

The 32-Bar Format

Unlike the blues format, the 32-bar popular song format is not quite as regular when it comes to its chord or melody structures, but we will try to identify some simple incarnations. There are two more-common versions that the 32-bar form will fit into: AABA and AA'. The letters stand for sections and the apostrophe stands for a variant).

AABA Format (Bernie Miller's "Bernie's Tune" is a good example)

In this form, the song is divided into three sections: the A and A' (16 measures total), the B (8 measures), and the returning A'' (8 measures). This is similar to the classical ternary form.

Section	Features
A with first ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts in the main key (but maybe not on a I(i) chord) • Can have two 4-measure phrases • The first phrase will end in a half cadence or a less-conclusive authentic cadence • The second phrase ends (known as the "first ending") with either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a half cadence, or ○ an authentic cadence that doesn't feel completely resolved (by usually having the 3rd or 5th of the tonic chord in the melody), or ○ an authentic cadence in a new key
A' with second ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will usually repeat (chords and melody) the first 6 measures of the A section • The last one or two measures (the "second ending") will set up a conclusive-sounding authentic cadence, allowing for a comfortable transition to the B section
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually starts in a different key than the original <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the song is in a major key, the B section often starts in the key of the subdominant (the IV) ○ If the song is in a minor key, the B section often starts in the key of the relative major (the III), or a different major key with a "close" key signature • Usually concludes with an authentic cadence in the new key or in a half cadence back in the original key—setting up a need to return to the original key in the final A section
A''	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallels (follows the same melody and chords) as the A section, but most definitely uses the cadence of the second ending (from the A' section) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the cadence will specifically be a strong authentic cadence in the original key <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The cadence will be further strengthened by the melody note landing on the tonic (1st scale degree)

The AA' Format (or AB Format) (J.V. Heusan's "Here's That Rainy Day" is a good example)

In this form the song is divided into two equal parts of 16 measures each. The relationship between the two sections might be very strong (a parallel-type relationship), or vague, where only fractions of each section are similar. If the relationship between the two sections is very different, we might opt for calling the second section a "B Section" as opposed to an "A' Section".

Section	Features
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts in the main key (but maybe not on a I(i) chord) • Can have two 8-measure phrases • The second (last phrase/first ending) will end with either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a half cadence, or ○ an authentic cadence that doesn't feel completely resolved (by usually having the 3rd or 5th of the tonic chord in the melody), or ○ an authentic cadence in a new key • If first and second endings are a part of this section, the second ending will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ set up a conclusive-sounding authentic cadence, allowing for a comfortable transition to the B section
A' (or B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might begin exactly like the A section, or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with similar sounding material as the A section, but in a different key, or • Introduce a new idea • The phrases in general might not be a clear cut • The last phrase might more clearly resemble material from the A section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the cadence will specifically be a strong authentic cadence in the original key <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The cadence will be further strengthened by the melody note landing on the tonic (1st scale degree)

Cadences

In the above tables, cadences are mentioned. A cadence is a structural event coinciding with the end of a phrase. A cadence often feels like a stopping point, but can also be described as an arrival point without the music actually "stopping". There are various types of cadences differentiated by mainly the specific chords involved. There are also many types and sub-classifications for cadences, but the two that are the most important when it comes to jazz structures are the:

- **Authentic Cadence**
 - Defined by two chords: $V^{(7)} \rightarrow I(i)$
 - Can be described as "resolved" or "conclusive" sounding
 - Nearly all songs end with an authentic cadence
- **Half Cadence**
 - Defined by two chords: $X \rightarrow V^{(7)}$ (the "X" chord can be one of many, but is often the ii chord)
 - Can be described as "unresolved" or "inconclusive" sounding
 - Many initial phrases end with a half cadence
 - Many second-ending A-sections and B-sections end with a half cadence
 - If a song is going to repeat its form from the top, a half cadence will often be tacked on to the end, which allows the music to feel like it is going to "start over"

Bernie Miller's song, "Bernie's Tune" is a good example of how authentic and half cadences are used.

Bernie's Tune
Bernie Miller
(As played by Gerry Mulligan)

Medium Swing

Authentic Cadence

Half Cadence

Half Cadence

Authentic Cadence

Chords in parentheses are used for solos.

The first ending of the A-section finishes on an A7 chord, the V7 of the key (which is D minor). This half cadence allows for an easy return to the top. The second ending uses an authentic cadence (A7 → Dmi) to let the A-section feel completed, making it more comfortable to transition to the B-section, which is in a new key.

The B-section initially ends with an authentic cadence in Bb, but then tacks on a half cadence in D minor (Emi7(b5) → A7).

The final A-section concludes with an authentic cadence (A7 → Dmi). The last measure has half cadence chords in parentheses only for the sake of starting the song over again.

All Of Me also uses cadences in a typical way within the AA' (or AB) format.

16.

ALL OF ME - SIMONE & GARCES

Half Cadence:
arriving on a V (G7) chord

Authentic Cadence:
moving from V to I (G7 to C6)

While this chart is labeled "A" and "B", the 2nd half is very much like the first half, so some people refer to the form as AA'.

Also notice that the 2nd half of each 16-bar section differs significantly. This is to say that bars 1-8 and 17-24 are the same, while bars 9-16 and 25-32 are rather different. One might also see this form as ABAC:

- A (bars 1-8)
- B (bars 9-16)
- A (bars 17-24)
- C (bars 25-32)