

Basic Rules for Second Species Counterpoint

The Fundamental Rule

Never move to a perfect consonance by parallel motion.

Rules for Second Species

- 1) Dissonances are allowed, but only on the second half of the measure and only if they are passing tones: approached and left by step.
 - a. Do not leap to a dissonance.
 - b. Do not dissonant neighbor tones: that is, do not return to the same consonant tone you left.
- 2) The first and last pitches of your counterpoint must be a perfect consonance.
 - a. You may begin with a half note rest.
 - b. If your Cantus Firmus is on top – you must begin with a Unison or Octave
- 3) Approach cadences [ends of phrases] in the same way as in First Species.
 - a. If CF is on bottom: 6 → 8
 - b. If CF is on top: 3 → 1
- 4) Avoid Parallel Fifths or Octaves on the first beat of consecutive measures.
 - a. Exception: Parallel P5 are allowed if the leap between them is greater than a third.
- 5) Unisons:
 - a. Don't leap to or from a unison.
 - b. Try to not have unisons on downbeats.
- 6) Avoid Oblique motion in your counterpoint. Repeated notes are not allowed.