Notes | 2013

Sibelius Advanced Layout and Formatting

Katie Wardrobe
Midnight Music

Layout and Formatting Tips 3
The Golden Rules 3
First things first 3
Creating a well laid-out score 3
What not to do 3
How to approach layout and formatting 4
3 Steps to Better Layout 4
Step 1 4
Step 2 4
Step 3 5
Other tips 5
First page margins 5
Hide empty staves 6
Exceptions 6
Test-printing 7
Parts 7
Viewing parts 7
Formatting parts 7
Multirests 7
Creating custom parts 8
More information 9

Layout and Formatting Tips

As someone who frequently trains teachers, composers, arrangers and students in the use of Sibelius, I find that one of the most misunderstood topics in Sibelius is layout and formatting of scores.

It's important to know that Sibelius can do most of the hard work for you. Many people spend hours manually adjusting distances between staves and systems or adding in page breaks only to find that everything goes awry if they decide to add extra bars, notes or other musical objects into their score at a later stage. All of the manual formatting work they've done is messed up and they need to start the process all over again!

Computer programs are designed to make life easier, you just need to know the best way to harness Sibelius's inbuilt layout and formatting power.

The Golden Rules

First things first

There are two golden rules of layout:

- Make your score clear to read
- Avoid collisions

Creating a well laid-out score

A score that is well laid-out….

- is clear and easy to read (see the golden rules above). Conductors and performers will be happy and rehearsal time will not be wasted
- has staves that are justified: that is, on every page, the top of the uppermost staff is at the same position (except perhaps the first page) and on every page, the bottom of the lowest staff is at the same position
- has a uniform distance between staves and systems
- displays consistency in design and positioning of objects

There are of course exceptions to these rules, but as a starting point, they are good guidelines to follow.

What not to do

First of all, there are a few things to avoid. As a general rule:

- **Don't** drag staves
- Don't add lots of Page Breaks and System Breaks (it messes with Sibelius's natural formatting tendancies)
- Avoid the use of the **Make into Page** or **Make into System** features …..except in special circumstances

How to approach layout and formatting

I'm sure that every composer, engraver, copyist and publisher has their own unique step-by-step approach to laying out their score. Here's one approach (my own):

- Set up your score
- Switch to **Panorama** view (Sibelius 5 and later) and **don't give layout another thought** until you've entered all notes, lyrics, chord symbols, first and second-time endings, technique markings and so on. When you're working in Panorama view, it doesn't matter whether you drag staves apart to make your score readable whilst your working on it – it will not affect the layout of your printed score. If you're using Sibelius 4 or earlier, resist the urge to drag things around at this stage
- When you've entered everything, go back to page view (press Shift+P) and take a close look at your score
- If everything looks beautiful, clear and easy to read, press print!
- In the more likely event that you have at least *some* collisions (objects are crashing into one another, notes are overlapping etc), follow the **3 Steps To Better Layout** below (inspired by Daniel Spreadbury's Tutorial on Layout and Formatting on the Sibelius blog)

3 Steps to Better Layout

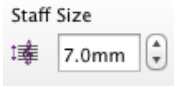
Step 1

Ensure that all staves and systems are reset to their default position. This is especially important if you could not resist the urge to drag staves apart whilst you were inputting notes!

- Select your entire score by pressing **Ctrl+A** or **⌘A**
- Go to **Layout > Format > Unlock format**
- With the score still selected, go to **Layout > Staff Spacing > Reset space above staff** (**Layout > Reset space above staff** in Sibelius 6 and earlier) and then **Layout > Staff Spacing > Reset space below staff** (**Layout > Reset space below staff** in Sibelius 6 and earlier)

Step 2

Change the **staff size** in Document setup (if necessary). Go to **Layout > Document Setup** and adjust the number next to Staff Size:

