

Part Writing

When part writing, keep in mind three basic guidelines:

1. **Independence of voices** (each voice must sound independent)
2. **Parsimonious voice leading** (smallest distance between two chords)
3. **Proper treatment of dissonance** (must be prepared by step or common tone and must resolve appropriately)

All part writing errors are transgressions against one or more of these guidelines.

This chart shows common errors and how many points are lost for each:

3-point errors	Parallel fifths Parallel octaves Missing root Missing third Progression that does not fit the phrase model Harmony does not fit given note Inappropriate $\frac{6}{4}$ chord Omitted chord
2-point errors	Unresolved dissonance Strong PD to weak PD Doubled dissonance Direct fifth or octave between soprano and bass Improperly resolve leading-tone in outer voice $\hat{5}$ in soprano at authentic cadence
1-point errors	Doubled leading-tone Improperly resolved leading-tone in outer voice Wrong note (each) Omitted fifth for no reason Incomplete inverted chord Voice crossing Voice overlap Unprepared dissonance Dissonant melodic interval Excessive avoidable leaping in upper parts Harmonic prolongation from weak beat to strong beat Root-position diminished triad Wrong inversion More than an octave between soprano & alto or alto & tenor

When taking a time-limited exam such as the proficiency exam, you should focus first on avoiding 3- and 2-point errors.

For more information on this topic see *Musician's Guide* pp. 233–241.