

Bach Chorales: A Guide.

- Bach Chorales are meant to be sung by four part harmony - SATB, originally for Lutheran churches in Germany.
- Melodies should be something easy to sing with a recognisable tune.
- These melodies are broken up into phrases, which are identified by pause marks - this is where you put your cadences.

Possible Keys

- Begin by looking at your key signature and any accidentals and working out what key you are in - either the Major or relative minor.
- Then work out the **5 other possible keys** that you can modulate (change keys) to. This would be to the following:

Dominant
Subdominant
Relative Minor
Relative minor of the dominant
Relative minor of the subdominant

E.g in the key of C major

Key 1	C Major	Tonic / home key
Key 2	G Major	Dominant Key
Key 3	F major	Subdominant Key
Key 4	A minor	Relative minor
Key 5	E minor	Relative minor of dominant
Key 6	D minor	Relative minor of sub-dominant

This works exactly the same if the chorale is in a minor key.....

Key 1	A minor	Tonic / home key
Key 2	E minor	Dominant Key
Key 3	D minor	Subdominant Key
Key 4	C major	Relative major
Key 5	G major	Relative major of dominant
Key 6	F major	Relative major of sub-dominant

Never modulate to any other keys than these.

7 Chords

Write out the 7 possible chords available to you in your key e.g in C Major:

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
E	F	G	A	B	C	D
G	A	B	C	D	E	F

This will help you quickly work out what possible chords you can use for the melody notes in the soprano part.

Harmonise Your Cadences

- Always harmonise your cadences first.
- A Cadence consists of three chords i.e. Ic - V - I.
- About 78% of Bach's cadences are perfect (V-I) and about 20% are imperfect (ending on V, usually I-V or even better Ib-V)
- Do not use plagal or imperfect cadences (very rare)
- Begin by labelling your soprano notes with their number in the scale:

For example, in F Major



- This will usually indicate to you if the cadence is Perfect or Imperfect (as you will get VERY used to the different cadence progressions!)
- You can also quickly look at the chart you made at the beginning of the 7 different chords available and work out which chords fit with these three different notes.

Perfect Cadences

- The most common perfect cadences (think Bach harmonic language) are the following:
 - ii⁷b - V - I (39% of all Bach cadences)
 - Ic - V - I / Ic - V⁷ - I (also known as cadential 6/4)
 - Ib - V - I
 - IV - V - I

IV - V - I

IV V I

Ic - V - I

Ib V I

Ic - V - I

Ic V I

ii7b - V - I

ii7b V I

Ic - V - I

Ic V I

ii7b - V - I

ii7b V I

- Always put your bass notes in first, then add the other two inner parts.
- In a Minor key use a **tierce de picarde** - this is where the final chord I is changed to the Major chord I.

Dominant 7th

When writing a perfect cadence, chord V can be made stronger by adding the 7th - V7. When you do this you need to resolve the chord correctly:

- The bass part **MUST** move V - I
- The 3rd of Chord V **MUST RISE** to the tonic
- The 7th of the chord V **MUST FALL** to the 3rd of chord I

Imperfect Cadences

- Imperfect cadences often feature:
 - V7b - I - V
 - Vii7b - I - V
 - Vii7 - I - V
 - I - ivb - V (use rarely)
 - Ib - iib - V (use rarely)

I - Ib - V

Musical notation for the I - Ib - V progression. The top staff shows a treble clef with notes G4, A4, B4, and a whole note chord G4-B4-D5. Fingerings 8, 8, and 7 are indicated above the notes. The bottom staff shows a bass clef with notes G3, A3, B3, and a whole note chord G3-B3-D4.

I Ib V

Viib - I - V

Musical notation for the Viib - I - V progression in 3/4 time. The top staff shows a treble clef with notes G4, A4, B4, and a whole note chord G4-B4-D5. Fingerings 4, 3, and 2 are indicated above the notes. The bottom staff shows a bass clef with notes G3, A3, B3, and a whole note chord G3-B3-D4.

viib i V

I - Ib - V

Musical notation for the I - Ib - V progression. The top staff shows a treble clef with notes G4, A4, B4, and a whole note chord G4-B4-D5. Fingerings 3, 3, and 2 are indicated above the notes. The bottom staff shows a bass clef with notes G3, A3, B3, and a whole note chord G3-B3-D4.

I Ib V

V7b - I - V

Musical notation for the V7b - I - V progression in 3/4 time. The top staff shows a treble clef with notes G4, A4, B4, and a whole note chord G4-B4-D5. Fingerings 4, 3, and 2 are indicated above the notes. The bottom staff shows a bass clef with notes G3, A3, B3, and a whole note chord G3-B3-D4.