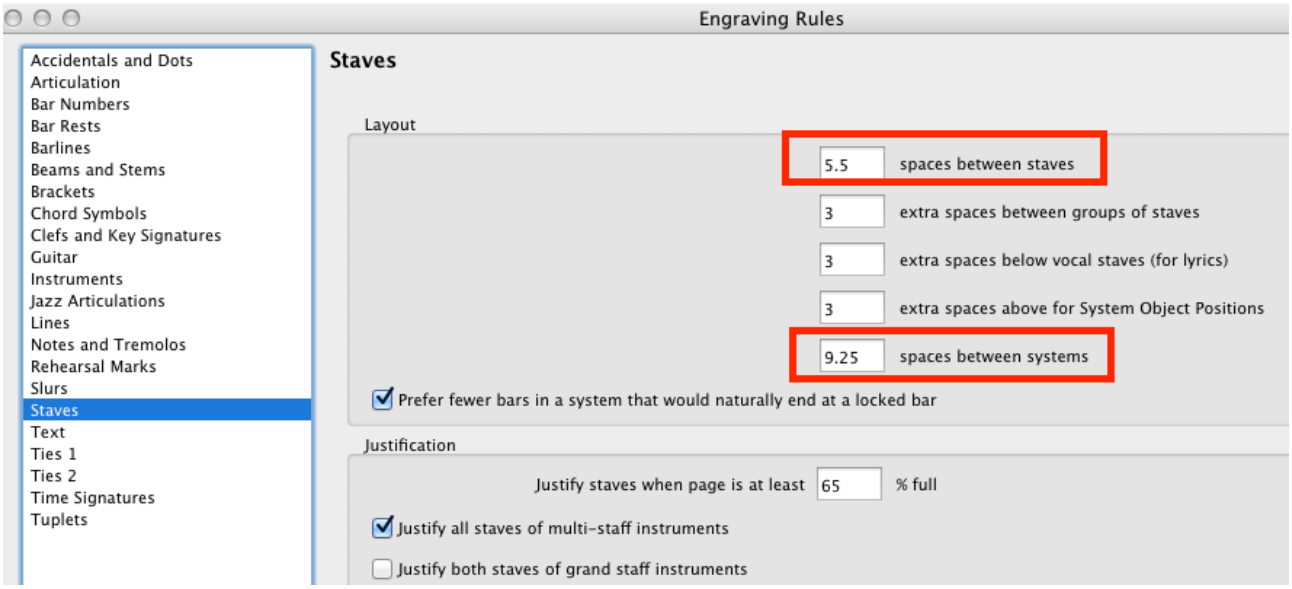


- If you change the overall staff size of your score it can have a dramatic effect on layout
- Change the staff size if you need to create more room between staves and systems in your score
- It's a good way to reduce the total number of pages for your score and can create precious space on individual pages especially in scores with a large number of instruments

Step 3

If you need to, increase the space between staves and space between systems by using the **Staves** window in the **Engraving Rules** dialogue (don't drag the staves with your mouse!)

- Go to **Appearance > House Style > Engraving Rules** (**House Style > Engraving Rules** in Sibelius 6 and earlier)
- Select **Staves** in the list on the left
- Increase the number in the *spaces between staves* and *spaces between systems* boxes. If you're using Sibelius 6 or later, you can also adjust the extra spaces for groups of staves and extra spaces below vocal staves. Experiment with the settings and go back to your score to check the effect of each change. It's best to find space settings that works for the whole score if you can

