

C.P.E. Bach: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*
(Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments)

Study Guide: Summary and Examples
Chapter Two, Embellishments: The Trill

TRILLS

1) Trills enliven melodies and are therefore indispensable. In earlier times they were mainly used in two ways:

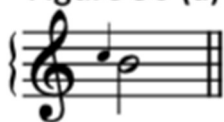
[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXII.



a) after an appoggiatura (“angeschlossener Triller” or “enclosed trill”)

Tab. IV. Fig. XXII (a)

Figure 90 (a)

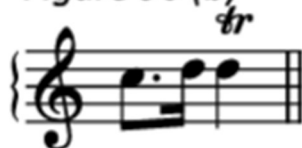


Trill after an appoggiatura

b) on the repetition of a tone

Tab. IV Fig. XXII (b)

Figure 90 (b)



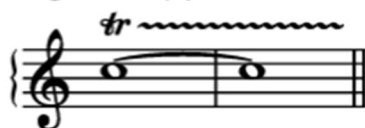
Trill on the repetition of a tone

Today [C.P.E. Bach’s day] they are used in both stepwise and leaping passages, immediately at the beginning of a movement, in succession, and at cadences. Additional uses:

- Held tones

Tab. IV Fig. XXII (c)

Figure 90 (c)

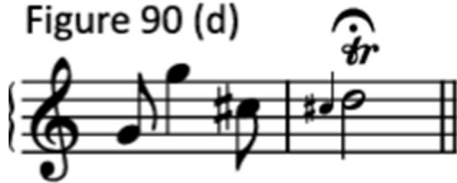


Trill on a held tone

- Fermate

Tab. IV Fig. XXII (d)

Figure 90 (d)



Trill on a fermata

- Caesurae (Einschnitten) without an introductory appoggiatura

Tab. IV Fig. XXII (e)

Figure 90 (e)



Trill on a caesura (Einschnitt)
without introductory appoggiatura

- Caesurae (Einschnitten) with an introductory appoggiatura

Figure 90 (f)



Trill on a caesura (Einschnitt)
with introductory appoggiatura

2) Use the trill judiciously, especially in *affettuoso* passages (do not overuse them).

3) The accomplished keyboard player has four trills:

- Normal
- Ascending
- Descending
- Half trill (short trill)

4) Each type has its own sign, and all may be notated by the abbreviation *tr* or a cross. The location will be clearly notated.

5) NORMAL TRILLS


[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXIII.



Tab. IV Fig. XXIII

Fig. 91



- (a) have the sign 
- (b) the sign is extended over long notes
- (c) shows the correct execution (start on the upper note, the number of shakes does not need to be precise)
- (d) shows that the small note is not needed unless it indicates the use of an appoggiatura

6) SUFFIX: At times two short notes from below are added at the end of the trill. These are called the suffix. The purpose is to make a more rapid trill.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXIV.



Tab. IV Fig. XXIV (a)

Figure 92 (a)



The suffix is often written out. This is C.P.E.'s preference to be most clear.

Tab. IV Fig. XXIV (b)

Figure 92 (b)



C.P.E. prefers this notation

It can also be indicated by the specific symbol shown in 92 (c)

Tab. IV Fig. XXIV (c)

Figure 92 (c)



dedicated symbol for
trill with suffix

7) Trills are technically the most difficult to master. They must be even, and although a slower trill may be used in slow pieces, a faster trill is generally more desirable.

8) C.P.E. advocates for practicing trills slowly first and gradually increasing speed, always listening for evenness and clarity. Practice intelligently, stay relaxed and do not force it. He also advises there should also be a quick release of the key after the final striking.

9) You should train all fingers to be able to trill, although in practice, certain finger combinations will be used more frequently than others. This is because of natural differences in the physical makeup of the hand, as well as the fact that composers write trills more often for certain fingers, resulting in more practice given to these. Still, there are times when trill figures are written in the outer voices, requiring a good trill ability from the weaker little finger.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXV.



Tab. IV Fig. XXV

Figure 93



10) At least two good trill combinations in each hand are needed:

- Fingers 2-3 and 3-4 in the Right Hand
- Fingers 1 (thumb)-2 and 2-3 of the Left Hand

11) Some performers practice double trills in thirds in one hand. These are good for the fingers, but it is better not to use them unless they sound even and distinct, the two most important marks of a good trill.

12) Useful fingering tips:

- Cross finger 2 over the thumb to avoid trilling on a black key with the thumb
- Trill with 3-5 or 2-4 in the right hand if the action of the keys is stiff

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXVI.



Tab. IV Fig. XXVI

Fig. 94



13) Using SUFFIXES

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXVII.



- Trills on long notes are always played with a suffix
- You may add a suffix to a trill followed by a leap

Tab. IV Fig. XVII (a)

Fig. 95 (a)



Trill followed by a leap

- When the decoration notes are short, an ascent after a suffix trill is better than a descent (Figure 95 b better than 95c)

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (b) and (c)

Fig. 95 (b) Fig. 95 (c)



ascent (b) is better after a suffixed trill
than descent (c)

- A suffix could be added in a very slow tempo for Figure 95 d (even though the rapid notes following the dot may be used as substitutes). The descending 2nd is the least desirable substitute.

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (d)

Fig. 95 (d)



Suffixed trill could be used at a very slow tempo,
OR use an unsuffixed trill with the short notes
serving as a suffix

- It is not necessary to always add a suffix if dotted notes are trilled for their full value.

14) Adding suffix to dotted notes:

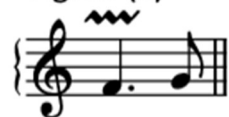
[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXVII.



- Suffixed trills can be added to dotted notes followed by a short ascent

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (e)

Fig. 95 (e)



Suffixed trill may be added
to a dotted note followed by
a short ascent

- In this case, instead of going straight into the following note, make a very short pause to show the separation of elements (that the following note is distinctly not part of the trill). Since a note following a dotted note is always shorter than its notated length, the notation in the examples is only approximate and must be determined in context.

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (f)

Fig. 95 (f)



written played (incorrectly) with no pause

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (g. 1)

Fig. 95 (g. 1)



written played (correctly) with slight pause
to separate trill from following 8th

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (g. 2)

Fig. 95 (g. 2)



written played (correctly) with slight pause
to separate trill from following 8th

Tab. IV Fig. XXVII (h)

Fig. 95 (h)



written played (incorrectly)

15) The suffix should be in the same tempo as the trill itself. Choose a fingering that allows for this. For example, don't use fingers 1-2 in the right hand if you plan to add a suffix.

16) Using the UNSUFFIXED trill

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXVIII.

- with descending successions

Tab. IV Fig. XXVIII (a)

Fig. 96 (a)

descending successions

- over short notes

Tab. IV Fig. XXVIII (b)

Fig. 96 (b)

over short notes

- successive trills

Tab. IV Fig. XXVIII (c)

Fig. 96 (c)

successive trills

Tab. IV Fig. XXIX

Fig. 97



In a very fast tempo an appoggiatura can substitute for a normal trill

19) Adding accidentals to trills:

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXX.



- If accidentals are not included with the trill symbol, the trill and its suffix use the key in force at the time
- Example a shows preceding notes determine the accidentals needed

Tab. IV Fig. XXX (a)

Fig. 98 (a)



Suffix uses Bb

- Example b shows succeeding notes determine the accidentals needed

<p>Tab. IV Fig. XXX (b. 1) Fig. 98 (b. 1) Bb</p> <p>Trill uses Bb</p>	<p>Tab. IV Fig. XXX (b. 2) Fig. 98 (b. 2) #</p> <p>Suffix uses F#</p>
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Tab. IV Fig. XXX (b. 3)

Fig. 98 (b. 3) #



Suffix uses G#

- Example c shows the ear alone or modulation determines the accidentals needed

Tab. IV Fig. XXX (c)

Fig. 98 (c)



Trill uses F# and suffix uses D#

- Never use an augmented 2nd in trills or suffixes

Tab. IV Fig. XXX (d)

Fig. 98 (d)



Suffix uses E#

(no augmented 2nds allowed
in trills or suffixes)

20) Complaints about trills

- Just because a note is long, it does not require a trill, especially if the note group is marked with a slur

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXI.



- Figure below shows the dedicated symbol along with two other options for notating it
- If only *tr* is marked, the performer may choose to use an ascending trill where appropriate

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXIV.



Tab. IV Fig. XXXIV

Fig. 102



23) Ascending trills:

- need to be over a long note to accommodate all the tones as well as a suffix where needed
- all the points relating to normal trills apply also to ascending trills.

24) Examples:

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXV.



- (a) shows how to use a suffix after a tie

Tab. IV Fig. XXXV (a)

Fig. 103 (a)



Written

Shows how to play suffix after tie

- (b) suffix should not be used because of the 16th

Tab. IV Fig. XXXV (b)

Fig. 103 (b)



Suffix should not be used
because of the 16th

- (c) suffix should not be used because of the 32nds

Tab. IV Fig. XXXV (c)

Fig. 103 (c)



Suffix should not be used
because of the 32nds

- (d) however, in cases where the tempo is slow or can be broadened (cadences or a fermata), you may add a suffix, giving the final notes some freedom as the pace broadens.

Tab. IV Fig. XXXV (d)

Fig. 103 (d)



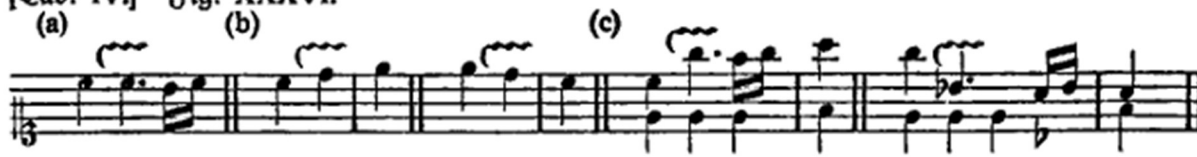
Suffix could be added in a very slow tempo
(note values are approximate)

25) Most frequent uses of the ascending trill:

- Over long notes, especially at cadences and before fermatas

Additional uses:

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXVI.



- Over a repeated note

Tab. IV Fig. XXVI (a)

Fig. 104 (a)



May use after a repeated note

- In conjunct motion

Tab. IV Fig. XXVI (b)

Fig. 104 (b)



May use in conjunct motion

- After a leap followed by an ascending or descending progression

Tab. IV Fig. XXXVI (c)

Fig. 104 (c)



May be used after a leap
followed by ascending
progression

May be used after a leap
followed by a descending
progression

- If fingers get tired during a long trill, ascending notes could be used to revive the trill if done discreetly without interrupting the flow of the trill
- You may approach it by gradually moving into a true trill as shown in Figure 105. This often occurs at cadences.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXVII.



Tab. IV Fig. XXXVII

Fig. 105



May be approached with gradually increasing speed

- It may be used in modulatory passages

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXVIII.



Tab. IV Fig. XXXVIII

Fig. 106



May be used in modulatory passages

- With caesuras (Einschnitten)

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XXXIX.



Tab. IV Fig. XXXIX

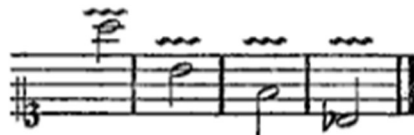
Fig. 107



May be used with caesuras (Einschnitten)

26) Do not use ascending trills in passages with successive leaps. Only use the normal trill in these cases.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XL.



Tab. IV Fig. XL

Fig. 108



Use a normal trill in successive leaps

27) THE DESCENDING TRILL

- Figure below shows the dedicated symbol and its execution. The asterisk example shows optional notation.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLI.



Tab. IV Fig. XLI

Fig. 109



28) Descending trills:

- Need to be over the very longest notes since they have the most notes of all trill types
- The cadence in Figure 110 would be best with a normal or ascending trill

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLII.



Tab. IV Fig. XLII

Fig. 110

Allegretto



Better to use normal or ascending trill
because the note is not very long

- The descending trill was used more widely [prior to 1750]. Now it is mostly limited to the following examples.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLIII.



- Could be used after a repeated tone

Tab. IV Fig. XLIII (a)

Fig. 111 (a)



May use with repeated note

- Could be used in descending motion

Tab. IV Fig. XLIII (b)

Fig. 111 (b)



May be used in descending passages shows trill should be executed with a tie in this case

- Could be used in downward leaps of a third

Tab. IV Fig. XLIII (c)

Fig. 111 (c)



May be used in downward leaps of a third

29) Correct voice leading is always most important. In the example below either a normal or descending trill could be used, but an ascending trill would create forbidden 5ths.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLIV.





 or

 Tab. IV Fig. XLIV

 Fig. 112

Use either a normal or descending trill to avoid parallel 5ths

Tab. IV Fig. XLIV
Fig. 112 incorrect



Not correct: Do not use ascending trill because of parallel 5ths

30) THE SHORT TRILL (HALF TRILL, PRALL TRILLER)

Figure below shows the symbol with its execution. Note that the large slur only indicates the overall phrasing. The 2nd G is tied (not played). There was a misprint in early editions that did not show the tie but C.P.E. clearly describes the note as being tied.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLV.



Tab. IV Fig. XLV
Fig. 113



31) The short trill

- Joins the preceding note to the decorated one and never appears over a detached note
- Has no suffix
- Is introduced either by an appoggiatura or a principal note

32) The short trill

- Is the most important of all the trills, but can be the most difficult technically
- Must be lively, played crisply and clear
- Can only be demonstrated at a fast tempo
- May appear over rapid notes, but must be played so that the ornamented note stays in tempo
- C.P.E. finds this to be the most essential trill. While other substitutions may be made to reduce technical difficulties, there is no substitute for the short trill

33) The trill is best executed with the strongest fingers. Choose fingerings wisely to execute the passage musically.

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLVI.



Tab. IV Fig. XLVI

Fig. 114



possible fingering options

34) The short trill appears only in a descending second, preceded either by an appoggiatura or a large (regular notation) note

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLVII.



Tab. IV Fig. XLVII (a)

Fig. 115 (a)



short trill over short notes

Tab. IV Fig. XLVII (b)

Fig. 115 (b)



trill over note made short
by an appoggiatura

Tab. IV Fig. XLVII (c)

Fig. 115 (c)



appoggiatura should be held very long
before the quick short trill

35) In addition to use at cadences and fermatas, it can be used:

- In descending passages of three or more tones (similar to the trill without suffix in descending successions)

[Tab. IV.] Fig. XLVIII.*Tab. IV Fig. XLVIII*

Fig. 116 (1/3)



May use in descending passages
of three or more tones

Tab. IV Fig. XLVIII

Fig. 116 (2/3)



May use in descending passages
of three or more tones

Tab. IV Fig. XLVIII

Fig. 116 (3/3)



May use in descending passages
of three or more tones

- May be used in passages where long notes are followed by short ones (also similar to the normal trill without suffix)

[Tab. V.] Fig. XLIX.*Tab. IV Fig. XLIX*

Fig. 117



May be used in passages where
short notes follow long ones

36) C.P.E. discusses the fact that this short trill is difficult to perform at the pianoforte because of the tendency for it to be too loud.

SOURCES

Bach, C.P.E. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Translated and edited by William J. Mitchell, W.W. Norton & Company, 1949, pp. 99-112.

Bach, Karl Philipp Emanuel. *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*. Edited by Walter Niemann, C.P. Khant, Leipzig, 1925, pp. 42-53.