

# Formatting in Finale

by David Ezell

This is a suggested procedure for making the formatting of a Finale document look as good as possible. Finale allows precise control of the appearance of a document. Several tools are used to gain this control, so the information needed for formatting is spread throughout the Finale documentation. Here we have gathered the steps into a logical order for doing this process as efficiently as possible. This is a long list. With practice you can go through it more and more quickly. These ideas have been used with Finale 2008 and 2010.

## I. Enter Music Elements

- A. Input everything: notes, lyrics, chords, articulations, repeats and expressions, as well as title, composer and copyright information.  
Choose fonts that are easy to read. Lyrics are usually done in Times, but it's not against the law to use a larger or more interesting font like Comic Sans MS.  
Check lyric hyphenation with a dictionary.
- B. Create notation that is easy to read as possible.  
Make the third beat of a 4/4 measure a real note, not buried in the middle of a quarter note or dotted note.  
Make it easy for experienced music readers to mentally scan the chords. The 3rd of an Ab minor chord may be easier to comprehend as C- flat, not B-natural.
- C. Go to the View menu and make sure you're in Page View
- D. Put a small title header at the top of each page.  
Select the Text tool and double click a spot on any page except page 1. Type the title. From the Text menu select Frame Attributes. Attach to Page Range from 2 to 40 (or some other high number). You never know how many pages you may add to the document later. Be aware that many printers cannot print to the very edge of the page, so leave a little margin above the header.
- E. Add page numbers  
Select the Text tool and double click a spot on any page except page 1. From the Text menu, choose Inserts—Page Number.  
Attach to Page Range from 2 to 40 (or some other high number).  
Check "Use Right Page Positioning." On the Horizontal pop-up menu choose Right. (This will make your page numbers always appear on the outside edge when you do two-sided copying.)
- F. Create any staff groups, with brackets and braces, that you will want to have. (It is important to do this before you optimize in Step III-A. Otherwise you will have to remove optimization, add brackets and/or braces, and optimize again.)

## II. Format Horizontally

### A. Assign the measures to systems.

If you want a measure to go up or down to another system, highlight it and use the up or down arrow on the computer keyboard. (Highlighting can only be done with certain tools active. The selection tool is easy to remember for this.)

If a voice or instrument is resting for several measures or more, you can make sure the rests appear on a discreet number of lines. (For example, after the intro, have the voice(s) enter at the beginning of a line.)

Don't let the music be too crowded. At this point the horizontal space is the only important thing. Vertical space will be adjusted below.

### B. Check Horizontal Spacing of Lyrics.

If a line has almost enough space for the lyrics, you can cheat a little bit. With the lyric tool selected, choose Adjust Lyrics in the lyric menu and click on a note whose lyric is slightly crowded. Move it to the right or left with arrow keys. After the adjustment, check that it is easy to see which syllable goes with which note.

### C. Check Horizontal Spacing of Notes.

You can use the Speedy Entry tool. Click on a measure and drag the notes around. Be careful with this, because it can have unintended results. If you have an older version of Finale, and depending on your hardware setup, it may be a good idea to save right before selecting the Speedy Entry tool, in case the computer freezes.

### D. Check Horizontal Spacing of Chord Symbols.

Select the Chord Tool. Click the handle for the chord symbol, and move it to the right or left with arrow keys.

(To make more space for any of the above elements, you can use the Measure tool. However, dragging barlines around can also have unintended consequences.)

### III. Format Vertically

#### A. Optimize the staves in the Page Layout menu.

This enables you to eliminate empty staves. It also prepares you for changing the vertical space between individual staves later, (Step III-E). Optimize after you have the measures assigned to systems, or you will have to repeat this step.

If you try to optimize a staff, and empty staves don't disappear, make sure the staff is really empty. One thing to check for is "dummy" whole rests, not real whole rests. (They look the same, but behave differently.) Select the staff tool, and choose Edit Staff Attributes from the Staff menu. At the right side of the dialog box, uncheck "Display rests in empty measures." If the whole rests are still there, they are real. Go to the Selection tool and select the offending measures. For Mac type "Clear" on the numeric keypad. For Windows type "Back Space." (In earlier versions of Finale, if you type Delete, the measures and all that is in them will be gone. Thank goodness for the Undo command.)

