

A lot to think about!!

At the end of the day there is an awful lot to think about and some of you will find that you struggle to write in this style. Everyone will have their strengths and weaknesses of genre writing and its about us spending the next 2 years finding your strengths.

These are just helpful steps at STARTING a ground bass style composition, some of these steps can be used for other pieces, but the main point to take away is to experiment. Think of the genre you are composing for and if it sounds like it. Research and listen to as many styles and pieces as you can. If you are writing a serialism piece how are you supposed to do well if you don't even know what is it or what it sounds like?! Ask questions; explore; look at the mark scheme; be okay with making mistakes; be your greatest negative and positive critic; but most of all enjoy composing. It is a very open task with many paths to explore, but jump in, take a look around and have fun.

Miss Sullivan's Guide to a ground bass piece



Criteria	What does it assess?	What you need to do? (/10)
A	Developing Musical Ideas	Think about your musical ideas and melodies. Are they established well? Do they develop efficiently? Do they make sense? Think about the characteristics that make a genre what it is. Do you know what they all are? Have you used them all? Have you used them correctly and convincingly? Does your piece sound like what it is supposed to? Does it fit the brief or the genre you are supposed to be writing for?
B	Demonstrating technical control	What instruments are you writing for? Have you used their full range? Do they have any special techniques? (pedal, pizz, mute) Have you thought about your texture? Does it work well with your instruments? Is it varied? Is it varied in the right places? Have a think about musical devices in relation to your chosen genre. Do you use them? Do you use them correctly?
C	Composing with musical coherence	Is your piece fluent? Does it have a sense of direction? Does it work as a whole piece overall? Is it at least 1:30 seconds? Is it too long? Does it wander?

Adding in harmonic parts

Once you have your initial bass line, chord progression and melody you need to now add in harmonic parts. This is the parts working together with the piece.

Think about the chord you are in in each bar. An easy harmonic part could be using notes from the chord. This is a good place to start.

You then have to start thinking about how it fits with all the other parts. Are you having all the parts playing the same rhythms? Are there any cross rhythms or polyrhythms going on? Are some going to be holding on notes whilst the melody sings over the top. The choice is up to you and it is a lot of trial and error, but remember you have to think of each melodic part as an individual part and as a whole ensemble working together

Look at this piece. How are all the parts working together?

The image shows a musical score for four violas (Vlc. 1-4) in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 7 and the second system starts at measure 12. Each staff shows a different rhythmic and melodic line for the violas, illustrating how they work together to create a harmonic texture.

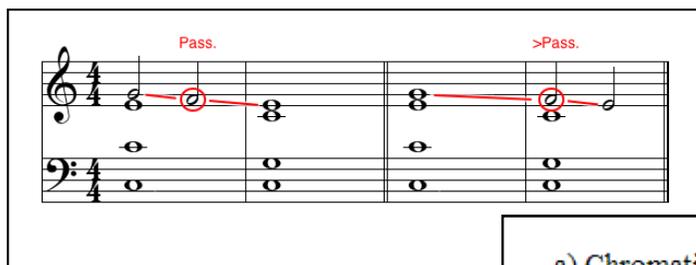
Developing your melody

Of course just using notes of the melody would be boring and as you can see from the previous examples other notes are used.

Also think about the shape of melodies. You need to look at a lot of different pieces to get an idea of how good melodies are shaped, formed and played.

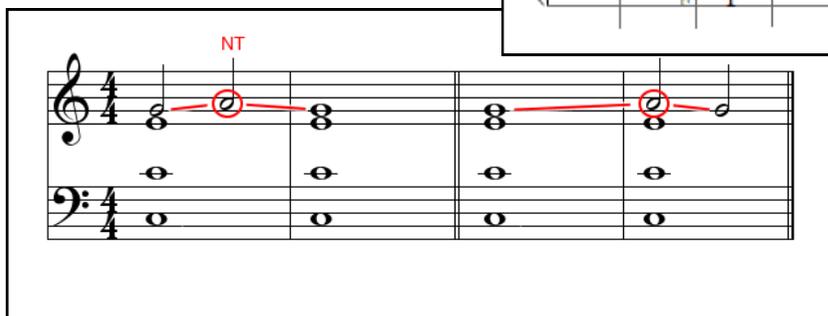
Have a look at these different techniques that can help your develop your melodies. These are just some ideas:

Passing notes: Notes that aren't of the chord but are used to get from one chord note to another.



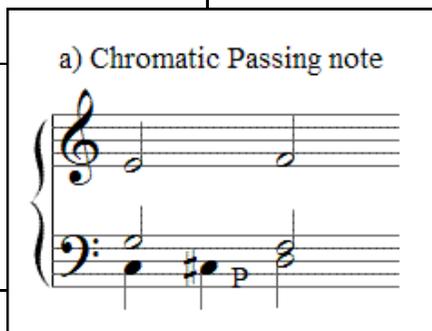
A musical notation example in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting on G4, moving to A4 (circled in red and labeled 'Pass.'), then to B4, and finally to C5. The bass clef staff shows a chord progression of G major, A major, B major, and C major. A red line connects the G4 note to the C5 note, with the A4 note in between.

