

Non-Chord Tones

Non-chord tones, or NCT (also called non-harmonic tones or NHT), are notes that are not part of the harmony. They are added for melodic embellishment, to make the music more intricate and interesting, or to smooth out music with a lot of leaps. When analyzing music, first figure out the chord being played, and then circle any notes that do not fit into the chord. These are the NCT. In classical music there are nine types of NCT; many of them are still used in today's compositions and in popular music as well. NCT may be **accented** (occurring on the beat) or **unaccented** (occurring off the beat).

- **Passing Tone (PT)**: approached by step, resolved by step in the same direction.
- **Neighboring Tone (NT)**: approached by step, resolved by step in the opposite direction (returns to starting note).
 - A neighboring tone may be above the chord note (upper neighbor) or below it (lower neighbor).
- **Changing Tones (CT)**: Also called a neighboring group or a *cambiata*, this is a pair of notes: one upper neighboring tone and one lower neighboring tone.
 - For example, think about the beginning of the song "Some Enchanted Evening" from the musical South Pacific (1949). In this example the melody is Do-Ti-Re-Do Do Sol. The harmony during this tune is I (Do-Mi-Sol). The Ti and Re in the melody would be analyzed together as CT.
- **Appoggiatura (APP)**: approached by leap, resolved by step (usually in the opposite direction). The appoggiatura is usually accented (occurs on the beat).
 - The "formula" for an appoggiatura is to leap up then step down. This does not always have to be the case, however. In the song "Maria" from Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story, at the start of the chorus the "ri" in the word "Maria" is an appoggiatura on the downbeat. It leaps up by an A4, then resolves up by a m2 (Ma-ri-a = Do-Fi-Sol)
- **Escape Tone (ET)**: the opposite of an appoggiatura: the escape tone is approached by step and resolved by leap. Remember: "To escape a burning building, step to the window and leap out!"
- **Suspension (SUS)**: approached by sustaining a note from the previous chord, then resolved down by step.
 - The suspension is a three-part event, involving two chords:
 1. In the first chord, the note fits into the chord.
 2. The harmony changes for the second chord, but one voice retains the note from the first chord. This is the "suspended" note.
 3. While still in the second chord, the suspended note resolves down by step, once again fitting into the harmony.
 - There are four types of suspension, measured by the interval distance of the suspended note above the lowest chord note. The four types are 9-8, 7-6, 4-3, and 2-3 (bass suspension). For example, in a 4-3 suspension, the suspended note is a fourth above the bass, and it resolves to a third above the bass.
- **Retardation (RET)**: the physical opposite of a suspension. It works in exactly the same way, except that the resolution is up by step instead of down.
- **Anticipation (ANT)**: the temporal opposite of a suspension. In an ANT, one voice resolves early to the note it has in the next chord. This often happens at the final cadence of a chorale, in an inner voice.
- **Pedal Tone (PED)**: Also called a pedal point, this is a long-term event, not a single note. Pedal points often occur in the bass, where they used to be played on the pedals of the pipe organ. One voice, usually the bass, sustains a note for a very long time. This note is sometimes part of the harmony, and sometimes not. Pedal points are often on the dominant or tonic pitches of the key. The purpose of a pedal point is to draw the listener's attention to the dominant (after a period of harmonic uncertainty), to prepare them for the final resolution back to tonic.