Part-Writing: The Horizontal Rules

**The Supreme Goal of Part-Writing is Good Voice Leading...**
Making each individual voice part easy to sing by avoiding awkward intervals or large leaps!

Before we get to the specific **dos** and **don'ts**, let's take a look at some important characteristics of four-voice part-writing:

- **Note how each voice moves as little as possible**, going to the nearest chord tone in each subsequent chord!
- **In some cases, the voice can simply stay on the same note.** This is called keeping the common tone, and it's always cool!

It's common for the bass to move in the opposite direction of the upper three voices. This is called **contrary motion** and it helps maintain voice independence.

Four-voice harmony is a form of counterpoint, which is the combination of more than one melody played simultaneously. In counterpoint, each voice is equally important; no voice is given a role of accompaniment to another voice.

In counterpoint, it is important for each voice to be independent; that is, no two voices should be doing the exact same thing. If two (or more) voices were moving in parallel, the richness of the texture would be reduced.

As a result, common practice composers were very consistent in avoiding two or more voices that moved in parallel perfect octaves, parallel perfect fifths, or parallel perfect unisons!

There are also a few other rules that apply to this style:

- When you have the leading tone in an outer voice (soprano or bass) it must resolve to the tonic in the next chord.
- You may not move any voice by an interval of an augmented second or an augmented fourth.

The good news: you can avoid all three of these by doing the following whenever possible:

1. Keep the common tone!
2. Move to the nearest chord tone!
3. Use contrary motion!