

MU 209 Assignment 6: Diatonic harmony

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Harmonize the melody above in 4-note chords in simple keyboard texture (3 notes in RH, bass line in LH). Observe the following simple rubric:

1. Use only **diatonic tones** in D major
2. Use only **triads and seventh chords** (mostly triads)
3. The melody note must always be a chord tone (usually the **root, third, or fifth**)
4. Stay all or mostly in **close position** (i.e. the three upper notes do not “skip” any chord tones and lie within an octave span)

Note that this makes for an easy and ergonomic way to explore all the chord options.

There are only three possible “chord shapes” for close position triads: a stack of two thirds (the $\frac{5}{3}$ shape), a fourth atop of a third ($\frac{6}{3}$ shape), or a third atop a fourth ($\frac{6}{4}$ shape).

These three chord shapes do not account for seventh chords, but it is not hard to expand this thinking to include them, and again, most of your chords will be triads.

We refer to these as “chord **shapes**” rather than **inversions** so as not to confuse them with the actual inversion, which will be determined by the choice of bass note below.

5. After harmonizing in this way with 3-note RH chords, add the bass. Your choice of bass note is guided by two distinct motivations:
 - a. The sound itself (what inversion or doubling sounds right to you)
 - b. The resulting bass line (trying to make a satisfying, directed melody shape)

Note that since your chord is already complete in the RH (for triads anyway) the choice of bass note is not constrained by needing to fill out the chord.

Complete two different harmonizations. Both should follow all the guidelines above.

In the first one, in addition to the above considerations, try to make your harmonization sound **conventionally correct** according to what you understand to be classical music practice.

In the second one, while still following all the above, put in at least some **non-standard progression**. It needn’t sound “as incorrect as possible” but should have things that are at least surprising, maybe conventionally wrong-sounding.

Try to articulate in writing what is “wrong” about these moments, according to your understanding of conventional tonal harmony.

Bonus observation. If you follow all the above guidelines, you will find that you end up writing few parallel fifths or octaves, even if you were not trying to avoid them. This is even more likely true if the bass moves in contrary or oblique motion to the right hand (note that in following the conditions above, all the motion within the 3 RH voices is either similar or oblique).

However, if your progression and your choice of bass motion **do** result in parallel p5 or p8, you will find that these can be corrected by abandoning close position, going to an open-voice chord with some doubling among the 3 upper voices. (This is in fact the usual situation in which Bach departs from close position in his 4-part chorale harmonizations.) You may do this if you find you have written “bad” parallels. In that case return to close position as soon as you can do so.