MUSIC PREPARATION FUNDAMENTALS FOR JAZZ COMPOSERS & ARRANGERS

by Darcy James Argue

Why Bother?

Well-prepared lead sheets, scores, and parts are essential for good sight-reading. Good notation shows respect for the musicians reading your music, and allows them to play more musically. Bad notation causes unnecessary mistakes and eats up valuable rehearsal time.

Music notation software has many advantages over traditional hand-copying, but does not eliminate the need to learn good music preparation skills. Regardless of whether you prepare music by hand or use notation software, every part you put in front of another musician needs to be prepared to a professional standard.

If you use music notation software, you will want to create a **template** that is configured to follow the best notation practices. Setting up a good template will save you an enormous amount of time in the long run!

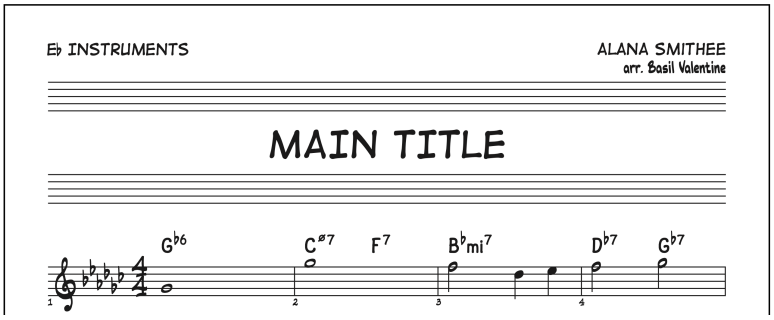
Do *not* assume that the software's defaults are correct.

Score & Part Setup

IF COPYING MUSIC BY HAND

Select paper with **10 staves per page** and a staff size of **8mm**. Do not use staff paper with more than 10 staves per page. Do not use staff paper with excessive margins, or where the staves are crammed too close together — you need room between staves to include chord symbols, ledger lines, repeat endings, and other elements.

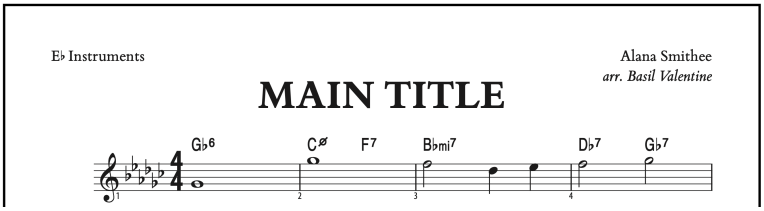
Write the title between the first two staves and begin the music on the third staff. Write the **Part Name** (e.g, "C Lead Sheet," "B♭ Lead Sheet") or **Instrument Name** (e.g. "Tenor Sax") at **top left**. Write the **Composer's Name(s)** at top right. If the work is an arrangement, write the **Arranger's Name** below the composer's.



IF USING NOTATION SOFTWARE

Use a staff size of **7.5mm** or **8mm** for lead sheets and parts. They should generally have **8 or 9 staves** on the first page, and **10 staves** on subsequent pages.

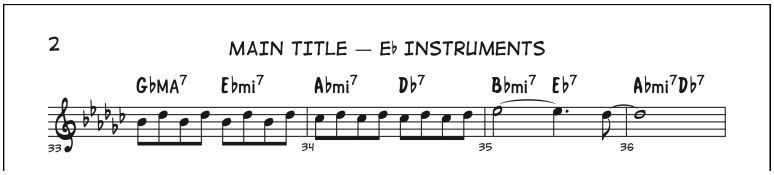
Center the title **1 inch** *(25 mm)* **below** the top of the page. Place the **Part Name** (e.g, "C Lead Sheet," "B♭ Lead Sheet") or **Instrument Name** (e.g. "Tenor Sax") at top left and the the **Composer's Name(s)** at top right — *above* the title, not below — with a page margin of **0.5 inches** *(12.5 mm)* on all sides. If the work is an arrangement, add the arranger's name below the composer's.



Parts must be **single-sided**. For parts longer than three pages, you should include time for the player to turn the page (i.e., a multimeasure rest) at the bottom of page 3, and at the bottom of every subsequent odd-numbered page. Create a page break at a valid spot for a page turn — pages do not have to be full!

Multi-page parts must be **taped,** accordion-style, with the sticky part of the tape on the *inside* of the fold. To achieve this, tape pages 1-2 on the front side, tape pages 2-3 on the back side, and so on. Be extremely careful about page order when taping music! I recommend **Nexcare Gentle Paper Tape** — it is thin, flexible, resists tearing, and can be easily removed without damaging the page if you make a mistake while taping.

Multi-page parts must include a **page header** at the top of page 2 and all subsequent pages. The header should include the **title**, **instrument name**, and **page number**. Page headers are particularly helpful when you are laying out pages to be taped!

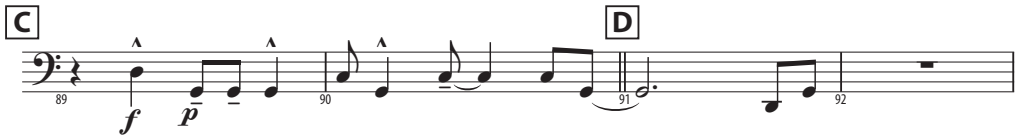


Scores should be printed **double-sided**, and bound or side-stapled into **booklets**.

When generating PDFs, or when photocopying, scanning, or printing music, be sure not to reduce, clip, or distort the music, make it too heavy or too faint, or otherwise reduce legibility. If you are scanning music using your phone, do not use the camera app — use a dedicated mobile scanning app, like **Adobe Scan**.

Use **portrait** orientation (not landscape) for all scores and parts. Landscape was once traditional for large-ensemble jazz scores, but is not recommended in the era of music notation software.

Use a **double barline** at the end of every section, and mark the beginning of the new section with a **rehearsal mark**: a boxed rehearsal letter or boxed measure number. Rehearsal marks should be centered above the barline, or centered above the left edge of the staff when they appear at the start of the system.



Rehearsal marks should generally appear every 8–16 measures. They should help to make the form clear at a glance. Avoid long stretches with no rehearsal marks.

Rehearsal letters are not the same as the letters used for formal analysis. Rehearsal letters must be **sequential**: A, B, C, D — not A, A, B, A, nor A, A2, B, A3, or similar. Every rehearsal letter must be unique. Never repeat rehearsal letters.

In addition to boxed rehearsal letters or numbers, **every measure must be numbered.** It is not sufficient to include measure numbers only at the beginning of each system. In lead sheets and parts, place measure numbers immediately below the staff, at the start of each measure — see example above.

In a large ensemble score, center the measure numbers below every measure of the bottom staff.

Parts for **transposing instruments** (e.g., E♭ Alto Sax, B♭ Trumpet) must be transposed correctly, including key signatures and chord symbols.

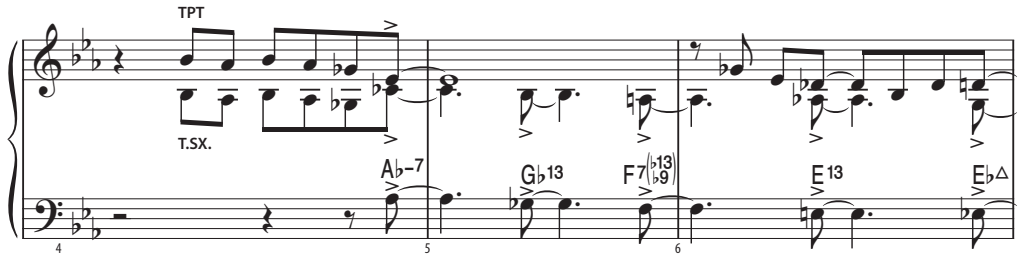
Each horn player must have an individual part. Do not combine multiple horn parts onto the same page.

In general, with a simple lead sheet, rhythm section instruments (guitar, piano, bass, drums, etc.) may all read from their individual copy of your **C Lead Sheet**. If you have written a specific bass line, you may notate your C Lead Sheet on a **grand staff**: add a bass clef staff and group the two staves with a piano brace.

For complex arrangements, or when writing for larger ensembles, prepare an individual part for each rhythm section instrument.

Rhythm section parts should include *all* of the information the player needs — rhythmic hits, melody cues, etc. Don't just give the rhythm section players a part containing only slash notation and chord symbols, with no further information!

