

## CHORALE COMPOSITION: PHASE 1

### Composing one solid chorale phrase

**OBJECTIVE:** Compose a 4-measure chorale phrase in common-practice style. Use a pencil and the attached staff paper. Follow the workflow specified below and maintain the 18<sup>th</sup>-century conventions we've been studying. As you work:

- Provide complete analysis by labeling the following: key, chords (Roman/Arabic numerals), embellishing tones, and cadence type.
- Try to hear what you compose: by singing the parts, playing the piano, or any other means.

### WORKFLOW:

#### Step I: Setup

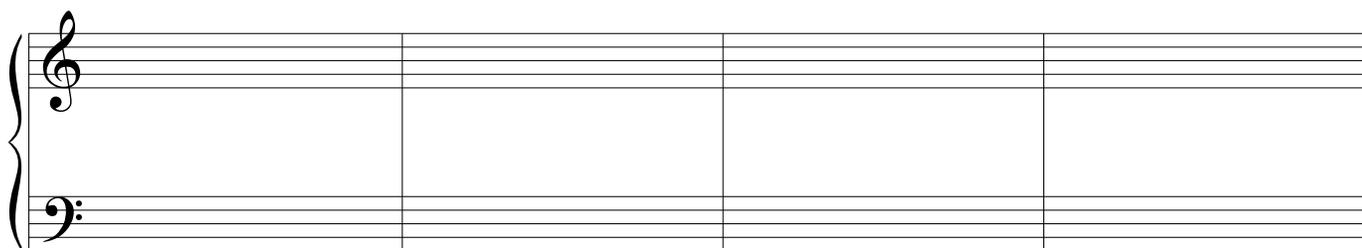
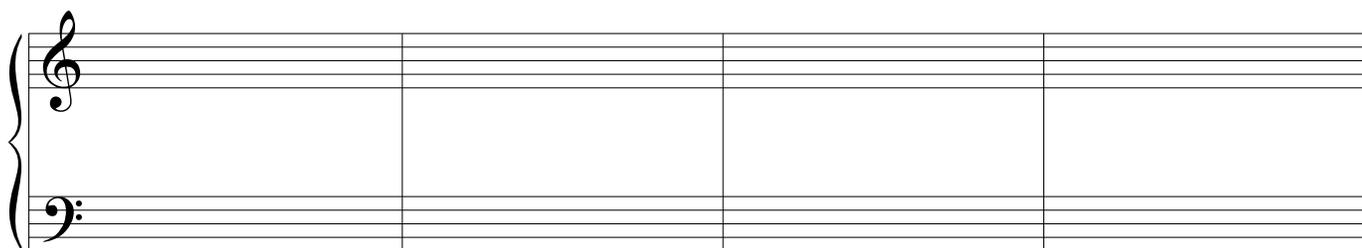
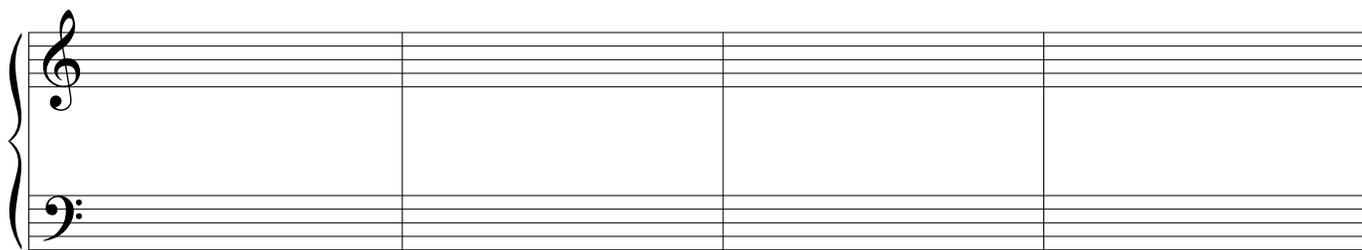
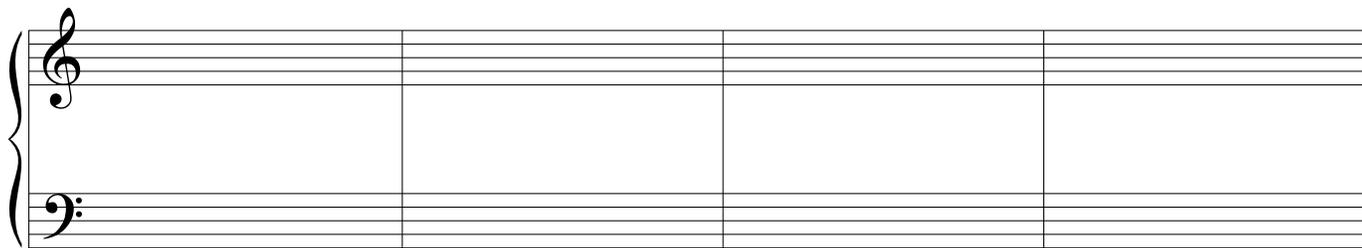
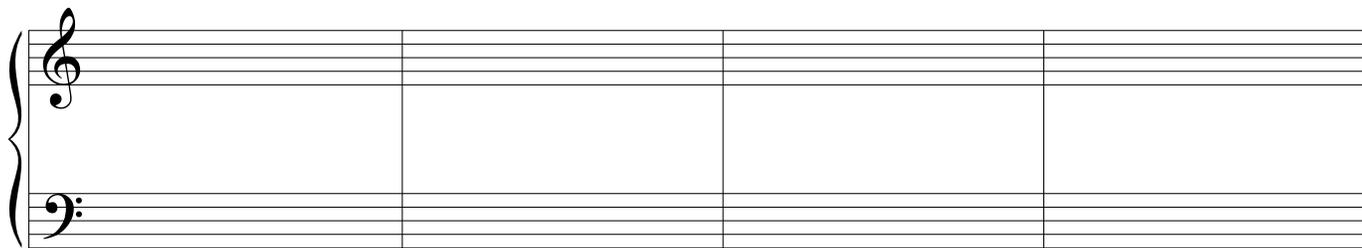
1. Use the attached template of staff paper.
2. **Add your time signature and key signature.**