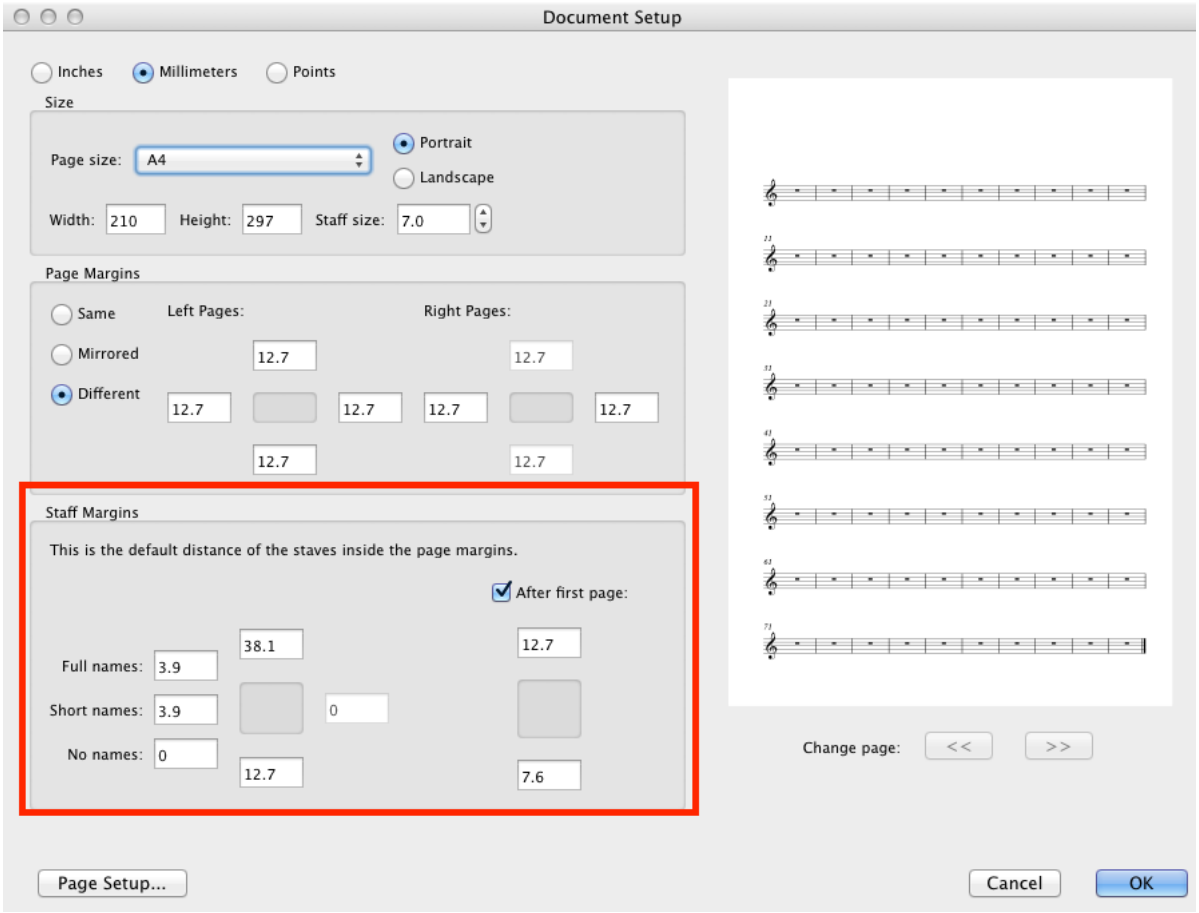


Other tips

First page margins

If you need to, you can create special margins on the first page to accommodate the title, composer and lyricist and copyright information

- Sibelius 5 and later: use the **Staff Margins** options in the **Document setup** dialogue to customise the margins on the first page



- Sibelius 4 and earlier: here's one of the exceptions to the dragging rule. If you need more space for your title, drag the top stave on the first page down gradually until it looks right

Hide empty staves

You can hide any empty staves to save space in your score. This is especially useful in large orchestral and band scores where some instruments don't play for a number of bars.

To hide the empty staves:

- Select a system (or the whole score) and go to **Layout > Hiding Staves > Hide Empty Staves (Layout > Hide Empty Staves in Sibelius 6 and earlier)**

Exceptions

There are always exceptions to rules. It is unlikely that adhering rigidly to the above approach will solve the layout problems of *every* score.

Dragging staves: you may need to drag staves in exceptional circumstances.

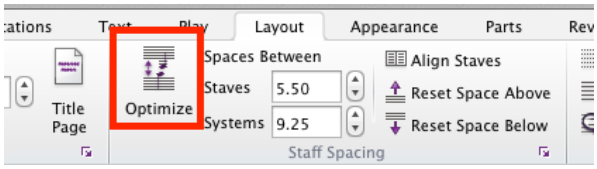
Some common scenarios include:

- Scores which have some very high or very low notes in just a few bars (or systems) for one instrument in your score (ie. in the 1st violin or Alto 2 parts) and they are colliding with the objects in an adjacent stave
- Vocal scores that start with multiple verses of lyrics which is followed by a page with a single-line refrain

In Sibelius 5 and earlier, it's best to set default distances that work for the majority of the score first. Then, drag staves only where necessary.

In Sibelius 6 and later, you can probably resolve these problem areas by using the **Optimize Staff Spacing** feature rather than dragging staves:

- Select the system (or page) and go to **Layout > Staff Spacing > Optimize (Layout > Optimize Staff Spacing** in Sibelius 6)



Test-printing

It's advisable to print out one or two pages of your score to check that the staff size is OK. You want to make sure it's readable enough for the conductor and/or individual performers.

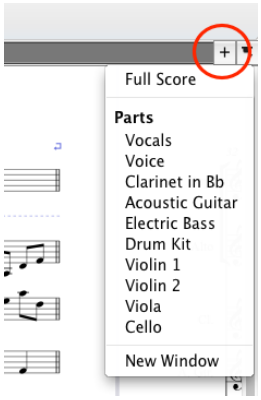
It's very difficult to tell what a printed score will look like until you see it actually printed out. A computer screen can be misleading!