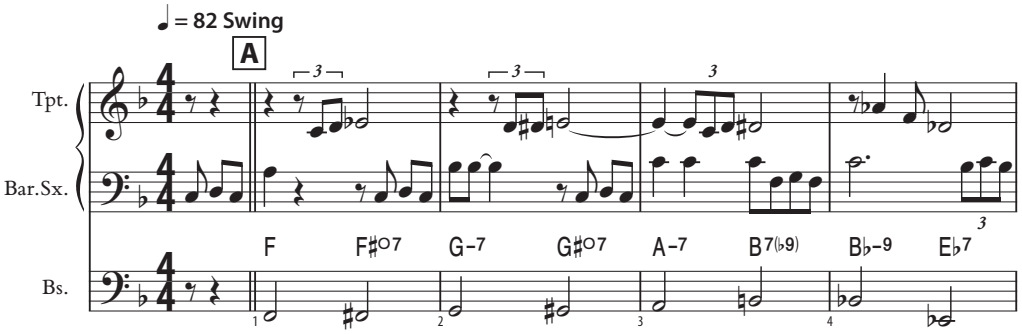
Your **C Lead Sheet** must show **all of the music** you have written. For example, if you write a two-horn arrangement with two independent horn parts, your C Lead Sheet must clearly show both horn parts, by combining **stems-up** (Horn 1) and **stems-down** (Horn 2) voices, in concert pitch, on a single staff. Be certain to clearly indicate which notes each horn is playing:



Effectively, your C Lead Sheet is a kind of score — a **Reduced Score.**

Don't forget: combing horns on a single staff is for the C Lead Sheet only. Each horn player must be given an individual part to play from, correctly transposed for their instrument, showing only the notes they play.

If the horn parts are unclear when combined onto a single staff — for instance, if the horns are widely separated in range, or if the texture is highly contrapuntal — you should prepare a **Full Score** (i.e., one staff per instrument):



A Full Score can be written either as a **Concert Pitch Score** or a **Transposed Score.** The type of score must be clearly specified on the first page of music — never write just "Score." In arranging and composition classes, using a Concert Pitch Score often makes it easier to give and receive feedback.

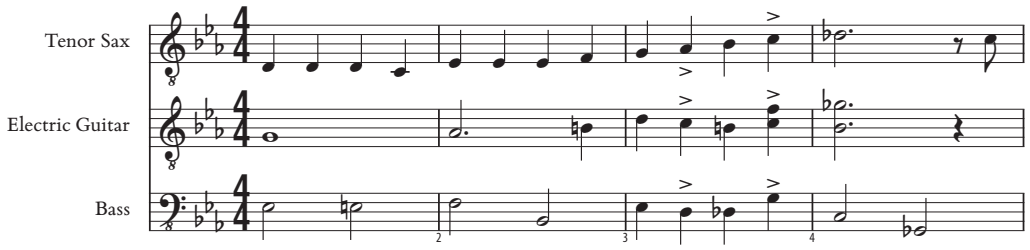
Note that in a Concert Pitch Score, instruments will sometimes use clefs that are different from the clef used in the transposed part. For example, in a Concert Pitch Score, the bari sax is written in bass clef, and the tenor sax is often written in a mix of bass clef and treble clef, to avoid excessive ledger lines.

Even in a Concert Pitch Score, **octave-transposing instruments** (e.g., guitar, bass) are written at the transposed pitch — in other words, they appear as they do on the player's part — rather than at the sounding pitch. This avoids excessive ledger lines.

Octave-transposing clefs, such as the sub8 treble clef and sub8 bass clef, should not be used.

WRONG

CONCERT PITCH SCORE



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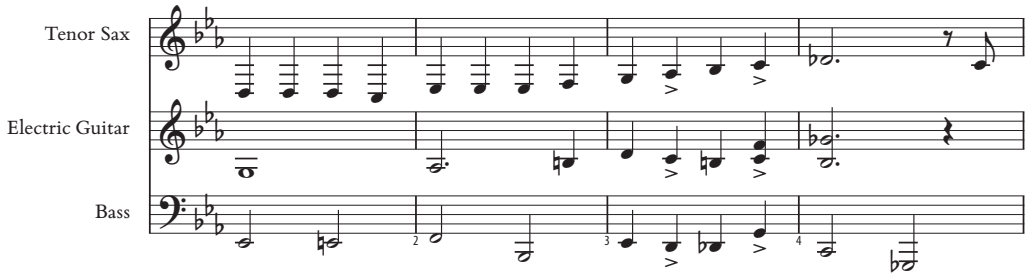

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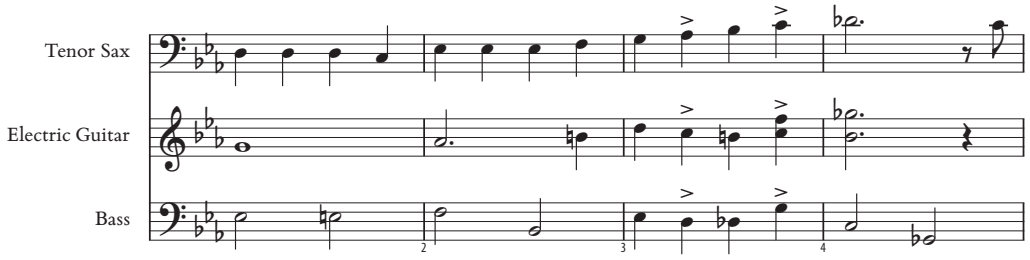
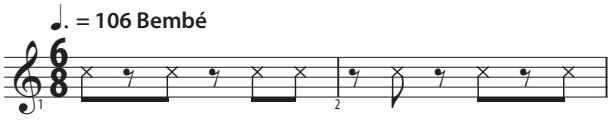


Some notation programs default to using treble clef for bari sax in concert pitch, or sub8 clefs for tenor sax. This is very bad and must be changed!

Tempo

The **tempo** (or tempo range) and **style** must be specified at the beginning of the piece. Initial tempo markings are **left-aligned** to the beginning of the time signature. Include both a metronome mark and a style or feel, e.g., "♩ = 208 Med-Up Swing,""♩ = 116–120 Straight 8ths (Open Feel),""♩. = 42 Sludgecore." Write the metronome mark using the musical symbol for the beat duration — do not write, e.g., "120 BPM."



Traditionally, tempo markings are written with the style coming before the metronome mark, e.g., "Blazing Swing ♩ = 420."

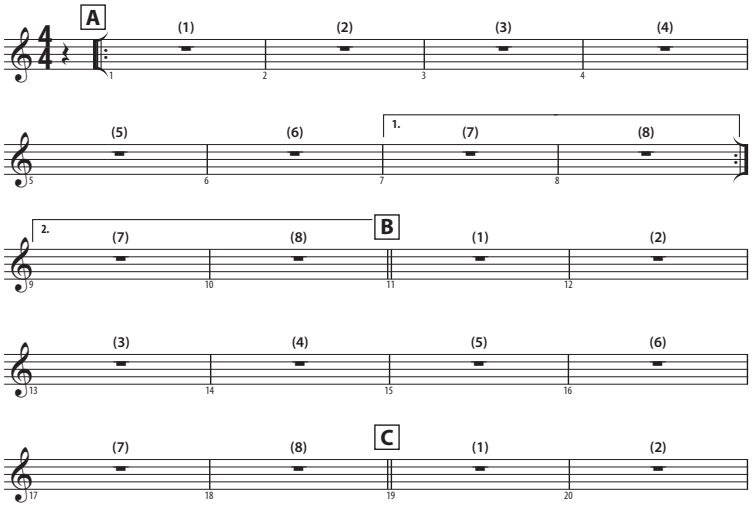
I recommend reversing this order ("♩ = 420 Blazing Swing"). Placing the metronome mark first makes it easier to see at glance, and, when there are tempo changes, aligns the metronome mark to the point in the music where it takes effect.

Phrasing

In music preparation, "phrasing" means "how the measures are distributed on each system." Good phrasing makes the form easy to see at a glance. Bad (lopsided) phrasing obscures the form.

Good phrasing also makes it easy for players — particularly rhythm section players — to glance away from the part (in order to make eye contact with other musicians, for example) and then easily retrieve their place in the music when they look back at the page.

