

Two Common Fugue Subject Types

1. The “sectional” subject

tail motive can end the subject directly, often on $\hat{3}$

“head motive” “tail motive” or continuation cadence

frequent characteristics

- conspicuous, declamatory opening
- prominent $\hat{1}$ and/or $\hat{5}$, often in alternation
- slower note values (comparatively)
- triadic and/or leaping intervals (4ths, 5ths, 6ths)
- repeated notes
- may be separated from what follows by rest

running notes in fastest value
predominantly stepwise
can feature sequence
regular/balanced harmonic rhythm

slowing of surface rhythm
 $\hat{1}$ ending preceded by (long) *tr* on $\hat{2}$
stepwise $\hat{4} \hat{3} \hat{2} \hat{1}$ is frequent
 $\hat{2}$ is counterpointed with 2-3 suspension

EXAMPLES from the WTC I: E, F, g, B \flat , b \flat , B II: C, c, D, E \flat , d \sharp , f, f \sharp , g, A \flat , a, E \flat , b

2. The “single note-value” subject

(a)

(b)

The use of a single note-value in the subject has implications for the counterpoint that follows. A subject in long values (a), will typically call for a faster-moving counter-subject, perhaps heard immediately. This type of fugue will continue to feature a two-layered rhythmic quality throughout, much like a double-fugue. Similarly, if the subject is in the smallest value (b), the other voices tend to be limited in their rhythmic motion, both for technical (performance) reasons, and because of the difficulty of writing extended note-against-note counterpoint in the smallest value. Usually, a subject exclusively in the smallest value will feature largely stepwise motion. (Bach's G major fugue WTC II, is a remarkable exception.)

EXAMPLES from the WTC I: c \sharp , f, A \flat II: c \sharp , E, F, G, g \sharp , B, B \flat