Parts

Viewing parts

As soon as you create a score in Sibelius, the parts automatically exist. To view the parts in your score, do the following:

- Sibelius 7 - click on the small plus sign on the right side of the screen (just below the Ribbon), then click on the part name
- Sibelius 6 and earlier - click on the Parts drop-down menu in the middle of the Toolbar and then click on the part name



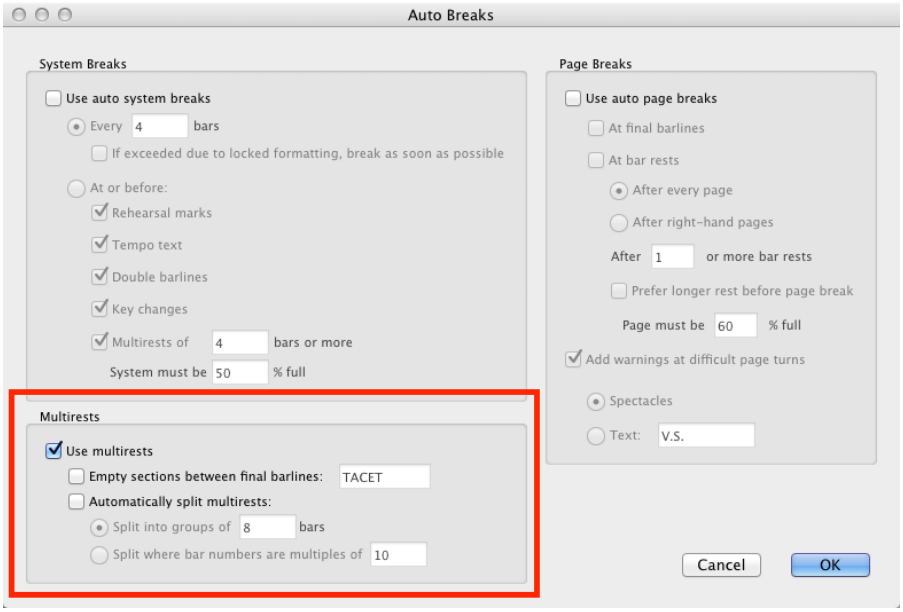
Formatting parts

Fix the layout and formatting of each individual part as before.

Multirests

Multirests appear in a part when there are multiple bars of rest. You can turn multirests on (or off) as follows:

- Go to L**ayout > Breaks > Auto Breaks**
- Check the **Use multirests** box and adjust the other multirest settings if necessary and click **OK**

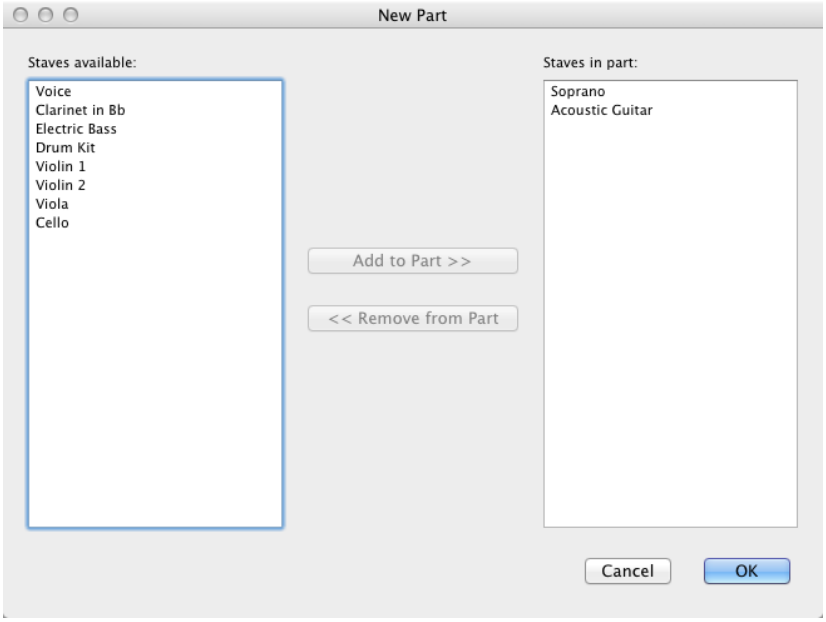


Creating custom parts

You can create custom parts from your score - a part that includes a specific set of instruments together. Custom parts are useful for the following instances:

- When you want to create a piano/vocal score for a soloist from a larger ensemble score (such as a big band arrangement)
- When you want to create a rehearsal score for one section or family of the ensemble: ie. a string score from an orchestral score, a choir score from a large symphonic score, a vocal score from a conductor's musical theatre score and so on

To create a custom part, go to **Parts > New** (**Window > Parts > New Part** in Sibelius 6, 5 and 4)



- Select the stave/s you need on the left side and click **Add to part**. Click **OK** when you're done.
- A new part will be created and will appear in the list of parts.

More information

- Sibelius Reference manual: see particularly **Layout & Formatting and Music Engraving**
- Sibelius blog: www.sibeliusblog.com