An important convention of jazz music preparation is that, on a lead sheet or part, all new sections must begin either at the beginning of the system, or at the midpoint of the system (e.g., at the start of the third measure of a 4-measure system):



As a general rule of thumb, a default of **4 measures per system** is a good and useful starting point. However, pickup measures, first & second endings, and phrases containing an odd number of measures can easily throw off the phrasing balance:

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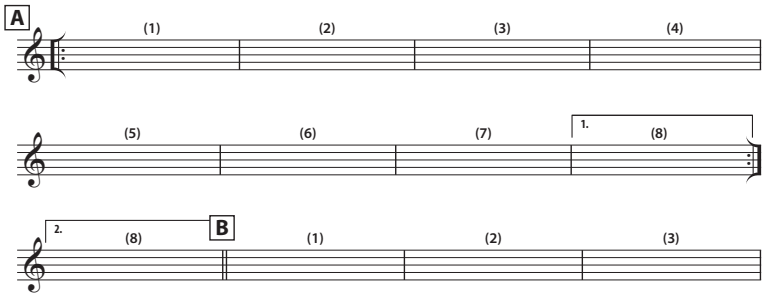

To resolve this phrasing imbalance, do not force both first and second endings on a single system if this would result in than 4 measures on a system:

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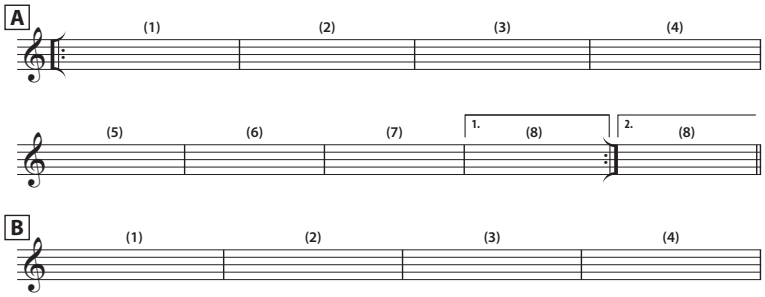

Instead, use a three-measure system and a mid-system rehearsal letter:

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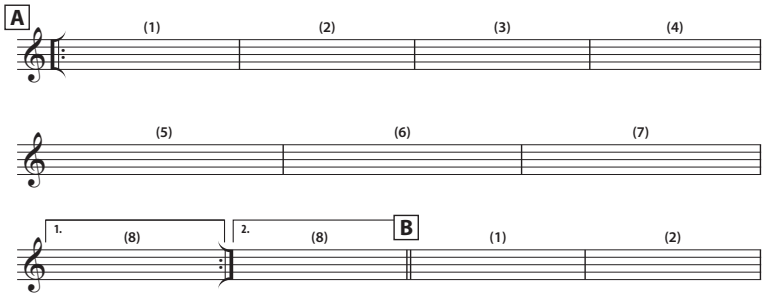
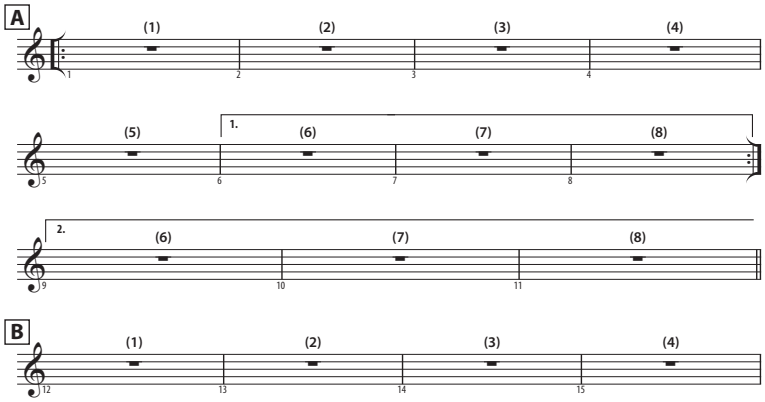


Here's another example of using a three-measure system to avoid lopsided phrasing caused by ending repeats:

RIGHT



Three-measure systems may also be required for busy passages (e.g., lots of eighths/sixteenths) or on vocal parts to avoid lyric collisions.

Do not use fewer than 3 measures in a system unless the music is extremely dense and otherwise would not fit without collisions. This includes the final system.

Do not use more than 4 measures in a system unless the notation consists entirely of long note values (whole notes and/or half notes), or of slash notation (i.e., rhythm section parts, solo changes, etc). In those specific cases — and *only* those cases — systems containing 6 or 8 measures are acceptable.

In a section containing an odd number of measures (e.g., a 7-bar phrase), one system will be a 3-measure system.

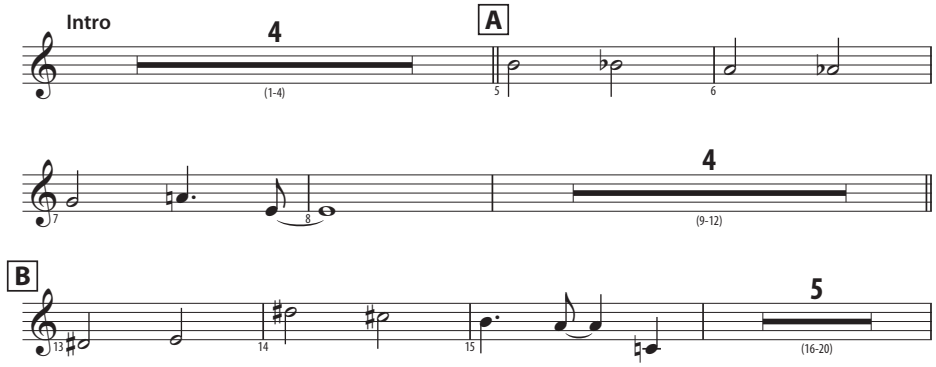
Keep in mind that the above phrasing rules apply only to lead sheets and parts. Scores often include 6–8 measures per system, or sometimes more if collisions are not an issue. However, keep in mind that excessively long score systems make it easy for the eye to get lost.

Consult **Chapter 11: Phrasing** of Clinton Roemer's *The Art of Music Copying* for additional guidance.

Multimeasure Rests

In the parts, consecutive empty measures should be combined into multimeasure rests. Break multi-measure rests at the end of every phrase, and at every fermata, tempo change, or feel change.

In phrases containing an even number of measures (e.g., 8-bar phrases), odd-numbered multimeasure rests should be given the space of one measure, and even-numbered multimeasure rests are given the space of two measures:

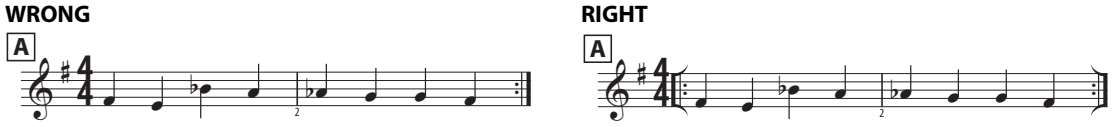


Multimeasure rests must show **measure number ranges** — e.g., "(9–12)" — centered below the rest.

Up to four multimeasure rests per system are acceptable, regardless of how many phrases are involved. Forcing a system break after every multimeasure rest wastes space.

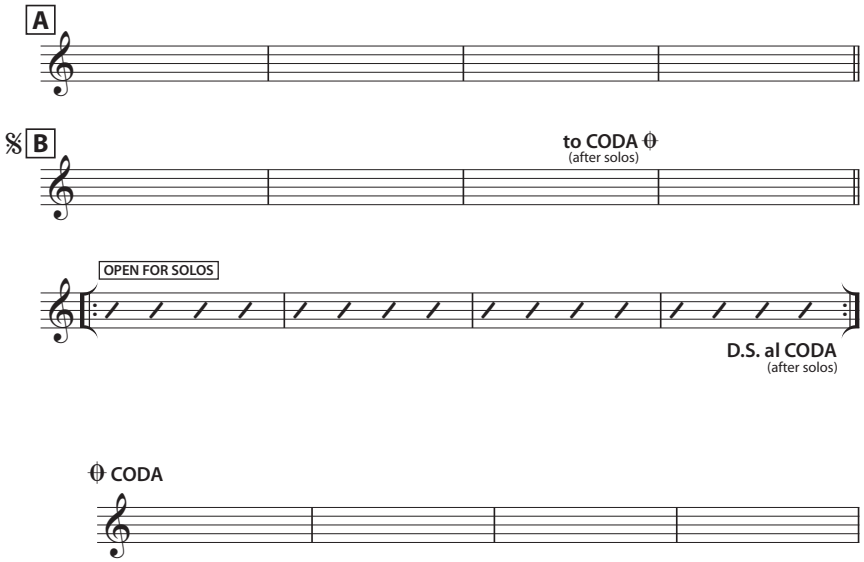
Repeats and Jumpers (D.S., D.C., etc.)

Use **winged repeats** — these help the repeats stand out on the page. Always use a **forward-facing repeat** at the start of a repeated section, even when the piece repeats back to the beginning.



Take care when using **jumpers** (D.S., D.C., codas, etc):

- The measure you are jumping *from* must include the text "**to CODA** 𝄌" (including the 𝄌 symbol). This text should be above the staff and right-aligned above the last measure to be played before jumping to the coda.
- The measure you are jumping *to* — i.e., the first measure of the coda — must include the text: "𝄌 **CODA**" (including the 𝄌 symbol). This text should be left-aligned above the first coda measure.
- The Coda must begin on a new, indented system, with additional **vertical white space** separating it from the previous system. (If you are using manuscript paper, leave an empty staff above the coda.)