#### Step II: Constructing the “skeleton”

1. Compose a **root-position chord progression** by sketching in Roman numerals below the bass-clef staff. Roman numerals should be placed carefully to imply the general rhythm of your chord progression. Your chord progression should be strong according to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century conventions we've been studying. Your progression should start with a root-position tonic triad and conclude with an authentic cadence or half cadence.
2. **Plot out your bass line, switching a few chords in each phrase to first inversion (2 or 3 first-inversion triads per phrase).** The first-inversion triads will make your bass line smoother and more interesting. For this assignment, stay clear of second-inversion triads.
3. Compose a **soprano line** that complements the bass line and has expressive shape.
4. Add **inner voices**.
5. Double-check your work. Make sure it follows 18<sup>th</sup>-century conventions for chord spacing, doubling, and voice leading.

#### Step III: “Fleshing out the skeleton” (Adding decoration)

1. Add **embellishing tones (1–3 per measure)**. Be sure they don't introduce new errors (such as parallel fifths/octaves). If you include two simultaneously, they shouldn't clash with *each other* (your ear will be a good judge of this).
2. Double-check your work one more time.



## **CHORALE COMPOSITION: PHASE 2**

### **Refining (or adding to) your first phrase**

***So far, you have composed a single chorale phrase. Moving forward, you have a choice:***

***CHOICE 1:*** Improve and refine your first phrase. (Any remaining corrections? Could the soprano line be more expressive/interesting/lyrical? Could the bass line be more interesting? Have you missed an opportunity for a beautiful embellishing tone, or have you overused embellishing tones?)

