

Some Guidelines (not rules) for distinguishing between Rounded Binary and Ternary Forms:

Musical Domains	Rounded Binary	Ternary
Form	a digression a' Organic Form	A B A (or A') Composite Form Also likely to have nested binary forms inside
Motives: melodic/rhythmic	continue in digression	sharply contrasted in B
Harmony	“dependent,” meaning: 1. digression goes to V 2. digression participates in harmonic sweep such as I-iii-V or I-iii-IV-V	B in subdominant, tonic in other mode. Also possible are Mediant, Submediant, (maybe mixture)
Instrumentation/Register/ Dynamics	Generally even, though climax may occur at the big dominant at the end of the digression	Sharply contrasted (may be lighter on the whole) may highlight a new voice in the ensemble (winds/brass/low strgs)
Mood	Generally even	Sharply contrasted
Text		Contrasting emotion, especially in Baroque arias
Score Markings (though not always present or reliable!)		“ <i>da Capo</i> ,” “Minuet-Trio,” “Scherzo-Trio” Key changes tempo/performance markings

How **not** to determine the form of a work:

1. **Length/Duration:** Very short pieces can be ternary forms and very long pieces (even those by Haydn/Mozart/Beethoven) can be binary!
2. **By making a judgment using just **one** row from the chart above.** In the Bach aria from pp. 539-543 of your text, it would be a mistake to only consider the motivic continuity between A and B and decide the piece is rounded binary. It is clearly marked a *da Capo* (ternary) aria, and there are many musical factors distinguishing B from A.

The best way to determine a form (and to analyze in general) is to consider all the terms of a work. Doing so provides you with the most evidence to defend your reading.

3. By failing to note the functions of sections. Do your best not to miss the strongest cadences, which often signal division of a work into small, medium, and large parts. If the B section of a ternary form closes with a strong cadence in the same key in which it opened, there is a chance that a retransition (defined p. 534) will return the music back to A.

*Here: it is especially important that you do not miss “written out repeats,” in which the melody line may repeat exactly or with substantial ornamentation.

4. By using your eyes alone (depending on your ability to audiate!) or by being unfamiliar with the main themes and gestures of a work.

Identifying Transitions / Retransitions:

- A. Look for these only after you’ve determined a work to be in ternary form
- B. Transitions (Rare in ternary forms, common in rondos!): take the music from A’s harmonic area to B’s harmonic area

Retransitions (Common in both ternary forms **and** rondos): smoothly take the music from B back to A. Some motivic preparation may occur as well.

Worksheet for form listening: Movt. 3 from Saint-Saëns's Symphony no. 1 in A

I. Dictation:

II. Form