If a player is to lay out for one or more passes through a repeated section, tell them when they play, as opposed to when they don't. For example, use "**2nd X only**" rather than "**Tacet 1st X**."

It is assumed that all repeats mean "play twice" unless otherwise specified. If a passage is to be played more than twice, indicate that at the beginning of the the repeated section: "**3x**," "**4x**" etc.

Avoid using "**open**" for open repeats — on a brass part, "open" can also mean "no mute." Instead, use "**Repeat for solos**", "**Repeat till cue**" or similar.

Key Signatures

Key signatures must appear at the beginning of every system, not just the first system.

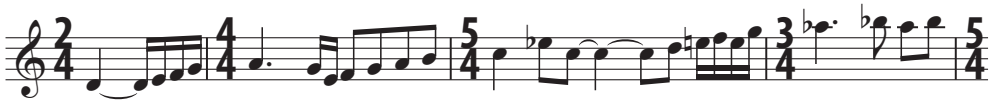
Use standard major and minor key signatures only. For **modal** music, use the key signature of the nearest major or minor key with the same tonic. For example, for a piece in F lydian, use a key signature of F major. For a piece in D dorian, use a key signature of D minor.

For highly chromatic, atonal, or other compositions written without a key signature, the parts should be transposed using accidentals only. In other words, when the score is **keyless**, the transposed parts must also be keyless. This option is called **Open Key** in Dorico and Sibelius, **Open/Atonal Key Signature** in MuseScore Studio, and **Keyless** in Finale. Do not use key signatures for transposing instruments in keyless scores.

Time Signatures

Do not abbreviate 4/4 to "C."

Traditional, inside-the-staff time signatures are fine for music that does not change meter. In music with many time signature changes, **oversized time signatures** can be helpful: the bottom time signature number should extend up to the 4th staff line, and the top time signature number should sit on the 4th staff line and extend above the staff.



Beaming

In 4/4, **beam four consecutive eighth notes beginning on beat 1 or beat 3**. It is incorrect to beam these eighths in pairs — it makes the lines look discontinuous, and is more difficult to read:

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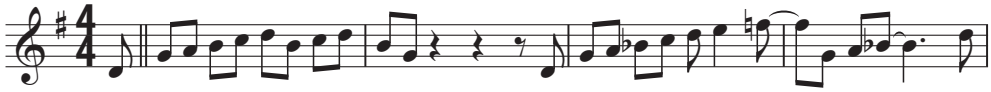

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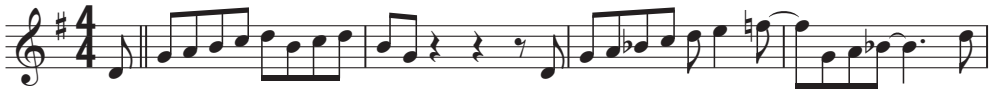

Do not beam three consecutive eighth notes in simple meter. Avoiding this helps to visually distinguish these figures from triplets:

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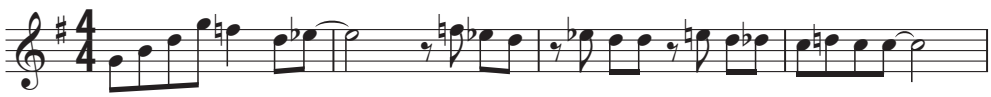

Eighth note triplets, sixteenth notes, and all smaller rhythmic values are all **beamed to the beat.** Whenever a beat contains these smaller values, the beat must be shown.

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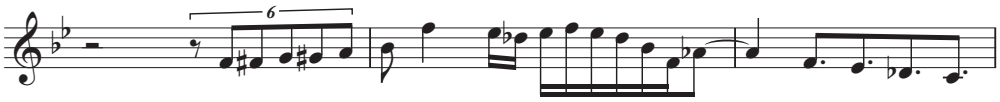

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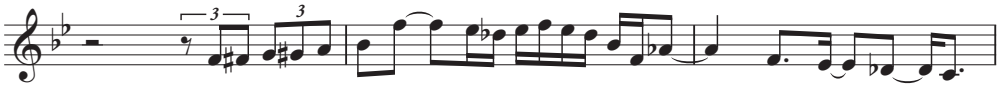

Rests inside beams should be allowed to **float vertically**, so that the stem length and beam angle is not distorted. Sibelius users should use the Float Rests plug-in.

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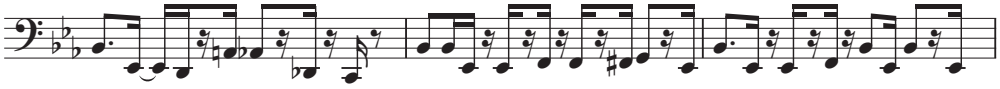

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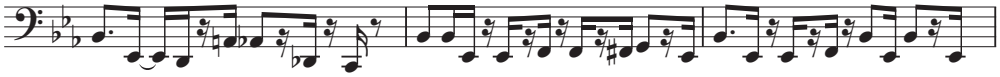

Do not use stemlets. They distort stem length and beam angle, and add needless clutter. Except in certain very extreme cases, stemlets make the music more difficult to read.

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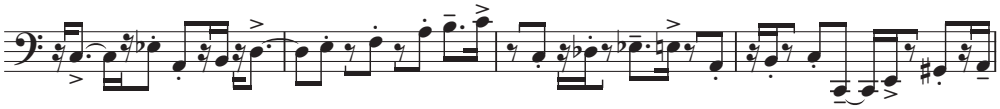

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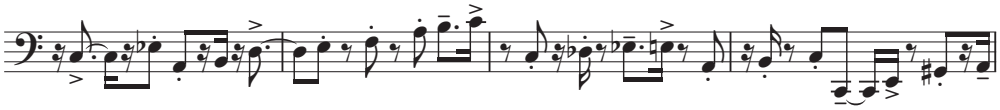

When beaming time signatures other than 4/4:

- **2/4** should be beamed as half a measure of 4/4.
- In **3/4**, you may beam 6 consecutive eighths. In all other cases, show two out of three beats. *N.B. never use a half rest in 3/4.*
- **2/2** (cut time) is beamed the same as 4/4.
- **5/4** is beamed as as if it were a measure of 3/4 plus a measure of 2/4 (i.e., either 3+2 or 2+3).
- **6/4** is traditionally beamed as two measures of 3/4.
- **3/2** is beamed as three measures of 2/4.
- **7/4** is beamed as two measures of 2/4 plus one measure of 3/4 (i.e., 2+2+3; 3+2+2; or 2+3+2).
- It is best to **avoid measures longer than 7/4**. Frequent time signature changes are better than measures that are too long.
- **Asymmetrical meters**, like 7/8, should **reflect the underlying beat structure**. A measure of 7/8 that is subdivided 2+2+3 is beamed differently from one that is subdivided 3+2+2.

Rhythmic Clarity

In 4/4, you should avoid writing figures that obscure the "**invisible barline**" that divides the bar in half. In other words, in 4/4, show beat 3.

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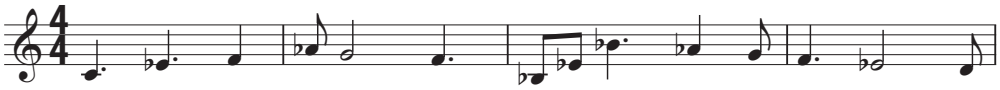

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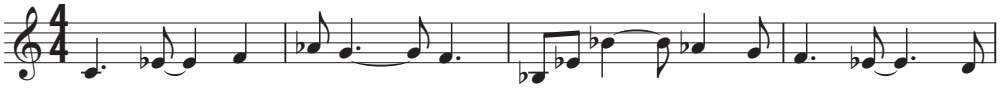
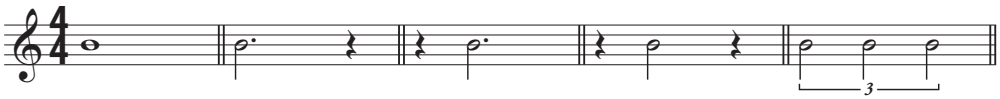


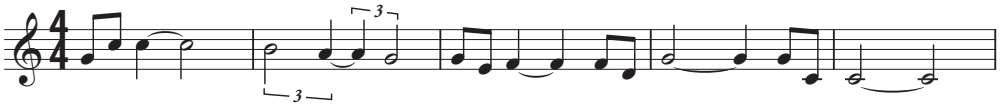
There are a small number of exceptions to the invisible barline rule. In 4/4, these figures — and **only** these figures — can, and should, cross beat 3:

- a whole note
- a dotted half note beginning on beat 1
- a dotted half note beginning on beat 2
- a half note beginning on beat 2
- tuplets that span the entire measure (e.g., half note triplets), or tuplets that cannot be subdivided on beat 3



Make careful note of the above exceptions. Do not clutter these figures by needlessly subdividing them.

