

C. WRITING FOR VOICES

Voices are usually (although not always) grouped in four sections:

- Sopranos (high female voices)
- Altos (low female voices)
- Tenors (high male voices)
- Basses (low male voices)

Here is a typical layout of parts for a choir of mixed voices:

This layout is called "open score". Notice that, to avoid ledger lines, the tenor part is written an octave above the notes that are sung. This is shown by the "8" under the clef.

Musical score for four voices in open score format. The parts are Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses. The Tenor part is written on a treble clef with an "8" below it, indicating it is an octave higher than written. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Here is the same music laid out in "closed score". Here all the parts are written at sounding pitch. Accidentals have to be written in all the parts that they relate to. Singers are reading only their own parts - so in bar 4, the tenors don't know that the basses have an F#, so they have to have an F# one too. (In keyboard music there would be no need for the second F sharp.) Notice the direction of the stems.

Musical score for four voices in closed score format. The parts are Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Here is a passage in open and closed score. Fill in the missing parts. Flip stems (up or down) when necessary.

Musical score for four voices in open and closed score format. The top part shows the open score with missing parts. The bottom part shows the closed score with missing parts. The music is in common time (C).