V^b i V

General Bach Chorale Techniques

Vocal Range

- Make sure you keep the four parts within their ranges and remember that the Bach Chorale is meant to be sung not played on the Piano.
- It is easier to play the top three parts (SAT) with the right hand and the bass parts with the left hand - so keep the tenor part high.

Musical notation showing the vocal ranges for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano part is on a single line (C5). The Alto part is on a single line (G4). The Tenor part is on a single line (C4). The Bass part is on a single line (G3). The notes are: Soprano (C5), Alto (G4), Tenor (C4), Bass (G3).

Soprano Alto Tenor Bass

Part Writing

- The soprano and alto parts should not be more than an octave apart.
- The alto and tenor parts should not be more than an octave apart.
- Generally keep the alto and tenor parts quite static - repeat notes or move by steps, if you do jump it should be very small jumps.
- The only large gap should be between the tenor and bass.

- The bass parts can leap more usually by 4ths or 5ths.
- Do not overlap parts i.e.
- Voices should not cross keep them in the order SATB.

The diagram shows four staves representing Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts over three beats. Blue arrows point from text boxes to specific notes:

- Left box:** "Tenor part on beat 2 is lower than part above it - Bass on beat 1". An arrow points to the Tenor note on beat 2 (G4) which is lower than the Bass note on beat 1 (G3).
- Right box:** "Alto part on beat 3 is higher than the part above it - Soprano on beat 2". An arrow points to the Alto note on beat 3 (G4) which is higher than the Soprano note on beat 2 (F4).

- **The 7th of a chord MUST ALWAYS FALL.**
- **The leading note MUST ALWAYS RISE** to the tonic (except in a few cases of cadences)
- **Nb - the leading note is the 7th note in your key i.e. in the key of C the 7th note is B - this is the leading note. The 7th of a chord is the 7th note in your chord so (in the key of C) the 7th note of a G chord is an F and should rise.**
- Avoid leaps in any parts that are of an augmented interval - remember the chorales are meant to be sung!

Parallel 5ths/8ves

- Between 2 parts i.e. alto and tenor avoid having 5ths/8ves from one beat to another e.g:

The diagram shows four beats of music on two staves (Soprano and Bass). Blue arrows point from text boxes to specific intervals between parts.

Beat 1
 Tenor = C
 Bass = F
 A 5th

Beat 2
 Tenor = B
 Bass = E
 A 5th
 = Parallel 5th between alto and bass beats 1-2

Beat 3
 Alto = G
 Bass = G
 An octave

Beat 4
 Alto = F
 Bass = F
 An octave
 = Parallel 8ve between alto and bass parts beat 3-4

- To double check look at the following parts in order between every two beats looking at 5ths and 8ves:
 1. S+A
 2. S+T
 3. S+B
 4. A+T
 5. A+B
 6. T+B

Exposed 5th and 8ves

- This is when the soprano line leaps and the bass moves in the same direction (whether by step or leap) and the parts arrive on a perfect 5th or 8ve.

The diagram shows two staves (Soprano and Bass) with blue arrows pointing to intervals between parts.

An Octave between Soprano and Bass parts

A jump in the Soprano part. The Bass part is also moving in the same direction - both parts are ascending

Chords

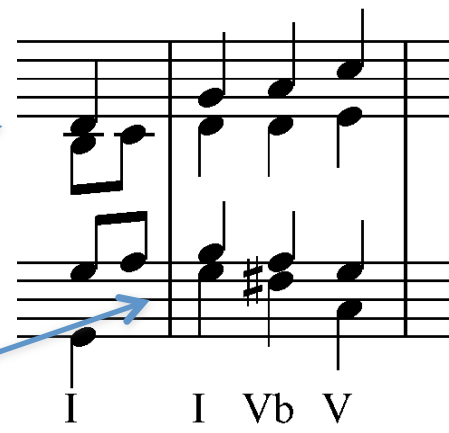
- The majority of your chords should be chords I/ IV and V.
- Aim for 50% root position chords and 50% first inversion chords.
- Bach could harmonise a chorale perfectly using only chords I/IV and V in the root and first inversion - he makes it interesting through his part writing.
- Do not use 2nd inversion chords unless it is in the cadential progression Ic-V-I or passing 6/4 which has specific rules which we discuss later.
- Diminished chords and Augmented 6ths can be used (although rarely) but there are specific rules for these which are discussed later.