WRONG



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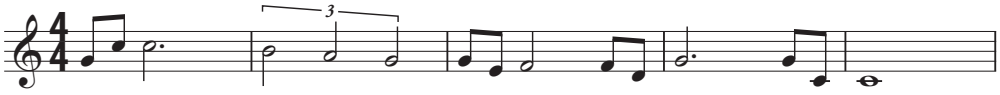
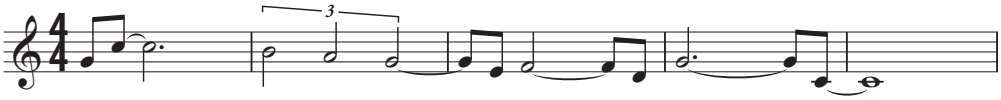


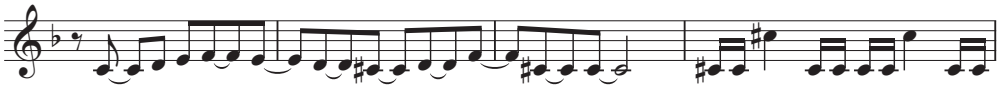
Note that all of these exceptions can be combined with ties:

RIGHT



Off-beat quarter notes can and should be used, provided they do not cross the invisible barline. Do not subdivide them into tied eighth notes unless they are part of a beat that also contains sixteenth notes, or smaller subdivisions.

WRONG



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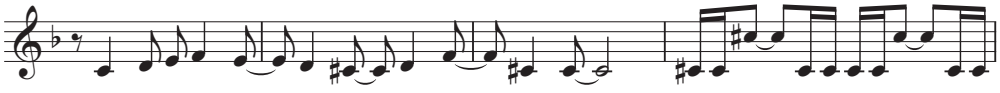


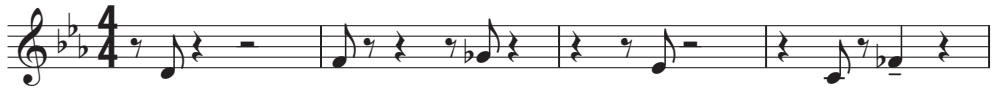
Avoid ties on notes that share the same beam.

Odd meters (5/4, 7/4, etc.) have their own invisible barline, which helps clarify how the measure is subdivided, e.g., 5/4 subdivided 3+2, 7/4 subdivided 2+2+3, etc. See **Beaming** above for beaming of odd meters.

Every instrument should have the same time signature, the same beat, and the same beaming pattern. Use accents (not beaming) to indicate emphasis that cuts against the meter.

Short notes on the beat should be shortened using staccato dots, rather than rests.

WRONG



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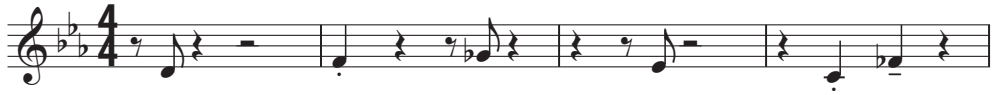


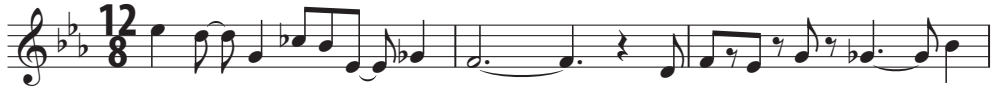
Never add a staccato dot to notes with augmentation dots, to notes that cross beat boundaries, or to notes that begin a tie.

Compound Meter

Compound meters such as 6/8, 9/8, and 12/8 are beamed to the beat. In these meters, the beat is the **dotted quarter note**.

WRONG

RIGHT



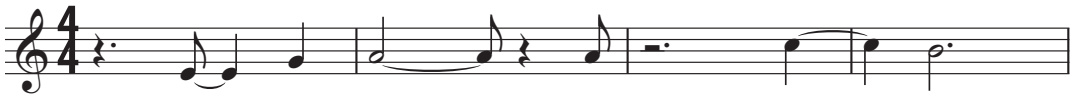
In 12/8, only dotted half notes (on beats 1 and 3) and dotted whole notes are allowed to cross beat boundaries.

Rests

Rests must be grouped to clarify the beat. Rests that last longer than a beat must begin on the beat.

In simple meter (e.g., 3/4, 4/4), do not use dotted rests longer than the duration of a beat. In other words, the largest available dotted rest is a dotted eighth rest that does not cross a beat boundary. Never use dotted quarter rests or dotted half rests in simple meter.

WRONG



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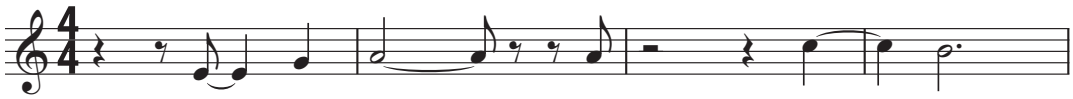
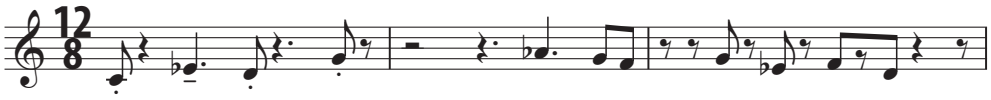


For clarity in compound meters, combine two consecutive eighth rests into a quarter rest when the first rest occurs at the beginning of a beat. Do not combine consecutive eighth rests when the first rest does not begin on the beat. Dotted quarter rests are used when they begin on the beat. Dotted half rests are used at the beginning of the bar, or, in 12/8, on beat 3.

WRONG



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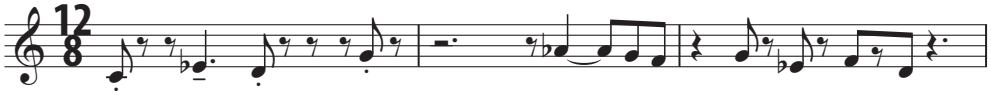
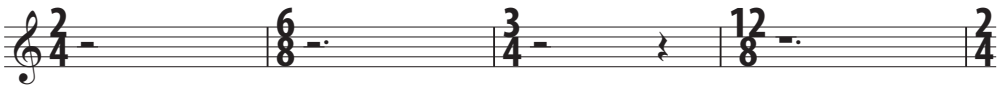


Empty measures always take a whole rest centered between the barlines, regardless of the time signature.

WRONG



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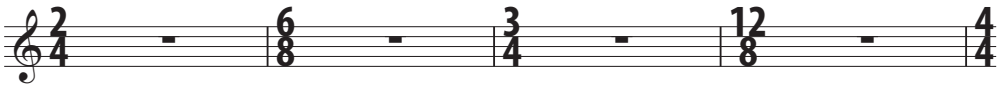
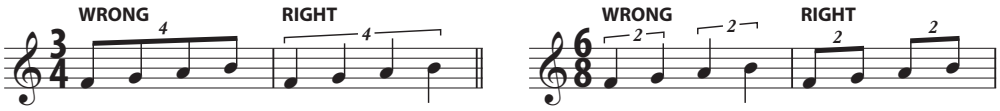


Tuplets

In simple meter (e.g., 3/4, 4/4) tuplets must be **shorter than the notes they replace**, but longer than the next smallest note value. For example, quarter-note tuplets are shorter than quarter notes, but longer than eighth notes.

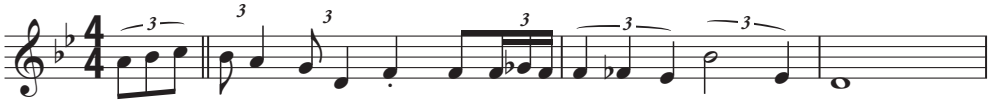
The exception to this rule occurs in compound meter (e.g., 6/8, 12/8), where duplets and quadruplets are longer than the notes they replace. For example, in 6/8, eighth note duplets are longer than regular eighth notes:



Beamed tuplets take a number only, on the beam side. Stemmed or mixed tuplets require a bracket in addition to the number. Tuplet brackets appear on the stem side.

Tuplets included on the same beam as non-tuplet notes — e.g., three triplet sixteenth notes and an eighth note — must be clarified with a bracket.

