

Score layout & part preparation

A score is read by one person sitting still; a part is read by someone playing at speed, in bad light, with both hands busy. They are different documents and they are laid out differently. Get the conventions right and players stop asking questions — which is the whole point.

SCORE ORDER, TOP TO BOTTOM

#	FAMILY — HIGH TO LOW WITHIN EACH
1	Woodwind — flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons
2	Brass — horns, trumpets, trombones, tuba
3	Timpani
4	Percussion — pitched above unpitched
5	Harp, keyboard
6	Voices — solo above chorus
7	Strings — violin I, II, viola, cello, bass

Horns sit above trumpets by convention, not by pitch.
A concerto soloist goes directly above the strings.

FRONT MATTER, IN ORDER

PAGE	CARRIES
Title page	Title, subtitle, forces in one line, composer, year
Instrumentation	Full list in score order, doublings named, percussion itemised per player
Duration & note	Approximate timing; a short programme note if the piece needs one
Performance notes	Any non-standard notation, explained before it appears
First music page	Title repeated small, tempo, full instrument names at the left

Abbreviate instrument names on every system after the first. State whether the score sounds at written pitch or transposed.

PAGE SETUP — THE TWO DOCUMENTS DIFFER

SETTING	SCORE	PART	WHY
Staff size	4–5 mm — fits the system on the page	6–7 mm — read from a metre away	A part printed at score size is unplayable.
Paper	A4 or A3, portrait	A4 portrait; landscape only for keyboard	Parts must sit on a stand and turn flat.
Bar numbers	Every bar, or every system	Every system, left of the staff	Rehearsal time is spent finding bars.
Rehearsal marks	Boxed letters at structural joins	Identical marks, same places	They only work if score and parts agree.
Multi-bar rests	Never — write every bar	Yes, with the count above	The player needs to know how long to wait.
Cues	Not needed	Small notes before long entries, instrument named	A cue is how a player comes back in after 40 bars.

PAGE TURNS

- 1 Plan turns before you engrave. Put them where the player has rests, not where the page happens to fill.
- 2 Mark *V.S.* when the turn is tight and unavoidable.
- 3 A wind or brass part turning during a phrase is a mistake; move the system break instead.
- 4 If a turn cannot work, print the passage twice on facing pages, or issue an extra sheet.

DETAILS PLAYERS NOTICE

Courtesy accidentals in brackets after a key change or a tied chromatic note.

Dynamics below the staff, one per staff, aligned vertically across the system.

Slurs and hairpins clear of the noteheads — never crossing a stem or a dynamic.

Divisi and unison marked at both ends; *unis.* is as necessary as *div.*

Breath and bow marks only where you mean them; too many are ignored.

Before you send anything out

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Bar counts match score and parts | ☐ Every long rest has a cue |
| ☐ Rehearsal marks in the same bars | ☐ Turns are playable, tight ones marked |
| ☐ Transpositions checked, key signatures right | ☐ Name, title and part name on every page |

Percussion parts, specifically

One part per player, not one per instrument, and say at the top which instruments that player needs. Mark the instrument at every change, allow bars for moving between them, and put stick changes above the staff where they happen.