

Voice Leading

Music

Four rules that make chord changes sound smooth rather than blocky.

Treat each note of a chord as a separate singer with its own line.

1

Keep common tones

If two chords share a note, hold it in the same voice.

2

Move by step where you can

The nearest note in the next chord, not the same-numbered one.

3

Resolve the leading note up

The 7th degree pulls to the tonic. Let it.

4

Avoid parallel fifths and octaves

Two voices moving in the same interval stop sounding independent.

C → G7 → C

Hold G throughout — it is in all three

B rises to C; F falls to E

The bass moves C → G → C

Contrary motion between the outer voices is the single most reliable way to make harmony sound intentional.