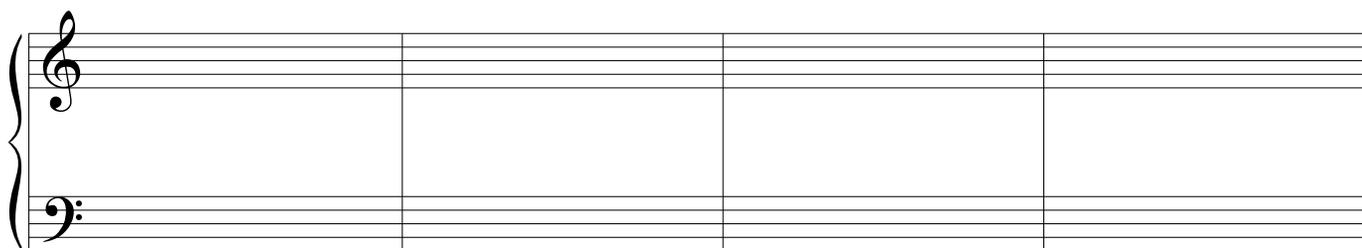
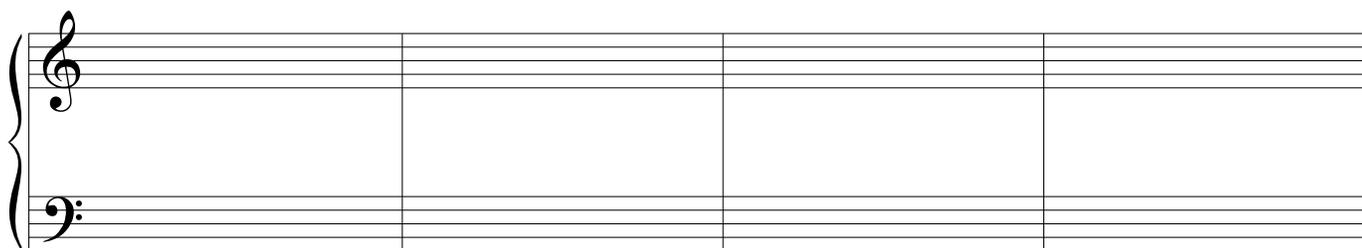
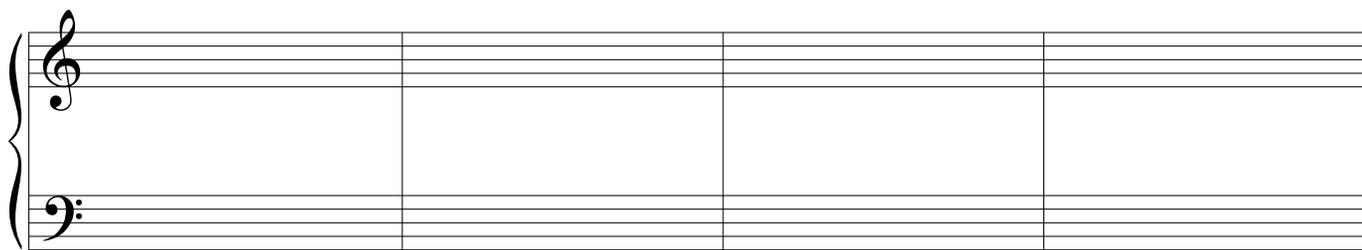
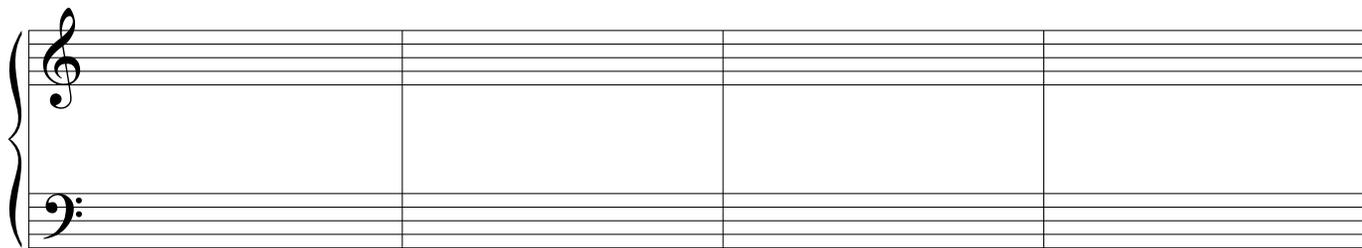
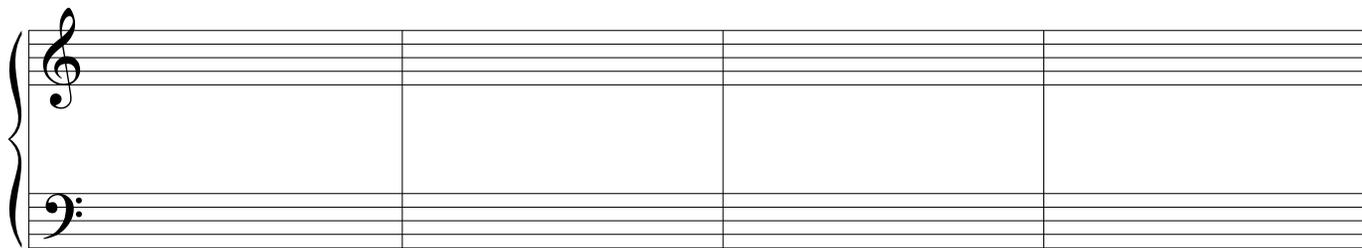
### **OR**