Anacrusis

- An anacrusis is where a phrase starts on the last beat of a bar.
- It is common to move from the following chords in this instance:
- This is the only instance where you can repeat the same chord in the same position i.e. I-I.
- Usually this involves a leap of an octave in the bass with the other parts being altered.

Beat 4	Beat 1
I	I (but with altered part writing)
I	VI
I	IV

The phrase starts on the up-beat or anacrusis.



The chord moves I-I but the bass line jumps up an octave

Doubling

- You have 4 parts SATB but only three notes in a chord - the tonic, third and fifth. One of these will be doubled.
- There are specific rules for doubling notes in Bach Chorales.
- The most important rule is this: **always include the tonic and 3rd** i.e. in a C Major chord always include the C and E, this is because the C is the tonic and therefore the most important note and the E indicates we are in the Major key (the 3rd would be an

E_b in the Minor key) so if we omit the 3rd we don't know if we are in the Major or Minor key.

- **As a general rule always aim to double the tonic, have one 3rd and one 5th.**
- Exceptions - you can double the 5th instead of the tonic as a second choice.
- Do not double the 3rd in a major chord.
- Never double the leading note in a key (i.e. in C Major the leading is B (7th of the scale) never double this note)
- **ALWAYS double the 5th in Ic** (i.e. the bass note of the chord so in chord C double the G)
- There are certain chords that in a Minor key should always double the third.

Secondary Chords:

Chord II

- Use mostly in the first inversion
- In a **Major** key chord II is minor and you can therefore double the 3rd
- In a **Minor** key chord II is diminished and the 3rd **MUST** be doubled.

Chord III

- Only use chord III/IIIb in a Major Key - **NEVER in a Minor key.**
- Chord II is often used in association with the melodic movement 8-7-6-5 using progressions:

VI - III - IV - I or I - III - IV - V

Chord VI

- Always write in the root position.
- In **Minor keys always double the 3rd** - this will be the tonic of the key.
- Use VI - V and V - VI
- I - VI is strong and often harmonises a repeated tonic note weak to strong i.e. beat 2-3 or 4-1 at the beginning of a chorale.
- I - VI - IV - I and VI - II are good progressions.
- In **Major keys only** - V - III/IIIb - VI is a good progression.

Chord VII

- **Chord VII is only used in the 1st inversion. You MUST ALWAYS double the 3rd** (because you never double the leading note in a key i.e. in C Major the root of Chord VII is B which is the leading note so you don't double the tonic)

Bachian Stylistic Writing

- Always aim for contrary motion with the Soprano line.
- Try to always have quaver movement in at least one part.
- Bach often has harmonies of 3rds and 6ths between parts.
- Runny bass line - the bass line moves a lot (in step) often ascending or descending towards the cadence.
- The easiest way to spot where to put quavers is if you have 2 crotchets a third apart - why not join them up with passing note i.e. passing between the two main notes.
- Different types of melodic decorations are as follows:

Passing Notes:

- This is the most common and basically is what it sounds like a note that passes between two harmony notes - usually used to fill gaps of a third. Can also include semiquaver movement to fill a gap of a fourth.

Quaver - 2 semi-quavers is a very Bachian movement and is used as passing notes. Note this example has constant movement - this is what you should strive for.

Both notes are not part of the chord but move between the 2 harmony notes. Also desirable is the contrary motion.

Auxiliary Notes:

- This is when you move a step above or below two harmony notes of the same pitch.

Auxiliary notes

In this example the A is used as a lower auxiliary note between the two Bb harmony notes

Anticipation:

- This occurs on a weak beat. It anticipates the next harmony note by introducing it before the chord and is often used before chord I in a perfect cadence.

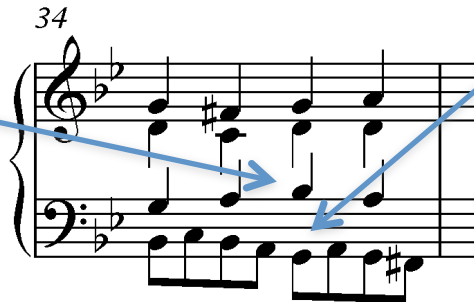
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The quaver G anticipates the G in this Ic - V - I cadence.

Accented Passing Notes:

- This is when you have a passing note on the beat and does create harmonic conflict or dissonance with the chord so should be used carefully.

Accented passing note - the Bb is not part of the F# first inversion chord.



