

RULES FOR FIRST SPECIES IN TWO VOICES

The format of these rules is based on the teaching of David Lewin.

NOTES AND MELODIC INTERVALS WITHIN THE COUNTERPOINT LINE

1. Use only white notes except as necessary, i.e. in order to avoid breaking other rules.
2. The counterpoint line must end with a rising minor second up to the tonic note of the mode, except in Phrygian, in which it must end with a rising major second from D to E.
3. The following melodic intervals (MI's) are allowed within the counterpoint line:
 - (a) m2, M2, m3, M3, p4, p5, , m6, M6, p8, all either up or down.
 - (b) perfect unison (creating a sustained or repeated note), but only once per exercise.

In other words, in addition to whole steps and half steps, only consonant skips up to an octave are allowed. Like dissonant leaps, augmented seconds are also forbidden. For melodic purposes, the p4 is considered consonant (but not for harmonic purposes!).
4. Successive melodic minor seconds in the same direction (e.g., C#-D-E♭) are forbidden. (NB: chromatic half steps, such as C-C#, are already forbidden by rule 3.)
5. The melody must be predominantly stepwise; at the very minimum, steps must account for at least half of all melodic motions.
6. Skips and leaps are allowed as per rules 3 and 5 above, but must be preceded and/or followed by a change in melodic direction.
7. Large leaps must be both preceded **and** followed by a change in direction. The sixths and the p8 and are "large" leaps. The p5 is borderline: it's preferable to frame it with a change of direction both before and after, but only one is strictly required.
8. You may write two successive skips or leaps in the same direction, but only if:
 - (a) the leaps outline a major or a minor triad, or an octave; **and**
 - (b) the pair of leaps is framed by changes of direction both before **and** after.

THE LARGE SHAPE OF THE LINE (see also "GLOBAL RULE" below)

9. Zenith (upper climax)
 - (a) the line must contain one unique highest tone, the "zenith".
 - (b) the zenith may not sound together with the zenith of the cantus firmus.
 - (c) the zenith may not occur on a sustained or repeated tone.
 - (d) ideally, the zenith should not be the last note, but we will allow it.
10. *Do not outline an augmented interval. An interval is "outlined" if the outer tones are local high or low points and/or framed by leaps instead of steps. You may outline a diminished interval, but only if the tone immediately following the outline moves by step in the opposite direction of the outlined interval (which "resolves" the diminished interval).*
11. Avoid returning too frequently to any one note, especially the tonic. In particular, avoid returning too often to the melody's lowest tone (the "nadir"). This is along the lines of the zenith rule above, but is not as strict.

RESTRICTIONS ON VERTICAL INTERVALS

12. Use only consonances. The following dyads (vertical intervals, or VIs) are allowed: unison, but at the beginning and end only; 8^{ve} (sparingly: maximum of one appearance beyond the beginning and/or end intervals); otherwise m or M3rd, p5th, m or M6th, m or M10th, an p12th. **Remember that the p4th is treated as a vertical dissonance** in 2-part writing in this style. Remember to **check the quality of 5^{ths}** as well (they must be perfect).
13. The counterpoint must end either 8^{va} above, at unison with, or 8^{va} below the cantus.
14. The counterpoint must open either 8^{va} above, 5th above, at unison with, or 8^{va} below the cantus. Note: do not open a 5th below the cantus, because that obscures the mode.
15. The vertical interval between the two voices should not exceed a p12th.

It is a good idea to mark the interval type on the page to facilitate checking rules 12-18.

RULES RESTRICTING DIRECT MOTION

16. Parallel 5^{ths} and 8^{ves} are strictly forbidden, as are // 12^{ths}.
17. Additionally, a vertical 5th or 8^{ve} or 12th may not be approached in direct motion, unless the upper voice moves by step (so-called “horn fifths”).
18. So-called “consecutive” p5^{ths}, 8^{ves}, and unisons (e.g. 5-12, 8-1, 8-15) are forbidden.
19. The two voices may not move in consecutive vertical 3^{rds} for more than three consecutive notes; similarly for consecutive vertical 6^{ths} and vertical 10^{ths}.
20. The voices may not leap simultaneously in direct motion more than once per exercise.
21. Voice-crossing is contrary motion may occur once per exercise. *Overlap is forbidden. Overlap occurs when the lower voice ascends to a note higher than the previous note in the upper part, or vice-versa, when the upper voice descends to a note below the previous note in the lower part. A consequence of this rule is that a unison must be left in oblique or contrary motion.*

THE RESOLUTION OF MELODIC CHROMATICISM

22. When a raised or lowered (“black”) note is used, an appropriate tone of resolution must appear in the line at some point thereafter (though not necessarily immediately). B^b resolves to A, E^b to D, C[#] to D, G[#] to A, F[#] to G or G[#]. The tone of resolution must appear in register.
23. When a raised or lowered tone is used, its unaltered form may not be used in the line until after the tone of resolution has appeared. E.g., once B^b has been used, B₄ may not appear in the line until some A has first appeared in the line (in register).

GLOBAL RULE (GR)

*For every note **X** of the counterpoint line lying above (below) the cadence tone, some note lying one step lower (higher) than **X** must appear in the line at some point subsequent to **X**.*

This rule is stricter than practice in the actual repertoire we are imitating (though not by much), and you are not required to follow it strictly. However, it is a useful guide in learning how to create a melody that “holds together” and has a sense of directed motion to a goal (cadence). Melodies that sound “random” or “unmusical” will usually exhibit significant violations of the Global Rule. In general, I will allow small violations of the G.R., but only by one step (i.e. leaving an unfilled registral “gap” of a third), and only 1-2 such gaps per exercise.