WRONG



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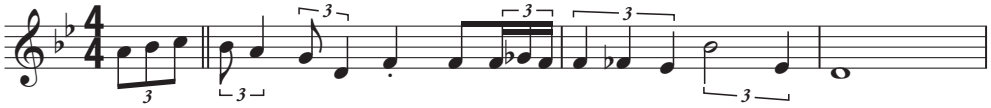


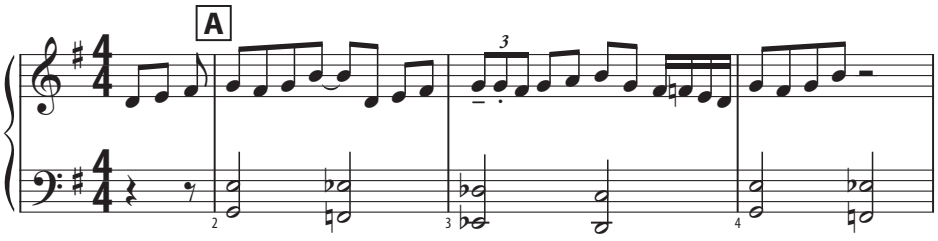
The older manuscript practices of using a slur instead of a tuplet bracket, or of placing all tuplets above the staff regardless of stem/beam direction, are not recommended.

Pickup Measures

A pickup measure is an incomplete measure that begins the piece. Pickup measures cannot be used anywhere except at the beginning of the piece.

The pickup measures is not included in measure numbering, and must be followed by a **double bar**. Staves without notes in the pickup measure should have rests equivalent to the duration of the pickup, and those rests should help clarify the meter.

WRONG



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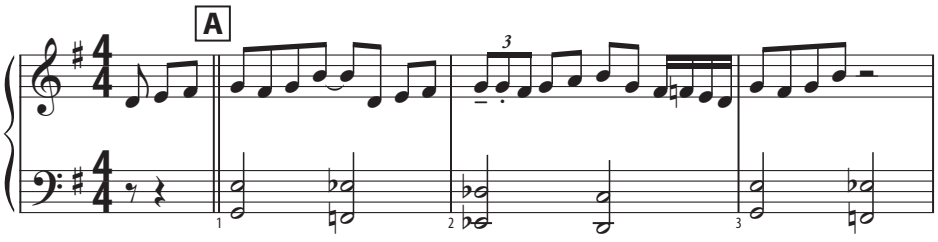
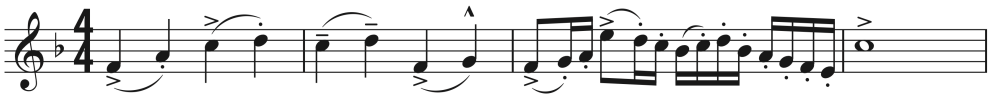


Articulations

Most articulations are placed on the note side. Staccato and tenuto marks can be placed inside the staff when appropriate. Marcato accents (^) always appear above and outside the staff. Staccato and tenuto marks go inside slur tips. Accents can go either inside or outside slurs.



The older hand-copying practice of placing all articulations above the notes and outside is not recommended.

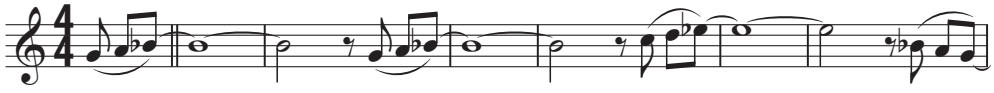
Use articulations to clarify the intended phrasing and note length. In a swing feel, quarter notes can be played either long or short, so it is a good idea to clarify every quarter note with a **tenuto** (long) or **staccato** (short) articulation, unless the musical context makes the intended length obvious. For example, in a ballad, quarter notes are assumed to be long unless marked otherwise.

Slurs and Ties

Notation programs often squash ties between closely-spaced notes. Always take care to ensure all ties are clearly visible.

Slurs over tied notes must extend to the final note in a chain of tied notes.

WRONG

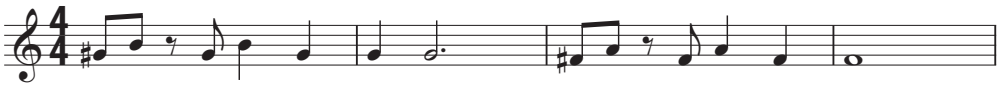


RIGHT

Accidentals and Enharmonics

Accidentals hold throughout the measure and are cancelled by the barline. Even so, following a chromatic alteration, a **cautionary accidental** must be used in the subsequent measure as a reminder to the player.

WRONG



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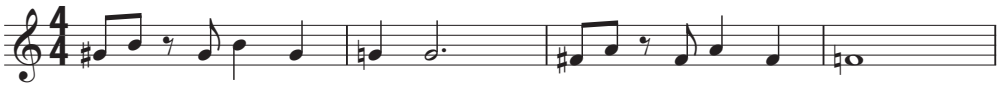
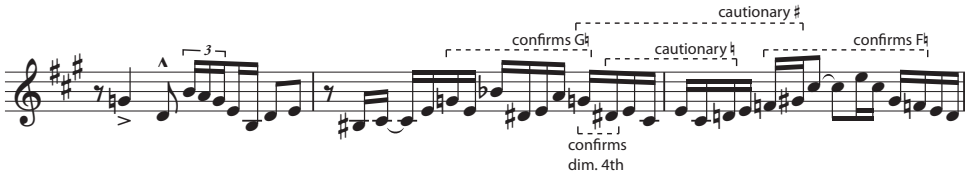


There is no need to parenthesize courtesy accidentals. Parentheses distort spacing and make the accidentals less legible. So long as cautionary accidentals are used consistently and thoughtfully, omitting the parentheses will not cause any confusion.

Accidentals apply in the given octave only. The presence of a B♭ in one octave does not affect the B's in any other octave. However, cautionary accidentals provide helpful **enharmonic confirmation** of augmented or diminished octaves. Augmented/diminished fourths and fifths also sometimes benefit from confirmation, as do intentional clashes with the given chord symbol.

In general, spell perfect fourths, fifths, and octaves as perfect intervals. Avoid augmented thirds (e.g., E♭-G♯), diminished sixths (e.g., F♯-D♭), augmented sevenths (e.g., B♭-A♯), and other misleading enharmonic spellings of perfect intervals.

In dense chromatic music, it is sometimes necessary to use courtesy accidentals within the measure as a reminder of what came previously.



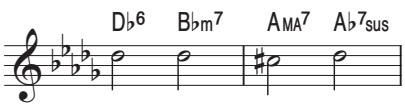
Use the enharmonic spelling that is correct for the key. For example, in the key of F♯, the IV chord is B^{MA7} and is spelled B–D♯–F♯– A♯. In the key of G♭, the IV chord is C♭^{MA7} and is spelled C♭–E♭–G♭–B♭.

Use double-sharps and double-flats with caution. While they are sometimes appropriate for use in staff notation, double-sharps and double-flats are best avoided in chord symbols.

As a general rule, avoid **enharmonic clashes** between melodic spelling and chord symbol spelling. For instance, in most situations, a D^{MA7} chord with a G♭ in the melody is confusing to read. However, melody notes are permitted to clash with chord symbols if the "correct" chord spelling would be awkward — this often occurs in keys with many sharps or flats.

For instance, in the key of D♭, the ♭VI chord is *technically* B𝄫^{MA7} — but as noted above, double flats in chord symbols are best avoided. You should flip this chord symbol enharmonically to A^{MA7}. However, in this case, diatonic melody notes, like D♭ (scale degree $\hat{1}$), should *not* be respelled, even though it presents an enharmonic clash with the respelled chord symbol (A^{MA7}):

WRONG



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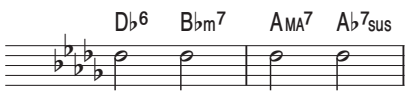
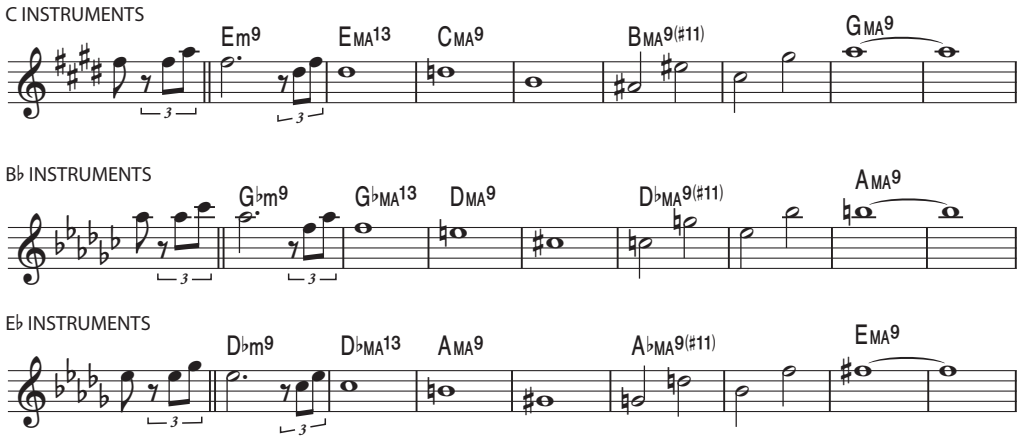


Do not flip diatonic melody notes to their enharmonic equivalents unless the harmonic progression has taken us temporarily outside the key.

