THE LOOK of the PAGE

Looks matter and neatness counts for any arrangement. After working hard and spending hours on your arrangement, the first indication of the care you put into the chart to the musicians playing it for the first time will be the professional look of the finished product. If the pages are sloppy, hard to read, if the roadmap is hard to follow, if the directions are unclear, then the musicians will invariably not give it their best reading—even if the music is actually well conceived. The page is your first impression. Arrangers usually have limited time in front of a band. They may share a rehearsal with other student arrangers, and the band may have only so much time to look at new material and will need to get back to their work towards upcoming concerts. All directions should be clear on the page. The conductor and the musicians should not have to waste rehearsal time asking any questions of the arranger—it should all be on the page. You do not want your allotted time in front of the band spent explaining things that should have been on the page like tempo and style markings, articulations, dynamics, where the coda sign should have been, and “where’s my second page?” You want all your time spent listening the band play what has only been in your imagination until that point, with a little time left at the end for everyone to tell you how good your arrangement sounded.

Format your pages as shown and discussed below. If you used pencil, format the page before you copy the notes. If you use computer software, set up a template so it only has to be done once.

TITLE should be large at the top of the first page.
PART NAME top left of every page. If it is not at the top of every page, you can count on pages getting out of order and wasting time trying to figure out which page two goes with which page one.
PAGE NUMBERS should be shown at least at the start of each line and in every measure (and large enough to read) on the score.
TITLE & PAGE NUMBERS should be at the top right from page 2 to the end.
STYLE & TEMPO placed at the beginning of each part and any place else in the chart if there are changes.
REHEARSAL MARKS & PLAYING DIRECTIONS should be easy to read. Put the measures with rehearsal letters at the start of lines, when possible. Make sure the $<$ and $>$ signs are easy to see and on every part.
ARTICULATIONS & DYNAMICS Every quarter note should be clearly marked short or long. Rehearsal time should not be wasted by anyone having to ask if a note is short or long, loud or soft.
SPACING: Try to space the notes in the measure proportionally so that what the musicians hear corresponds to what they see. The same principle should be applied the number of measures in a line, so that when possible, when writing music in four measure phrases, place four measures on one line.