***CHOICE 2:*** If you're genuinely happy with your first phrase, then compose a *second* phrase, following these guidelines:

- Same meter as first phrase
- Can be in same key or in the relative key
- Start on root-position tonic
- End with authentic cadence or half cadence
- Follow the usual 18<sup>th</sup>-century conventions for voice leading and chord progression

Here are some additional items to keep in mind as you compose and refine:

- Cadence chords should land on strong beats of the measure (beats 1 or 3 in 4/4 time; beats 1 or 2 in 3/4 time).
- For the AP exam, we'll keep soprano lines "safe and unadventurous." But for this project, you can aim for slightly more expressive/interesting/lyrical soprano lines. A well-placed leap might be effective, though it should be followed by stepwise motion in the opposite direction.
- Avoid second-inversion chords.
- Embellishing tones:
  - Use mostly unaccented passing tones and possibly some unaccented neighbor tones, both of which may be spread out among the four parts.
  - The other embellishing tones may be used as well and can be extremely expressive. But don't overuse them.
  - The following embellishing tones tend to be used in the *soprano line only*: escape tone, anticipation, appoggiatura.



**CHORALE COMPOSITION: PHASE 3****Assembling a chorale from 1–2 solid phrases****STEP I: Get the basic chorale in place**

You have composed 1–2 solid chorale phrases. Assemble a complete four-phrase chorale using the appropriate phrase scheme below.

Note: In these diagrams, a's and b's represent similar and contrasting phrases. The prime sign (as in a') implies a varied repetition (i.e., essentially the same phrase, but with something different about it).

*If you have ONE phrase ready:*

<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a'</b>	<b>a</b>
orig. key	orig. key	relative key	orig. key

*If you have TWO phrases ready:*

<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>a</b>
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**STEP II (optional): Refine or elaborate your chorale**

After Step I, you should have a chorale that, at a basic level, works. But, your ear may hear spots that need help. Maybe something's too jumpy, a transition is awkward, or you want to add more variety. Try these ideas:

- Add “connective tissue” *in between* phrases. For example:
  - add connective embellishing tones
  - re-voice the cadence chord
  - add an anacrusis chord going into the next phrase (for example, the dominant of the incoming key)
- Add variety to your “a” phrases. For instance, if **a a b a** is too predictable, **a a' b a''** might be more interesting. Ways to do this:
  - Vary the cadences.
  - Vary the embellishing tones.
  - Vary the soprano line and adjust the other voices accordingly.
  - Transpose to the relative key.

