

JR'S PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE FUGUE (PART I)

About the Fugue

Fugue is the name given to a composition of the Baroque Period which is imitative in 3 or 4 voices, according to the structure outlined below. Most fugues were written for keyboard instruments, although they may be played by many different combinations of instruments or voices.

A typical **fugue** has an **exposition**, **development**, and **recapitulation**.

These work differently than in sonata form.

- The exposition is over when all voices have entered with the subject or answer.
- The development consists of **episodes** and **middle entries**.
- The recapitulation consists of **final entries** in the tonic key and sometimes includes a **coda**.

Part I: Exposition

Things you will find in a typical fugue exposition:

subject – This is the first thing you hear; it lasts until the next voice enters with the answer.

A “good” fugue subject is easily divided into two parts--the **head** and **tail**. These are sometimes developed separately.

answer – The imitation (“follower”) of the subject in the second voice, transposed up a P5. This is what the second voice does when it enters. Answers come in 2 varieties:

- **real answer** – an exact, note-for-note transposition of the subject up a P5.
- **tonal answer** – a subject transposition in which some intervals have been altered in order to pull the tonality back to the tonic key. A fugue will normally use a **tonal answer** when:
 - DO and SOL are used prominently in the subject.
 - The subject modulates.
 - The subject has many skips.

countersubject – What the first voice does when it has finished with the **subject**, and the **answer** has entered in another voice. Simply put, *the countersubject is counterpoint against the answer*.

The exposition ends when all voices have entered with the subject or answer and there is a **cadence**, (authentic or half). The cadence may be in the home key or a closely-related key.

Optional material: Things you may or may not find in a fugue exposition:

bridge –extra music between the **answer** and the second entrance of the **subject**. It contains neither subject nor answer, and is usually a sequence of previously introduced material.

link – a few pitches between the subject and countersubject to make the transition smoother. (A link sounds like a subject “appendage.”)

Diagram of a 3-voice fugue exposition Voices may enter in any order.

Voice 1:	subject (I)	countersubject	optional: bridge	new material	Cadence
Voice 2:		answer (V)		countersubject	
Voice 3:				subject (I)	

Diagram of a 4-voice fugue exposition Voices may enter in any order.

V1:	subject (I)	countersubject	optional: bridge	new material	new material	Cadence
V2:		answer (V)		countersubject	new material	
V3:				subject (I)	countersubject	
V4:					answer (V)	

JR's Practical Guide to the Fugue, Part II

Development (or “second section” or “middle section”)

The **development** begins immediately after the **exposition** has ended (i.e., after all voices have stated the complete subject or answer once.) The development is made up of **episodes** and **entries**:

- **middle entry**— any complete statement of the subject and/or countersubject, usually in a key other than the tonic.
- **episode** – Free material; any music in the middle section that does not contain subject or countersubject. Episodes usually contain sequences, which will cause the music to modulate to a subject **entry** in another key.

Other compositional devices used in the development:

- **inversion** applied to the subject or countersubject.
- **stretto** – entries that overlap. (i.e, a second statement of the subject enters before the first has finished.
- **augmentation** – a statement of the subject (or CS) wherein the note values have been increased. (e.g. stated in half notes instead of quarters.)
- **diminution** – a statement of the subject (or CS) wherein the note values have been decreased. (e.g., stated in sixteenths rather than eighths.)
- **pedal point** – Usually found during an entry; a sustained note against motion in other voices; used to confirm a key center (The pedal point is often the tonic (^1) or dominant (^5) scale degree of the current key.)

Recapitulation (or “closing section”)

The closing section of a fugue usually contains a **final entry** of the subject in the **tonic key**. Sometimes there is a **deceptive cadence** (or other inconclusive cadence) near the end before proceeding to a **perfect authentic cadence** in the home key. Any music after the PAC is a **coda**.
