Verses, Choruses, and Verse–Chorus Forms

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Verses

Sectional Verse
Begins on tonic and ends with a cadence (has T–PD–D–T; sometimes just T–PD–D with half cadence). Often a parallel period or srdc structure, frequently ending with a refrain. Feels like a complete, self-contained section.

Initiating Verse
Begins on tonic but does not cadence or even move away from tonic. Often contains a chord loop or shuttle for the entire section. The melody often takes the form of two or four repetitions of the same passage. Feels like it needs to go somewhere else (but doesn’t always).

Billy Joel, “Piano Man” (1973): sectional verse, parallel period

Antecedent

Consequent

The Beatles, “Misery” (1963): sectional verse, srdc with refrain

Choruses

Sectional Chorus
Like a sectional verse, but a chorus. Begins on tonic and ends with a cadence. Often a parallel period or srđc structure. Sometimes has the same harmony and/or melody as the preceding verse. Feels like a sing-along anthem.

Continuation Chorus
Begins off tonic and ends with a cadence (PD–D–T). Isn’t always very chorus-like; sometimes sounds like part of the verse or even a prechorus. Feels unsettled until the cadence.

Telos Chorus
Begins on tonic and does not cadence. Feels like a point of arrival rather than a goal-directed section. Often contains a chord loop or shuttle for the entire section. The melody often repeats a single motive over and over, frequently with the same text (usually the title of the song). Feels like a rock-out section.

Verse–Chorus Forms

These verse and chorus types normally combine in one of three ways, creating the three verse–chorus forms:

**Sectional verse–chorus**
Verse and chorus are separated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse (sectional)</th>
<th>chorus (sectional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T PD D T</td>
<td>T PD D T</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
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**Continuous verse–chorus**
Verse and chorus are cohesive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse (initiating)</th>
<th>chorus (continuation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PD D T</td>
<td></td>
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**Verse–Prechorus–Chorus**
Verse and chorus are endpoints connected by prechorus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse (initiating)</th>
<th>prechorus</th>
<th>chorus (telos)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
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The Allman Brothers Band, “Ramblin’ Man”: Sectional Verse–Chorus

I  s: Lord, I was born a ramblin’ man,
    r: Tryin’ to make a livin’ and doin’ the best I can.
    IV  d: And when it's time for leavin’, I hope you'll understand
       [I]–[V]–I  c: That I was born a ramblin’ man.

Verse (sectional) same progression
s: My father was a gambler down in Georgia,
   r: And he wound up on the wrong end of a gun.
   d: And I was born in the back seat of a Greyhound bus
   c: Rollin’ down highway 41.

Tom Petty, “Free Falling”: Sectional Verse–Chorus

chord loop
Verse (initiating)
I–IV–I–V She’s a good girl, loves her mama
She’s a good girl, crazy ‘bout Elvis,
loves Jesus and America, too.
loves horses and her boyfriend, too.

Chorus (continuation)
I–IV–I–V And I’m free!
Free falling.

Survivor, “Eye of the Tiger”: Continuous Verse–Chorus

chord loop
Verse (initiating)
i→VI→VII→i Risin’ up, back on the street
Risin’ up to the challenge of our rival
Did my time, took my chances
And the best known survivor stalks his prey in the night,
Went the distance, now I’m back on my feet,
and he’s watching us all with the eye of the tiger
just a man and his will to survive

Chorus (continuation)
Van Halen, “Dance the Night Away”: Verse–Prechorus–Chorus

Verse
I Have you seen her, so fine and pretty
Movin’ with her style and ease,
And I feel her from across the room
Yes, it’s love in the third degree

vi Ooh, baby baby,
Don’t ya turn your head my way?
Ooh, baby baby,

Prechorus
V come on, take a chance! You’re old enough to…

Chorus
I Dance the night away
Ah, ah, dance the night away

Wham!, “Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go”: Verse–Prechorus–Chorus

Verse (initiating)
I–ii You put the boom-boom into my heart
You send my soul sky high when your lovin’ starts
Jitterbug into my brain
Goes a bang-bang-bang ’til my feet do the same

Prechorus
ii But something’s bugging you, something ain’t right
My best friend told me what you did last night
Left me sleepin’ in my bed

Chorus (telos)
V I was dreaming, but I should have been with you instead.
I Wake me up before you go-go…