The Harmonic Cadences

A cadence is generally considered to be the last two chords of a phrase, section or piece. There are four types of cadences, each with their own specific requirements and variations.

**An Authentic Cadence** consists of a dominant function chord (V or vii) moving to tonic. To be considered a perfect authentic cadence, a cadence must meet all of the following criteria:

- It must use a V chord (not a vii).
- Both chords must be in root position.
- The soprano must end on the tonic.
- The soprano must move by step.

![Diagram of perfect authentic cadence]

If the cadence doesn't meet all of those criteria, it's considered to be an imperfect authentic cadence!

**A Plagal Cadence** consists of a subdominant function chord (iv or ii) moving to tonic. To be considered a perfect plagal cadence, a cadence must meet all of the following criteria:

- It must use a iv chord (not a ii).
- Both chords must be in root position.
- The soprano must end on the tonic.
- The soprano must keep the common tone.

![Diagram of perfect plagal cadence]

If the cadence doesn't meet all of those criteria, it's considered to be an imperfect plagal cadence!

**A Half Cadence** is any cadence that ends on the dominant chord (V).

- A specific type of half cadence is the Phrygian cadence, which must meet the following criteria:
  - It occurs only in minor.
  - It uses a iv chord moving to V.
  - The soprano and bass move by step in contrary motion.
  - The soprano and bass both end on the fifth scale degree.

![Diagram of Phrygian cadence]

**A Deceptive Cadence** is a cadence where the dominant chord (V) resolves to something other than tonic... almost always the submediant chord (vi).

Really, it's the psych-out cadence, in that you expect it to resolve to tonic, but it doesn't.

And, in fact, it's more common to see this in the middle of the phrase rather than the end... where you might call it a "cadence-like structure"!