Tissimo

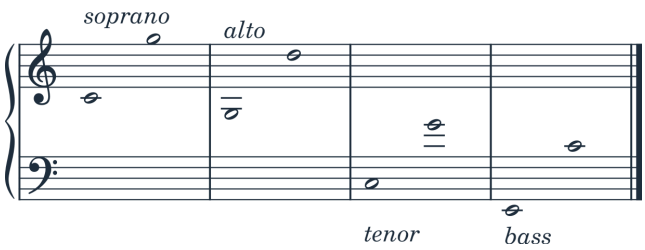
LISTEN
Scan to hear every example
tissimo.co/worksheets/four-part-harmony

Four-part harmony

A hymn is written for four singers: **soprano**, **alto**, **tenor** and **bass** (S A T B). Each sings one line, and on every beat the four notes make a chord.

FOUR VOICES, ONE CHORD

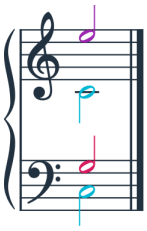
Soprano and alto share the treble staff (soprano stems up, alto stems down); tenor and bass share the bass staff the same way. A triad has only three notes, so one of them is sung twice.



The lowest and highest note of each voice



C major: the root is **doubled**



Too wide: soprano and alto over an octave apart

Keep the order
Soprano on top, bass at the bottom. No voice **crosses** another.

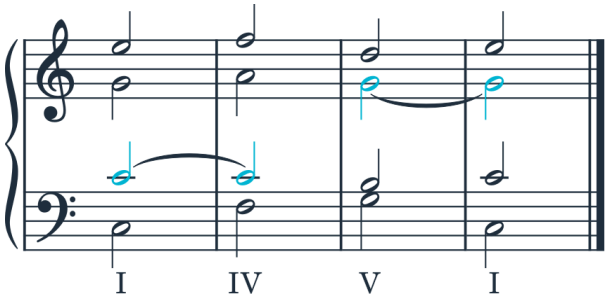
Keep them close
At most an **octave** from soprano to alto and from alto to tenor.

Usually double the root
The 5th or 3rd also works. Never the **leading tone** (B in C major).

MOVING: KEEP THE COMMON TONE

Each voice moves to the **nearest note** it can. When two chords share a note, the voice that has it **holds it**: C from I to IV, G from V to I. IV and V share nothing, so the upper voices move down while the bass steps up.

The **leading tone** B rises to C, and the 7th of a V7 falls (Handouts 212 and 235). It is the smooth-shape idea of Handouts 42 and 130–153, with every note given its own singer.



Cyan = a common tone, held. The bass may leap.

TWO MOVES TO AVOID: PARALLEL 5THS AND OCTAVES

Two voices a 5th apart (in any octave: a 12th counts too) that move the same way to another 5th melt into one hollow sound; octaves do the same. Check every pair of voices. The cure: hold a common tone, or move one voice against the other (**contrary motion**).

Parallel 5ths AVOID



Alto and bass: G over C, then D over G.

Parallel octaves AVOID



Tenor and bass: C over C, then G over G.

The fix GOOD



The alto **holds G**; the tenor steps down to B.

Try it Play I–IV–V–I, treble staff in the right hand and bass staff in the left, and **sing the alto** (G–A–G–G). Then play the faulty pairs and the fix: can you hear two voices lock together? Hunt for more mistakes in Exercise 71.

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