#### B. Check the vertical space above and below the lyrics.

If lyrics are too close to leger line notes below the staff, select the Lyric tool, specify the correct current lyric in the Lyric menu, and choose either Click Assignment or Type Into Score. Four triangles will appear at the left. The first one adjusts the specified lyric on all staves throughout the document. The second one moves the lyric on the selected staff, throughout the document. The third one moves the lyric only on the system in question. The fourth one is rarely used. (If you want to move the triangles to a different staff, click inside the staff. If Click Assignment is selected, click at a blank spot so as not to inadvertently enter unwanted syllables.)

#### C. Check the location of expression marks, articulations, hairpins, slurs, etc.

#### D. Check vertical space below and above chord symbols.

The Chord tool has a set of triangles similar to the ones associated with the Lyric tool.

If you need more vertical space in general, try globally moving all chords symbols down.

If a chord symbol touches a note, beam, or other mark, move all the chords for that staff up together.

Make sure the chord symbols are clearly above or below bracket lines for first and second endings.. (Publishers are not consistent in choosing above or below.)

#### E. Check the vertical space between the staves.

Select the Staff tool. There should be two selection handles on the clef sign at the beginning of each staff. (If there is only one handle, it is because you haven't optimized staff systems using the Page Layout tool.)

To globally move a certain staff up or down within every system in the document, drag the top handle.

To move a staff on an individual system, use the bottom handle.

#### F. Check the vertical space above and below each system.

To adjust the space above a system, select the Page Layout tool. Click the selection handle to the top left of the system area. Move it up and down with arrow keys, or by dragging.

To adjust the space below a system, use the handle at the bottom right of the system area.

G. Decide how many systems will be on each page.

To get more music on a page, select the Percent tool, and click at the top left corner of the first page. (If you do this, it may have implications for the results of previous steps.

However, it is at this point that you know best how much music you want on each page.)

You may want to print a page or two to see whether the music is readable.

To move a staff from one page to another, select the Page Layout tool. Then you can drag a staff up or down, or you can choose Add Page Break from the Page Layout menu.

You may wish to put fewer systems on the first page than on other pages, so that there can be room for title, composer and copyright information.

If there is a partial page at the end, consider adjusting the number of staves, to fill up each page.

Again, don't let the music look crowded.

H. Check for convenient page turns.

Two-sided copying is a good way to reduce page turns.

Page turns will be easier and the music will stay on the stand better if you copy onto 11 x 17 paper.

For convenient page turns it helps to end odd-numbered pages with rests.

Careful placement of repeats and first endings can make turning easier also.

It may help to make a title page with no music on it. You can do this by selecting the Page Layout tool and adding a blank page before page 1. (You could change page turns by copying the music with odd-numbered pages to the left, but it is traditionally not done this way.)

I. If you wish, leave a little bit of extra space at the top and bottom of each page.

This gives a good appearance, and helps prevent two words or symbols from claiming the same space. Select the Page Layout tool. Drag staves toward the middle of each page so that space is available at the top and bottom. Reserve space above the first staff of each page by moving the top left selection handle up. Reserve space at the bottom by moving the bottom right selection handle down. The page will not look right until the next step.

J. Space systems evenly.

Select the Page Layout tool, and from the Page Layout menu choose Space Systems Evenly. It is best to have everything in order at this point so you can do all pages at once and not have to change the number of systems on each page.

#### **IV. Proofread.**

Play through the music to check for errors and for places where the formatting can make the page more readable or more attractive.

David Ezell is a member of the Music Ministry Team at the Association of Unity Churches, International, Music Director at Christ Unity Church in Columbia SC, and President of Heart Wind Music, which offers New Thought audio recordings and sheet music for download at [heartwindmusic.com](http://heartwindmusic.com).