Auxiliary note: Notes used to go from the chord note back to the original chord note.



A musical notation example in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting on G4, moving to A4 (circled in red and labeled 'NT'), then to B4, and finally to C5. The bass clef staff shows a chord progression of G major, A major, B major, and C major. A red line connects the G4 note to the C5 note, with the A4 note in between.

a) Chromatic Passing note



A musical notation example in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, then to B4, and finally to C5. The bass clef staff shows a chord progression of G major, A major, B major, and C major. A red line connects the G4 note to the C5 note, with the A4 note in between.

Welcome to your first of many composition booklets.

These booklets are designed to give you a step by step guide to not only create an amazing composition, but to create a musical composition edexcel style!

You will all have a laminated sheet of the mark scheme, I have made it as simple as possible, you do not need to look at this before you input every note, but you need to be aware of how the moderator will think, so keep it handy in front of you every time you work on your composition.

Secondly do not be afraid to change your ideas! The first notes you input will not be the final ones. They will be changed again, and again, and again... and again!! Remember we are shaping our ideas to fit edexcel as well as making a composition that you like. At the end of the day it has to be something you like and have enjoyed making.

Finally before you jump into composition and Sibelius, think about what your piece is going to be about. Have an overall picture in your head of what you want it to look like, it may change along the way but it is best to have rough ideas rather than jumping in and hoping!

Instrumentation

First off you need to decide what instruments you want to compose for. This can be an easy choice for some but think carefully. There is a whole criteria on instrumentation in the mark scheme and how you use the instruments. You need to make sure you write idiomatically for each individual part as well as a whole ensemble. You also need to make sure that they all work together and that you have a balance of pitch.

You need to weigh up if having more instruments is better or not. If you have more you will have more individual research to complete and may have a more challenging time balancing each part. However, there may be pieces which call for a wide range of instruments so you need to weigh up what is best for you, depending on the genre.

When choosing instruments you need to consider:

Does the instrument have any limitations?

What is the instrument's range?

Does the instruments have and unique techniques?

Does it have a strong or loud octave?

Are there any weak notes or octaves you need to be aware of?

Jot down some ideas on the next page.

Example 2:

Musical notation for Example 2, showing two staves of music in 3/4 time. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation includes various chord symbols (V, IV, V, I, IV, V, II, VI, V, I, V, (VII=V7), V, I) and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). There are also 'X' marks above some notes, likely indicating natural harmonics or specific techniques.

Example 3:

Musical notation for Example 3, showing two staves of music in 4/4 time. The notation includes a 4-bar phrase with a note-by-note transcription below it. The transcription is: m f s d' s f m r d t d e m f s d' r' m' f' m' f' r' m' r'. The transcription is repeated for the second staff: d' t l t d' r' d' t l s m f s d' r' m' r' d'.

Points to take away from this:

Adding a simple melody

Instrumentation Ideas

Next you need to think about your melody. Start basic and only use notes of the chord. Also think of your rhythms, you need to be a bit interesting to start, but not too complicated and complex that you have nowhere to go when developing your rhythms.

Also have a think about your shape of the melody. If you have started low are you going to end up higher half way through the 8 bars and then come down to end on the same note? Or are you going to start high and do the opposite?

Have a look at these melodies. Why are they good examples?

Example 1:

Example 1. Early One Morning English folk song

The image shows a musical score for 'Early One Morning', an English folk song. It is written in 2/4 time and features a simple melody on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of eight measures. The first measure starts on a middle C (G4) and moves up stepwise to a D5. The second measure continues the stepwise ascent to an E5. The third measure descends stepwise to a D5. The fourth measure continues the descent to a C5. The fifth measure moves up to a D5. The sixth measure continues the stepwise ascent to an E5. The seventh measure descends to a D5. The eighth measure ends on a C5. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. There are two staves shown, with the second staff starting with a '5' above the first note, indicating a fifth finger fingering.

Composing a Chord Progression

First come up with a chord progression. Block it out in a simple triad first in root position, you don't want to make things too complicated yet!

Think about your primary chords (I, IV, V) these will be used the most. Other chords can be used too!!

Also think of your cadences, if we are doing an 8 bar melody do you want to finish on a perfect/plagal cadence? If you plan to repeat this chord progression will it make sense for it to finish?

Remember to listen to your work , if the chords don't sound right change them now!

Chord progression choice 1:

Chord progression choice 2:

A ground bass and Chord Progression

Once you think you have a nice chord progression think about a bass line, This will repeat throughout your piece so make sure you like it and you think it works.

Looking at your chord progression start with putting in the tonic from each chord as a semibreve in your bass part.

Then have a listen, does it work? Look at the shape of the bass line, remember we are looking at the 'flow' of this music, this includes every melodic line in the piece.

Have a little think about the rhythms too, do semibreves work? What about minims? I wouldn't go any smaller than this as ground bass patterns usually have long note values

Bass line choice 1:

Bass line choice 2:
