

Part-writing basics

Writing music for four voices

- Now that we have had some practice writing for two voices, we are now going to add two more voices, creating standard *four-part writing*
- The four voices (from highest to lowest) are:
 - Soprano
 - Alto
 - Tenor
 - Bass
- Much of what we have learned about writing music for two voices also applies to music for four voices



Voice-leading

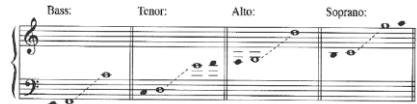
- Another name for part-writing is **voice-leading**, because you need to lead the four voices carefully such that they form chords with each other *and* create interesting melodic lines



- Now we will discuss some part-writing basics

Range

- The first thing to keep in mind when writing four-part chords is that you should keep the four voices in their proper ranges:

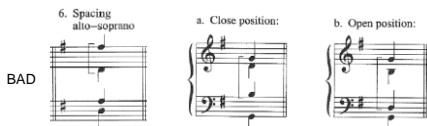


- Try to avoid extremes, keeping voices in their middle registers as much as possible



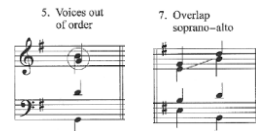
Spacing

- Another important thing to do when writing a four-part chord is to space out the voices correctly
- Do not allow the upper voices to be spaced out more than an octave apart from each other
 - Ex: between soprano and alto or between alto and tenor
 - It is *fine* to have wider spacing between tenor and bass
 - If there is less than an octave between the soprano and tenor, it is called *close position* (as opposed to *open position*)



Voice-crossing and overlaps

- Try to keep the voices in their proper order—not allowing them to *cross* each other
- Also avoid *voice overlap*, where one voice leaps above or below the previous pitch of another voice



- These guidelines are sometimes broken if it improves a melodic line or improves voice-leading

Doubling

- Since we are spelling triads (3 notes) using four voices, one of the notes will need to be *doubled*
 - When spelling root position chords, you should always **double the root**



- For inverted chords, there are various options, but it generally works to double the bass note
- You should *never* double the leading tone

Chord spelling

- For a root position chord, you will typically have

2 ROOTS, 1 THIRD, and 1 FIFTH

- When you are spelling a chord, make sure that you do not leave out the root or the third
 - The root is the most important note in the chord
 - The third tells us whether the chord is major or minor
 - The fifth is occasionally omitted:
 - If you triple the root (common at a final cadence)
 - If you have two roots and two thirds (rare)