Phrases and Period Forms

**Phrase** - a relatively independent musical thought terminated by a cadence. Phrases are labeled using lower-case letters (a, b, c, etc.). The overlapping of phrases is referred to as "elision."

**Period Forms** - A period is the combination of 2-4 phrases and consequently involves 2-4 cadences. The final cadence in a period is normally the strongest. In a two phrase period, there is typically an antecedent-consequent relationship between the phrases. That relationship is established by means of a stronger cadence at the end of the second phrase. This stronger cadence, usually a PAC, is referred to as a "complete" cadence. A weaker cadence, such as an IAC, DC, or HC, is referred to as an "incomplete" cadence. Two frequent possibilities exist:

1) $\text{a} \quad \text{HC} \quad \text{b} \quad \text{IAC or PAC} \\
2) \text{a} \quad \text{IAC} \quad \text{b} \quad \text{PAC}

**Period Types:**

1) **Parallel** - Both phrases begin with similar or identical material.

2) **Contrasting** - The phrases begin with different, unrelated material.

3) **Sequential** - The material at the beginning of the two phrases is sequentially related.
4) **Modulating** - The consequent phrase begins or accomplishes a modulation.

5) **Three Phrase** - Involves three different phrases. The possibilities are antecedent-consequent-consequent (the most common), and antecedent-antecedent-consequent (rare). The strength of the cadences will be the determining factor.
6) **Four-Phrase** - Antecedent-antecedent-consequent-consequent is the most typical.

NOTE: Any two-phrase period may be expanded by repetition of one or both of the phrases. For example, aab, abb, aabb. A cadential expansion may also extend the phrase.
**The Double Period** - Consists typically of four phrases. The first two phrases and the last two phrases are paired. The cadence of the second pair is stronger than the cadence of the first pair. There are two types of double periods:

1. **Parallel** - The material that begins each half is similar.
2. **Contrasting** - The material that begins each half is different.

**Phrase Group** - Several related phrases that do not form a period or a double period.