

Terms, ornaments & simple form

Three small things that together make a piece sound finished: the words that tell a player how to move, the marks that decorate a note, and the plan holding it together.

TERMS OF TEMPO AND EXPRESSION

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT THE PLAYER ACTUALLY DOES
<i>accelerando</i>	Gradually getting faster	Speeds up over several bars, not all at once. Often written <i>accel.</i>
<i>rallentando</i>	Gradually slowing down	Eases off, usually into a phrase ending. Written <i>rall.</i>
<i>ritardando</i>	Gradually slowing down	Very close to rallentando — treat them as the same instruction. Written <i>rit.</i>
<i>a tempo</i>	Back to the original speed	Cancels the slowing or hurrying and returns to the tempo set at the start.
<i>cantabile</i>	In a singing style	Shape the line as a singer would — smooth, connected, with a breath at the phrase ends.

TWO ORNAMENTS TO KNOW



TRILL

A rapid back-and-forth between the written note and the one above, for as long as the mark lasts.



GRACE NOTE

A quick extra note just before the main one, written small with a slash. It takes almost no time of its own.

ORNAMENTS ARE DECORATION, NOT NEW NOTES

An ornament never changes which note the melody is on, or how long that note lasts. Take every ornament away and the tune must still be complete.

THE TWO SIMPLEST FORMS

A

B

Binary — AB. Two contrasting sections in order. B often moves to a related key and does not come home — a journey out.

A

B

A

Ternary — ABA. Three sections, the first returning at the end. That return is what makes it satisfying.

HOW TO HEAR THE FORM

Listen for the moment something you already heard comes back. If it never returns, the piece is binary. If it returns after a contrasting middle, it is ternary.