

Notes outside the chord

A melody of chord notes only would be an arpeggio. The notes in between — passing, leaning, hanging on from the bar before — are what make a line sound like a tune.

THE SIX YOU NEED

NAME	APPROACHED BY	LEFT BY	HOW IT SOUNDS, AND WHERE
Passing note	step	step, same direction	Fills the gap between two chord notes a third apart. Weak beat — the workhorse.
Auxiliary (neighbour)	step	step, back again	Steps away and returns to the same note. Decoration that goes nowhere.
Suspension	held over	step down	A note from the previous chord hangs on, then falls. Strong beat, the classic clash.
Appoggiatura	leap	step, opposite way	Lands on the beat as a dissonance and leans onto the chord note. The most expressive of the six.
Anticipation	step or leap	stays, repeated	The next chord's note played early. Common at cadences.
Escape note	step	leap, opposite way	Steps away, then jumps off elsewhere. A light flick, always on a weak beat.

THREE OF THEM DRAWN

Passing note



C – D – E over a C chord. The D belongs to nothing and joins the two chord notes into a line.

Suspension



Preparation as a chord note, **suspension** as the chord changes underneath, **resolution** down by step.

Appoggiatura



A leap onto a note that does not belong, on the beat, then a step down into the chord. Meant to be heard.

HOW TO USE THEM

- 1 Write the chords first, then the melody. Decoration is added to a structure, not instead of one.
- 2 Weak beats take passing and auxiliary notes; strong beats take suspensions.
- 3 Every dissonance resolves by step, usually downwards. That rule covers most of the craft.
- 4 One decoration at a time. Two clashing notes on the same beat sound like a mistake, not a colour.

NAMING A SUSPENSION

Suspensions are numbered by the interval above the bass — the clash first, then the resolution.

4–3	The commonest. Fourth above the bass falls to the third.
7–6	Gentler. Often used in a chain, one voice pulling the next.
9–8	A second above the octave, falling in. Rich and slightly austere.
2–3	The bass itself suspends and the upper part resolves instead.

SPOTTING THEM IN MUSIC

Work out the chord, then find the notes that do not fit. How each is approached and left tells you which one it is.

PEDAL NOTES

A held bass note the harmony moves over — the same idea at the bottom, and a fine way to build tension.

IN YOUR OWN WRITING

If a melody sounds stiff, it usually has too few. If it sounds vague, it usually has too many on strong beats.