Accented passing notes- the G in the bass does not belong to the first inversion D chord. Use of accented passing notes

Modulations

- To spot a modulation firstly look out for any accidentals not in your original key.
- Look at the chart you completed at the beginning of your chorale with the 6 possible keys for your chorale - do the accidentals match up with any of these keys.
- Look at the cadence points and think about the standard progression i.e. 2-2-1 does this fit with any of the new keys.
- Finally think leading notes - these ALWAYS have to rise to the tonic. You have modulated if the leading note (i.e. B in the key of C) suddenly stops rising to C in the melodic part.
- The easiest way to modulate from one key to another is to do it at the start of a new phrase this is called an **ABRUPT MODULATION**.
- This is often made by a note rising by a semitone in the bass.
- To modulate within a phrase you need to use a **PIVOT CHORD** - this is a chord that belongs to both the keys you are currently in and the key you are modulating too.
- For example if you were modulating from C Major to the dominant G Major chord vi in C = A (ACE) which is the same as chord ii in G = A (ACE). It uses exactly the same notes.
- Suggested pivot chords to modulate to/from:

Major Keys

Minor Keys

To the dominant	Vi-ii	To the dominant major	i=iv
To the sub-dominant	Ii-vi	To the sub-dominant major	Iv=i
To the relative minor	Ii=iv	To the relative major	Iv=ii

The Pivot Chord all 4 notes in this chord exist in both G and D Major

G: vi⁷ V I
 D: ii⁷

Moving from G Major to the dominant (V) D Major therefore using suggested pivot chords

Suspensions

- These occur when a chord changes and one part hangs onto the note from the old chord creating a clash with the bass of the new chord.
- There are three parts to a suspension:
 1. Preparation: the note that will cause the suspension is heard as a part of a normal chord, usually on a rhythmically weaker beat.
 2. Suspension: the prepared note is held over (or repeated) as the other parts move to a different chord on a stronger beat, creating a dissonance between the bass and suspended note.
 3. Resolution: the suspended note falls by a step to a note of the new chord in order to resolve the dissonance.
- There are three types of suspensions: 9 - 8, 7 - 6 and 4 - 3. This refers to the number up from the bass note.
- **How to spot opportunities for suspensions** - where there is descending stepwise movement in the Alto or Tenor part.
- 7ths can often cause suspensions and should therefore be prepared and resolved correctly.
- Suspensions are often used by Bach at cadence points and sometimes one directly after the other.
- Don't try to put suspensions in as you go until you are very practiced at Chorales instead finish your Chorale and then go back and look for possible places you can put them in.

Preparation: the F is played in the same part (alto) as the suspension occurs a beat before.

Suspension: the note a 4th above the bass line is repeated in the same part (alto) to cause a dissonance.

Resolution: the suspended note: F resolves downwards in the same part (alto) by step to a 3rd above the bass line.

Extra Mile: complex progressions and chords

Passing viib

- Use infrequently and only in the following instances:
- Between chords I and Ib or Ib and I i.e.:
I - viib - Ib
or
Ib - viib - I
- The soprano part must move by step in the same direction whilst the bass also moves by step in the opposite direction to the soprano line i.e. contrary motion.
- Used for melodic number 1-2-3 or 3-2-1 or 3-4-5 or 5-4-3

In both the soprano line is moving by step. The bass line is also moving by step but in the opposite direction

5 4 3

I viib Ib
1 2 3

1 2 3

Ib viib I
3 2 1

Passing ⁶₄

- Basically a second inversion chord that is used as a passing note between the root and first inversion of a chord.
- Has similar rules as a passing viib - the soprano line must move by step in one direction whilst the bass moves in the opposite way by step creating contrary motion.

Soprano and bass parts both moving by step in opposite directions = contrary motion. Passing 6/4 between Ib and I. Could also occur in the reverse order

1 2 3

Ib Vc I

Soprano and bass moving by step in opposite direction. Passing 6/4 between IV and IVb. Could also occur in the reverse order

6 5 4

IV Ic IVb

•Used in the following situations ONLY:

- Ib - Vc - I
- I - Vc - Ib
- IVb - Ic - IV
- IV - Ic - IV b

Diminished 7th Chords

- Diminished 7th chords are chord where every interval is a minor 3rd apart.
- These are used rarely in Bach Chorales and you need to ensure you follow the rules correctly.
- After you use a diminished chord you need the outer parts (soprano and bass) to move inwards.

Dim 7 chord - B
D F G sharp.
Outer parts
move inwards.

Dim 7 Ib II

Circle of 5ths

- A chord progression that moves by a 5th each time. I.e. A-D-G-C - each time moving down a 5th.
- Could be used at a cadence point with the chords VI - IIb7 - V - I