

Let's Get Started!

- 1 **Select a Song.** For your first arrangement, select something simple. At this point, your “taste” is most likely more advanced than your skills. Learn to crawl before you run! You are looking for something that is easy to harmonize to, with uncomplicated harmonies and simple melody line. It’s OK if it has already been arranged. (*Resource handout*)
- 2 **Find the Music.** If you can’t locate it, choose a different song. (*Resource handout*)
- 3 **Determine the Key that is appropriate.** Not too high or too low. This may require transposing.

Old Key	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D
New Key	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	F

- 3 **Using the sheet music, write out the lead (melody) line, lyrics and add the chord symbols.** Using Finale or other music software program is a good idea. Don’t crowd your work and leave room for embellishments. If you transposed, be sure to also transpose the chord symbols. Easy Peasy!! The sheet music usually tells the names of the primary chord(s) in each measure. You will need to figure out the rest.
- 4 **Using the Eleven BBS Chord handout, take one melody note at a time,** working with the “anchor/pillar” chords first. Figure out an appropriate voicing according to where the lead falls within each chord indicated by the chord symbol. Keep the root in the bass as much as possible. When the lead or baritone is on the root, put the bass on the 5th. It is OK to skip over whatever you wish. Simply put down what you can, skip the rest for now. Remember to refer to the detailed information on your *Eleven BBS Chord* handout.
- 5 **Proceed with each melody note,** being aware that the horizontal line you are creating for each part should be logical, reasonable and predictable if it’s to be sung effectively.
- 6 **Fill in the missing chords** by creating chords that follow the harmonic pattern indicated in the sheet music (Chord Symbols). If the lead (melody) note is not in the chord that is called for, look for a passing/substitute chord - one that will connect the chords before and after the note in question.
- 7 **Go back and sing the lead line** with interpretation in mind for the purpose of deciding where to put embellishments. The general rule is less/simple at the beginning, building in complexity and emotion towards the end. Decide on the “emotional high point”.
- 8 **Consider where the singers will breathe.** Too much, too busy is not a good idea. Less is best. Simple, straightforward and pure BBS is a good foundation for success.
- 10 **Finish your “masterpiece”** with an Intro and Tag “Bingo” you’re arranging!