Voice Leading Rules:

- Move the voices a little as possible when changing chords
  **Rule:** Resolve 7→1 in a V chord in the outer voices.
  **Guideline:** Keep the notes the same if you can (except in soprano). Move mostly by step.
  **Guideline:** Avoid melodic leaps with dissonant intervals.

- Make each line unique
  **Rule:** no parallel fifths/octaves (or unisons)
  **Rule:** no hidden fifths/octaves between the outer voices
  **Rule:** Don’t double tendency tones!
  **Rule:** Keep upper voices within an octave of one another (i.e. soprano is within an octave of the alto, alto is within an octave of the tenor)
  **Guideline:** No voice crossings (where one voice goes above another) or overlaps (see below)

- Doubling/complete chords
  **Guideline:** Write complete chords whenever possible.
  **Rule:** you may only leave out the fifth
  **Guideline:** Double the root of the chord (except for diminished…)
  Double the fifth if it makes the voice leading smoother. Be careful with the third.

- Misc:
  **Rule:** Write outer voices first – make sure they sound good together!
  **Guideline:** Contrary motion between upper voices and bass whenever possible
  **Guideline:** Start with a closed position chord and work out from there.
  **Guideline:** If a pair of upper voices leap together by more than a third, rethink it…

Terrible Example:

*Voice overlap - where a voice jumps higher (or lower) than a neighboring voice's preceding note.*

*In the first measure, the alto leaps above the soprano's previous A. This confuses our ears and sounds bad.*