

COUNTERPOINT GENERAL RULES

In counterpoint, one voice is usually given. This voice is known as the *cantus firmus* (C.F.), or the "fixed voice."

There are **five species**:

first species:	1:1 -- note against note
second species:	2:1, 3:1
third species:	4:1, 6:1
fourth species:	syncopation / suspensions
fifth species:	florid / free counterpoint

SOME GENERAL RULES:

Scales:

- Use only diatonic (natural) tones of the major and minor scales.

Voices and voice-leading:

- The vertical interval should not exceed a twelfth (12th).
- Each voice should have the range of an octave (ideally), or at most a tenth (10th).
- **Active** tones should resolve in the direction of their inflection:
 - notes sharpened --> resolve up
 - notes flattened --> resolve down
 - FA --> MI (4-3)
 - LA --> SOL (6-5)
 - TI --> DO (7-8)
 - RE --> DO or MI (2-1 or 2-3)
- Notes may go in the opposite direction if they are in a passing motion.
- Avoid crossing / overlapping voices.
- Avoid exposing the tritone between voices. When it does appear, make sure it resolves correctly.

Repetitions:

- Avoid repetitions and sequences.
- Don't use repeated notes.
- Don't use more than 4 (ideally 3) vertical 3rds or 6ths in a row.

Lines:

- Each line must be a good melody by itself. It should have a definite direction, an interesting curve and a climax.
- Each line should be independent in regards to rhythm and direction. In both lines you should maintain a balance between stepwise motion and skips.
- Motion needs to be distributed evenly between the lines.
- Contrary motion should predominate.
- Avoid parallel P1, P5, P8.
- Avoid moving from a d5 to a P5 since the tritone (dissonance) does not resolve.
- Avoid hidden / direct fifths and octaves.
- The lines should have enough in common in regards to rhythm and direction to make them sound convincing together.
- Maintain a steady pulse.
- Corroborate melodic elements by using similar patterns in both lines.

Harmony:

- Counterpoint **above** a given line may begin on a 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 and end on the 1, 3, 8, 10.
- Counterpoint **below** should begin and end only on 1, 8.
- The counterpoint should imply a good harmonic progression.
- Change chords from weak to strong beats.
- Consider the bottom note the bass note.
- Intervals used should be primarily consonant. Dissonances may appear but should be in small quantities.
- Use consonances most often on accented beats or portions of the beat, and dissonances on unaccented beats or portions of the beat.
- Don't double the leading tone.