

## PRACTICAL GUIDELINES for final-project scores and parts

### 1. Use large fonts.

If words appear only occasionally (i.e., if the notation is primarily graphical and/or symbolic), then a 10-pt. font may be used. If many words appear, then use *at least* a 12-pt. font, and preferably 14-pt. or 16-pt. Keep in mind that musical instruments take up space; even comparatively small ones may involve arm motions that require the score or part to be placed at least two feet from the performer’s eyes, and often as far as three feet away.

NB the staves of conventional notation are typically between 1/4” and 1/3” in height; thus conventional staff notation constitutes, in effect, a 20-pt. font!

### 2. Use wide margins.

Information can be absorbed more quickly when it’s clearly set off by empty space. This is true not only of the margins at the edges of a page, but also of the margins within the cells of a table, and even among elements within the same cell:

(crowded version: other performers’ instructions are in immediately proximity)

Performer 1: Do a little of this ( <b><i>pp</i></b> ), then a little of that ( <b><i>p</i></b> ), then this again ( <b><i>pp</i></b> ).
Performer 2: Do some of this ( <b><i>ppp</i></b> ), then some more ( <b><i>pp</i></b> ), then even more ( <b><i>p</i></b> ).
Performer 3: Do more of this than you ever previously imagined possible ( <b><i>f</i></b> → <b><i>fff</i></b> ).

(more generously spaced version: blank space reinforces separation of lines)

	0:00	0:13	0:21	0:26
Performer 1	Do a little of this, <b><i>pp</i></b> □	then a little of that, <b><i>p</i></b> □	then this again. <b><i>pp</i></b> □	
Performer 2	Do some of this, <b><i>ppp</i></b> □	then some more, <b><i>pp</i></b> □	then even more. <b><i>p</i></b> □	
Performer 3	Do more of this than you ever previously imagined possible. <b><i>f</i></b> , gradually getting louder..... <b><i>fff</i></b>			
	0:00	0:13	0:21	0:26

(added touch: shading to distinguish performer labels from instructions)

### 3. Page turns matter.

Proper application of both principles above inevitably requires more paper to present your instructions. Your score will likely run to three or more pages; this raises the practical issue of where the page breaks occur. *Don't expect your performers to continue playing AND simultaneously turn a page:* with the exception of singers (and sometimes pianists, if the passage doesn't require both hands), both of the performer's hands are required to play the instrument.

If your piece incorporates moments in which all the performers are silent, then these moments present golden opportunities for page breaks—and, conveniently, everyone can read from the same version of the score.

If the performers' breaks in playing do *not* coincide, then you may need to cut-and-tape three different versions of the score, depending on where each player's opportunities occur.

Although it may look strange to your eye, it is far, *far* better to create a page that has comparatively little on it, with ample opportunity to turn the page, than to fill the page and leave only brief, awkward chances to turn the page. In fact, professional copyists will sometimes leave an entire page intentionally *blank* in order to improve the page turns.

### 4. What if I create parts?

One way to minimize the problem of page breaks is to create individual parts for the performers. That is, the *score* contains the instructions for *all* the performers; each *part* contains only that individual performer's instructions.

If you choose to create parts, you must provide each performer with clear signposts of where they are in the course of the piece. At the very least, supply rehearsal marks at major points of formal articulation; this way, if someone does get lost, everyone can start together again (e.g. "at 'letter C,' which we know from rehearsal to be the spot where total chaos breaks out").

Better yet, whenever one of the other players performs a clear sonic signpost (e.g., a trumpet blast that signals the outbreak of total chaos), it's helpful to supply a "cue" in smaller notes and/or type (so that, e.g., the percussionist can distinguish readily between large-type instructions directed at him, and small-type cues that keep him oriented in time).

In short, be sure that each player's part supplies *not only* instructions for everything that you want him or her to do, *but also* information that insures that he or she will perform those actions at the proper time. When in doubt, err on the side of providing slightly more information than you believe to be strictly necessary. (Why? Well, everything that you're writing makes clear sense to *you*, because you're familiar with the whole piece. But to the performer seeing only his/her own instructions, the relationship of that part to the whole is probably *not* obvious.)