

School of Music, SUNY Fredonia

Grading Guide for Part-Writing Assignments

The study of part writing cultivates an understanding of the contrapuntal and harmonic construction of music of the Common Practice Period and a variety of style periods which draw their origins from this period; it is intended to be a study of broad general principles rather than mere practical training for a career in chorale writing or arranging. The list of part-writing errors below reflects the part-writing principles derived from the compositions of many great composers of Western culture. These composers played, sang, and wrote what instinctively sounded good to them; only later did theorists come along and categorize these instincts into coherent principles. What you are following in your harmonic writing is not an arbitrary set of "rules," but principles of tonal hearing developed through many generations of playing and composing.

Mastering these part-writing conventions will ultimately allow you to create skillful and musical tonal compositions with confidence and will increase your understanding of an enormous body of music and musical thought. It is essential that you not let your assignments become mechanical exercises; be sure you know how your assignments sound (what you have written) and to make them as musically attractive as possible.

Part-writing errors:

-3 points

doubled leading tone; parallel perfect unisons, fifths, or octaves; melodic augmented second; seventh of seventh chord not resolved; incorrect chord notated (incorrect solution to figured bass); pitch or spelling error in chord (exception: if the pitch is incorrect because an accidental canceled earlier in the measure and is not replaced = -1); missing third; seventh degree not raised in minor (-1 subtracted additionally if an undesirable melodic interval results when the seventh is raised); incorrect doubling of six-four chord; incorrect resolution of augmented sixth chord.

-2 points

melodic augmented fourth; melodic sevenths; incorrect handling of permitted leaps (including non-resolution of diminished melodic intervals); direct fifths or octaves (in outer voices and only when soprano moves by leap); parallel fifths or octaves by contrary motion; incorrect resolution of leading tone in outer voice; irregular resolution of six-four triad; incorrect use of six-four chord (use is not one of three described in text); misplacement of cadential six-four chord on weak beat; doubled chord seventh in seventh chord; incorrect approach to chord seventh; incorrect resolution of diminished seventh chord; incomplete inverted triad; rhythmic errors; more than an octave between vertically adjacent *upper* voices; (chain of these intervals = maximum of -4); incorrect resolution of Neapolitan sixth chord.

-1 point

excessive voice-overlap; excessive voice-crossing; incorrect doubling of tonic triad in cadence; tonic degree not doubled in submediant triad in deceptive cadence; unnecessary large leap; manuscript errors; diminished fifth moving to perfect fifth in outer voices; other minor problems.

Maximum subtracted per chord: -3 total for part-writing and analysis.

Analytical errors in part-writing assignments

-1: incorrect roman numeral (incorrect scale degree); -.5: incorrect quality or inversion of chord (but no more than -.5 total if scale degree of RN is correct); no appropriate editorial marks showing dependency of six-four chord.

For analyses of complex or modulating passages of part-writing, extra points will be added to parts of the assignment beyond the maximum per chord shown above. In these cases, penalties for analytical errors will be as follows: -3: incorrect key marked; -2: unreasonable placement of pivot chord; -1: pivot not analyzed in both keys.

Extra points will also be added to the total score of longer harmonization assignments to compensate for penalties imposed for incorrect and poor chord choices. These penalties will be as follows: -3 incorrect (non-harmonizing) chord choice; -2 and -1: poor chord choice.

Note: purely analytical assignments will be graded on a separate scale.

Correction symbols

lt: leading tone (any problem); *1, 5, or 8* with parallel lines: forbidden parallels; arabic numeral with single line: undesirable or improperly handled melodic interval; *dir 5 or 8*: direct fifth or octave; *ov*: overlap; *v-cr*: voice-crossing; *dbl*: incorrect doubling; *res*: incorrect resolution; *>8* vertical interval larger than an octave.