In highly chromatic passages and/or rapidly moving passages, enharmonic spelling rules may be relaxed for ease of reading.

Transposing Instruments

When writing parts for transposing instruments, like trumpet or alto sax, it is sometimes necessary to **wrap keys** to their enharmonic equivalent to avoid placing the music in an excessively sharp key. For example, in a piece with a key signature of E major, the B♭ instruments should be written in the key of G♭ major (not F♯), and the E♭ instruments should be written in the key of D♭ major (not C♯).



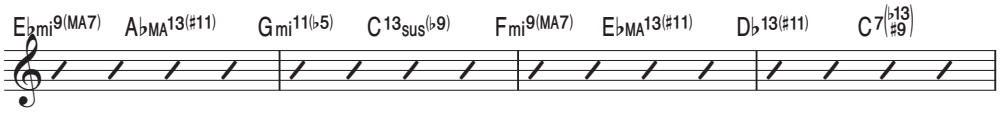
Transposed parts must be checked carefully for enharmonic issues. Notes and chord symbols may need to be enharmonically flipped to avoid awkward spelling, including unwanted double-sharps and double-flats. Some courtesy accidentals may no longer be needed, and new ones may be necessary.

Do not assume your music notation software will take care of this for you.

Chord Symbols

For rhythmic clarity, it is extremely important that chord symbols be **left-aligned.** This means that the left edge of the chord symbol is aligned to the beginning of the beat where the chord is played.

WRONG



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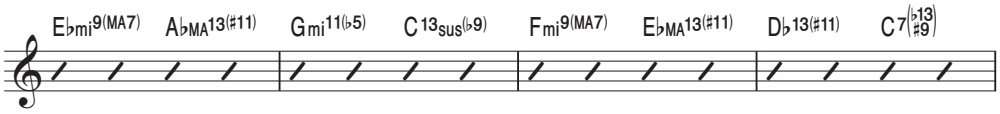


Chord symbols must never be centered or otherwise misaligned. Here is how to do that in the major notation programs:

- In **MuseScore Studio**, chord symbols are left-aligned by default.
- To left-justify chords in **Dorico**, under **Engraving Options > Chord Symbols > Horizontal Position > Horizontal alignment relative to note, chord or rest**, choose **Left**.
- In **Finale**, select the **Chord** tool and choose **Left-Align Chords** from the **Chord** menu.

- **Sibelius** users should follow the instructions here: https://www.scoringnotes.com/tips/left-align-chord-symbols-sibelius/ and save these settings in your template.

Use a **sans-serif font**, such as Helvetica Condensed or similar, for chord symbols. Do not use a serif font like Times New Roman. Chord symbols are far more legible when a sans-serif font is used.

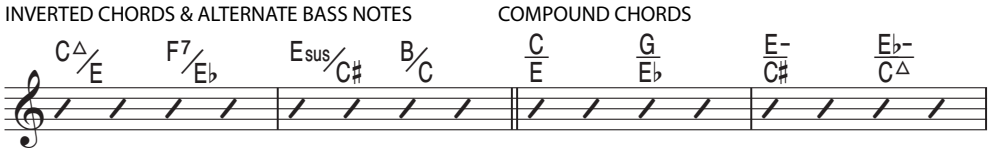
See the **Appendix: Chord Symbol Spelling** for recommended chord symbols.

Chord symbols should accurately reflect any tensions included in the melody. For instance, if the melody note is a G♭ over an F dominant seventh chord, the chord symbol should be F7(♭9) — not just F7.

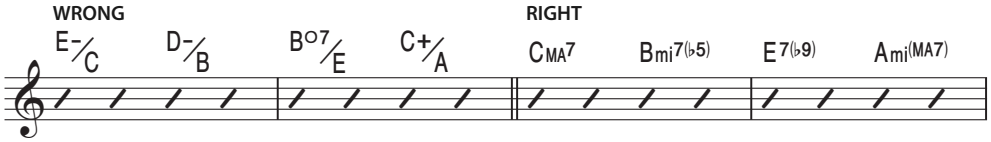
Chord alterations must be parenthesized and should be spelled with sharps and flats — e.g., G7(♭9), F7(♯9) — not pluses and minuses.

There are two types of slashed chords and they mean different things:

- Chords with a **diagonal slash** indicate an inverted chord, or a chord with an alternate bass note.
- Chords with a **horizontal slash** indicate a compound chord, i.e., two complete chords, one above the other).



Do not use slashed chords when they can be written more clearly as common chord symbols:



In parts for transposing instructions, chord symbols must also be transposed to the player's key.

On a simple lead sheet, a separate solo section is only necessary if the solo changes or solo form differ from what is played during the head. For more complex arrangements, or arrangements for larger ensembles, use a dedicated solo section.

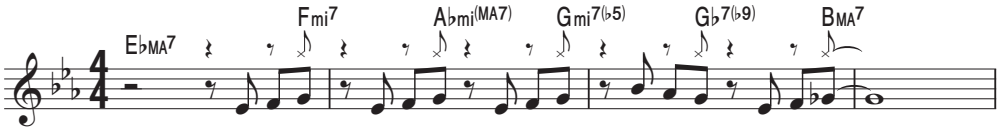
Chord symbols hold until the next chord symbol. When the chord is unchanged over multiple measures, do not restate the chord every measure, and do not use the one-bar repeat symbol (𝄎). Exceptions: restate the chord symbol at the beginning of a new system, in the first measure of a 2nd ending, and in the first measure of a coda.

Chord symbols are usually attached to **primary beats** — in 4/4, beats 1 and 3. Chord players may add anticipations appropriate to the style and context.

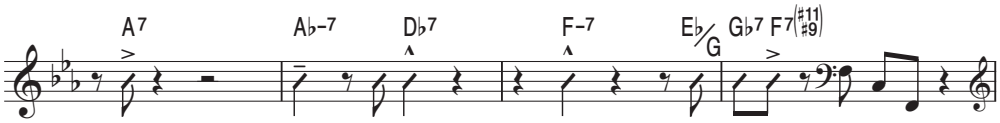
Slash Notation, Rhythmic Cues, Rhythmic Notation, Drum Parts

Use **slash notation** (i.e., stemless slashes in the staff), not rests, to indicate improvisation or comping.

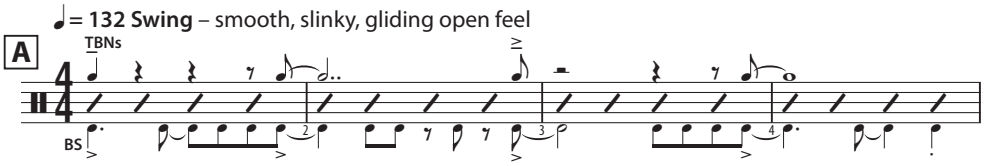
On a lead sheet, use **rhythmic cues** — small x-noteheads or slash noteheads above the staff, with ledger lines hidden — to show hits, comping rhythms, or other specific rhythmic figures:



If the figures are too dense or complex to be shown above the staff, or when using individual rhythm section parts, indicate rhythmic figures using **rhythmic notation**: stemmed slashes written inside the staff:



Drum set parts should include clearly labeled cue notes on the first space above the staff. In traditional jazz big band writing, a good starting point is often to take the entire lead trumpet part and replicate it as a single line of cue notes, written above slash notation. Be sure to label all cues so it is clear to the drummer what instruments are being cued.



Bass cues and other low instrument cues should be written below slash notation, on the first space below the staff.

Be sure to indicate things like "**Break**," "**Solo btw/hits**," "**Stop Time**," "**In 2**," "**Double-Time Feel**," "**Brushes**," "**Mallets**," etc., as needed.

In a solo section without any available cues, it is sometimes helpful to include chord changes in the drum part, to clarify the harmonic rhythm for the drummer.

In a jazz context, it is not usually necessary to include a fully written-out drum groove, unless something very specific is required.

