piece of music in minor ends on the tonic, but in major, we call it a picardy third.

Advanced Cadences

- **Half Cadence** : It is an unfinished cadence ends the phrase on a dominant chord (V), which in tonal music does not sound final; that is, the phrase ends with unresolved harmonic tension. It acts as a sentence with a comma in a story. Generally, it is used in a two parts phrases where we first use the Half Cadence and then the Perfect Cadence.
- **Deceptive Cadence** : A deceptive cadence begins with V, like an authentic cadence, except that it does not end on the tonic. Often the triad built on the sixth degree (VI, the submediant) substitutes for the tonic, with which it shares two of its three pitches. A deceptive cadence may be used to extend a phrase, to overlap one phrase with another, or to facilitate a sudden modulation to a remote key.
- **Andalusian Cadence**: We call this a cadence because we can encounter it quite often even though it is a four chords cadences : i- \flat VII- \flat VI-V. It kinds of provides an oriental flavour due to the use of the dominant chord – the last chord – extracted from the harmonic minor scale. The three first chords come from the basic natural minor scale. It is used for example in Sultans of Swing by the Dire Straits in the 2nd verse : Dm-C-B \flat -A.
- **Mario Cadence** : This name does not really exist but it is a nice label for the next three chords cadence : \flat VI- \flat VII-I. It is such a great tool to produce a real epic effect to the listener. This is the three chords you ear when Mario enters the castle at the end of every level : it is really recognisable ! We can see this cadence as a modulation where the two first chords come from the parallel minor mode.