Fermata, Tenuto & Accent

three small marks, three big personalities — hold, lean, punch

Composers write how a note should be TREATED, not just how long it is. These three marks each change a note's character: the **fermata** stops the clock, the **tenuto** leans into the note with full weight, and the **accent** strikes it boldly. Each excerpt below shows one mark at work — play all three and exaggerate the difference.

Fermata

the bird's eye · hold it longer



Pause time: hold the note **longer than written** — as long as sounds beautiful. Here it crowns the last note of Twinkle.

Tenuto

the dash · full value, with a lean



Give the note its **whole length** and a gentle lean of weight — not louder, just **fuller**. The opposite of staccato's bounce.

Accent

the arrowhead · a strong start



Attack the note with **extra punch**, then let it ring normally. Accents shout "HERE!" on important beats.

Try it Play the same five-finger scale three ways: every note **tenuto** (a dignified procession), every note **accented** (a stomping march), and with a **fermata** on the top note (a singer showing off). One scale, three stories — then look for these marks in your next piece. Practice: Exercise 76.

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