

Cadences

Music

The four ways a musical phrase can end, and how final each one sounds.

A cadence is defined by its final two chords, not by the melody.

Cadence	Chords	Sounds
Perfect (authentic)	$V \rightarrow I$	Finished. Full stop.
Plagal	$IV \rightarrow I$	Finished, gentler. The 'Amen'.
Imperfect (half)	$\text{any} \rightarrow V$	Unfinished. A comma.
Interrupted (deceptive)	$V \rightarrow vi$	A surprise — the ending withheld.

A perfect cadence with both chords in root position and the tonic on top is the strongest ending in tonal music.