Parting Thoughts

This document contains a great deal of information packed into a small number of pages. I don't expect anyone to absorb all of it on first reading! Review it regularly, especially before you prepare a set of parts for rehearsal.

Remember, before anyone in the room hears your music, they see it on the page. Whenever you pass out a part, you are sending a message — what kind of message is up to you. Do you respect the players and value their time? Did you make thoughtful, well-considered decisions about the best way to notate your music? Did you invest your own time and effort into making it easier for the players reading your music to make it sound good?

Finally, I mentioned this at the beginning, but it bears repeating: if you use music notation software, you should take the time to create a **template**: a file that incorporates these suggestions, and your own personal preferences and needs, into the document's defaults. Having a well-designed template will save you untold amounts of time and frustration, and makes it far easier to prepare your music to a consistent, professional standard.

Good luck and happy writing!

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Clinton Roemer, *The Art of Music Copying* (Roerk Music). The music copyist's bible — absolutely essential for every jazz musician. Out of print, but available in most music department libraries.

Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars* (Faber Music). An excellent and very thorough encyclopedia of music engraving standards. Best for the advanced user of notation software looking to learn to create publisher-quality work.

RECOMMENDED MUSIC NOTATION SOFTWARE

Dorico Pro is a modern music notation software package from Steinberg.

Finale, from MakeMusic, is the longest-running music notation program. N.B. I designed the Finale Jazz Font Default, which is included with the latest Finale version. This default file is compatible with the music preparation guidelines given in this document.

Sibelius|Ultimate is subscription-based music notation software from Avid.

MuseScore Studio is free, open-source music notation software. It has made tremendous strides in recent years, but remains more limited than the professional commercial software packages listed above.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES & FORUMS

"But my software doesn't do that!" is not a valid excuse. It is also almost always incorrect. If there is something you don't know how to do it, search the online knowledge base for your software, or ask your question on a software user forum, or consult with a knowledgable peer.

There are many good online music notation resources — here are some of them:

MUSIC NOTATION NEWS AND TIPS

Scoring Notes: https://www.scoringnotes.com

MUSIC PREPARATION, ORCHESTRATION, AND FILM SCORING

Tim Davies' deBreved: http://www.timusic.net/debreved/

DORICO

Steinberg Dorico blog: https://blog.dorico.com/

Dorico Users Group (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/dorico/

FINALE

Finale 101 (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/1889032998012042/

Finale Powerusers (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/finalepower/

SIBELIUS

Avid Sibelius Users (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/sibeliussoftwareforum/

Sibelius Power Users (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/323691061147132/

MUSESCORE STUDIO

MuseScore Forum: https://musescore.org/en/forum

MuseScore Discussion and Support Group (Facebook): https://www.facebook.com/groups/musescore/

SIBELIUS-SPECIFIC ISSUES

If you use Sibelius, you must **left-align chords** and **float rests**, neither of which Sibelius does by default. Here are instructions on how to achieve these results:

Left-Align Chord Symbols in Sibelius
https://www.scoringnotes.com/tips/left-align-chord-symbols-sibelius/

Float Rests in Sibelius
https://www.scoringnotes.com/tips/new-plug-in-float-rests/

Sibelius's rhythmic notation ("beat with stem") and slash notation can be improved by following these steps:

Tweaking Slash Notation and Rhythmic Notation in Sibelius
http://www.rpmseattle.com/of_note/sibelius-rhythmic-slash-notation-tweaks/

Norfolk and Pori Fonts for Sibelius

Norfolk and Pori are both upgrades over the fonts that come with Sibelius:

- **Norfolk** is an engraved font based on the open-source font **Bravura**, which comes with Dorico but can be used with other software. I actually use Bravura with Finale — it's the font used for all of the musical examples shown in this handout. Sibelius requires some compatibility adjustments in order to use Bravura, and that is what the Norfolk font provides.
- **Pori** is a manuscript-style font based on the open-source font **Petaluma**, inspired by Sher Publishing's *The New Real Book*.

These fonts also come with a solution to create diagonally-offset slash chords in Sibelius:

https://www.nycmusicservices.com/musicresources/

SCORING EXPRESS TEMPLATES

NYC Music Services, a professional music preparation service, offers **Scoring Express Jazz**, a set of well-designed jazz templates for Dorico, Finale, and Sibelius. These templates are available for purchase here:

https://www.notationcentral.com/product-category/templates/

STREAMDECK

Elgato's StreamDeck — available as a mobile app or as a physical controller — can be a powerful productivity tool. These StreamDeck profiles have been specifically designed for use with the major music notation programs:

DORICO

Notation Express StreamDeck Profile for Dorico
https://www.notationcentral.com/product/notation-express-stream-deck-profile-for-dorico/

Notation Express XL StreamDeck Profile for Dorico
https://www.notationcentral.com/product/notation-express-xl-stream-deck-profile-for-dorico/

FINALE

JetStream Finale Controller
https://jetstreamfinale.com/

SIBELIUS

Notation Express Stream Deck Profile for Sibelius
https://www.notationcentral.com/product/notation-express-stream-deck-profile-for-sibelius/

Notation Express XL Stream Deck Profile for Sibelius
https://www.notationcentral.com/product/notation-express-xl-stream-deck-profile-for-sibelius/

APPENDIX: CHORD SYMBOL SPELLING

In the real world, chord symbol spelling is highly variable. Everyone wants to believe that their preferred method of spelling chords is the One True Way. In reality, what is considered correct is determined by consensus within musical communities. That said, there are practical reasons to prefer chord symbols that are concise, compact, consistent, unambiguous, and visually distinct; this is the basis for the following recommendations. Chord symbols are more legible if a **sans-serif font** (e.g., Helvetica Condensed) is used.

CHORD NAME	RECOMMENDED	ACCEPTABLE	DO NOT USE
MAJOR TRIAD	G		GMA, G triad, G$^{\triangle}$, G$^{\triangle TR}$, etc.
MINOR TRIAD	G–, Gm, Gmi	Gmin	GMI, Gm triad, etc.
AUGMENTED TRIAD	G+		Gaug
DIMINISHED TRIAD	G^{o}		Gdim
SIXTH	G^{6}		anything else
MINOR SIXTH	Gm^{6}, Gmi^{6}, G–^{6}	Gmin^{6}	GMI^{6}, etc.
MAJOR SEVENTH	GMA^{7}, G$^{\triangle}$	G$^{\triangle 7}$, Gmaj^{7}	GM^{7}, Gma^{7}, GMaj^{7}, etc.
SEVENTH	G^{7}		anything else
MINOR-MAJOR SEVENTH	Gm$^{(MA7)}$, Gmi$^{(MA7)}$, G–$^{\triangle}$	Gmin$^{(MA7)}$, G–$^{\triangle 7}$	Gm$^{(M7)}$, Gm^{MAJ7}, etc.
MINOR SEVENTH	Gm^{7}, Gmi^{7}, G–^{7}	Gmin^{7}	GMI^{7}, etc.
HALF-DIMINISHED	G$^{\varnothing}$, Gm$^{7(\flat 5)}$, Gmi$^{7(\flat 5)}$	G$^{\varnothing 7}$, G–$^{7(\flat 5)}$, Gmin$^{7(\flat 5)}$	GMI$^{7\flat 5}$, G–$^{7-5}$, etc.
DIMINISHED SEVENTH	G^{o7}		Gdim^{7}
CHORDS w/EXTENSIONS	G$^{\triangle 9}$, GMA^{13}, G–^{9}, Gm^{11}, G^{13}, G$^{6}_{9}$, etc.		GMA$^{7(9)}$, Gm$^{7(11)}$, G$^{7(add13)}$, G$^{6/9}$, etc.
CHORDS w/SUSPENSIONS	Gsus, G^{7}sus, G^{9}sus	Gsus^{4}, G^{7}sus^{4}, G^{9}sus^{4}	G^{4}, G$^{7(4)}$, G^{11}, etc.
CHORDS w/ALTERATIONS	G$^{(\sharp 4)}$, G$^{13(\flat 9)}$, G$^{7\binom{\flat 13}{\sharp 9}}$, etc.		G$^{\sharp 11}$, G^{7-13+9}, G+$^{7(+9)}$, etc.
INVERSIONS & CHORDS w/ ALTERNATE BASS NOTES	G$\diagup$B, G$^{7}\diagup$F, G$^{\triangle}\diagup$E$\flat$, etc.		G/B, G^{7} on F, G$^{\triangle}$/E$\flat$ bass, etc.
POLYCHORDS/COMPOUND CHORDS	$\frac{G}{B}$, $\frac{G^{7}}{F}$, $\frac{G^{\triangle}}{E\flat -}$, etc.		G over B, $\frac{G^{7}}{\text{F triad}}$, etc.