



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Setup and basics			
Score setup	tossup	tossup	Both programs have setup wizards that offer ready-made templates as well as options for customization.
Selecting and working with objects		✓	There are no tools in Sibelius, so you can select a note, an expression and a line and, say, delete them all at once. It is not possible to select more than one object at a time in Finale's Selection Tool; to do that, you must use a particular tool. Once there you can only work with the items specific to that tool. It is also possible to select non-contiguous staves in Sibelius; this is not possible in Finale.
Program defaults		✓	Sibelius gets better results more quickly. Magnetic Layout, while not perfect, makes aligning items and avoiding collisions much easier. Placing articulations in the correct position, especially when using multiple articulations, is much easier in Sibelius. Sibelius has better beaming defaults. Sibelius will automatically vertically justify staves on a page.
Advanced customization	✓		Many things can be customized in Finale in ways that they sometimes cannot in Sibelius. Noteheads, notes, pages, staves, systems, and many other items can be resized individually with limitless options in Finale.
Note entry, key signatures, time signatures, clefs and barlines	tossup	tossup	Both programs are similar when it comes to the basics of entering notes via a computer or MIDI keyboard, or a mouse. Entering time and key signatures, clefs, and barlines is comparable but different in each program.
Transposing scores		✓	Finale 2014 narrowed the gap; prior to this version it was not possible to create a true atonal, or "keyless" key in Finale. Still, Sibelius has a slight edge when it comes to correctly dealing with C instruments that transpose at the octave like xylophone, piccolo and contrabass. These instruments customarily show at transposed pitch even in C scores; only Sibelius handles this correctly. Sibelius also gives correct aural feedback when entering notes into a transposed score via a MIDI keyboard; Finale will play the actual pitch entered on your keyboard instead of the transposed pitch of the instrument.



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Notes and notations			
Cautionary accidentals		✓	Sibelius has various options to automatically display cautionary accidentals. In Finale, this is done via a plug-in that must be run again if the document changes.
Glissando lines	✓		In Finale it is easy to create any type of line and have it automatically snap to two notes, even if the notes are on different staves, something that is not possible in Sibelius.
System lines		✓	Global lines like <i>rit. poco a poco</i> _ _ _ that automatically display in parts are only possible in Sibelius, although both programs can handle global text without a problem.
Tremolos		✓	Tremolos of both the single note and multi-note variety are supported better in Sibelius. Sibelius will automatically adjust the stem length on notes with tremolos, if needed. Tremolos between two notes are also natively supported in Sibelius and can be easily enabled or disabled; in Finale, a plug-in is necessary.
Beams and stems	tossup	tossup	Each program has strengths. Sibelius has better default beam algorithms, easy beaming over barlines, and ways to quickly adjust the most common beam variations. Finale will automatically “float” rests under a beam, and allows you to individually adjust all the properties of a beam or any secondary beam.
Brackets and staff groups	✓		Sibelius is very limiting in how instruments can be grouped in the score. Finale offers nearly unlimited possibilities with support for nested groups; individual control on a system-by-system basis; more brace and bracket styles; fine control on bracket positioning; and a brace designer.
Nonstandard key signatures	✓		Finale allows you to build key signatures like those found in maqam or other folk-derived scales, which are not possible in Sibelius.



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Text			
Text in the music		✓	The new features Sibelius 7 put Sibelius ahead of Finale. Advanced typography options like wrapped text in expressions, angled text, and the ability to create parent and child text styles are Sibelius-only features. Sibelius offers point increments of .5 pt, compared to 1 pt in Finale, and also allows for different settings in the score and the part—all features lacking in Finale. Finale does offer more enclosure options, although not at the text style level. Both programs offer a “house style” or “category” system of text management, where default styles and positioning can be set.
Text on the page	✓		Simply dropping text on the page independent of the music is virtually impossible in Sibelius, unless it’s a blank page. Specifying a finite page rage for a header or footer is equally impossible, but in Finale, it’s very easy to do. (It’s so easy, in fact, that novices often place text blocks where they should be placing expressions, and run into other sorts of trouble.) Both programs do allow extensive use of wildcards to automatically insert score metadata in text areas.
Bar numbers	✓		For most typical cases, the programs perform equally well and have options to add prefixes and suffixes, skip bars, and change from numbers to letters within a document. But Finale’s measure numbering options are far more customizable when it comes to complex situations, as well as allowing varying styles within the same document or even the same section of music.
Page numbers	tossup	tossup	Finale’s concept is much more straightforward, but also more limiting. While both programs allow for different page numbers than the actual page (page offsets), only Sibelius allows for different settings for the score and each part. In Finale, this has to be accomplished via separate text blocks for each part that are then hidden in all the other parts. Both programs can calculate the total number of pages in a score.



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Lyrics and vocal music		✓	For simple scores, both programs are fine. For large scores, a lot of lyrics can slow Finale to a crawl. Unscrambling a Finale file where the composer has indiscriminately applied lyrics in different verses or sections is not for the faint of heart. There is also a rare but serious bug where Finale will re-assign lyric syllables throughout the score. Sibelius can automatically apply elisions in lyrics; Finale can't. Sibelius also can identify vocal staves and automatically position text, hairpins, and tuplets above the staff on these staves.
Chord symbols		✓	Both programs are comparable in the features offered. Sibelius recognizes chords better, can easily provide equivalent chord text and in general is easier to work with.

Layout

Independent page, staff and system sizes	✓		Finale has a clear advantage here. Staff, system and page sizes and settings can all be adjusted on an individual basis in Finale. In Sibelius, it is possible to set sections with different page margins and to have a small staff at a fixed percentage size, but the options are nowhere near as varied as what is offered in Finale.
Page layout	tossup	tossup	Both programs offer sophisticated page layout options, but go about it in different ways.
Multiple movements		✓	Even though Finale can place page text better than Sibelius, there is no way in Finale to automatically center a text block on a page and attach it to a particular system. This is possible in Sibelius and thus makes placing section or movement subtitles much easier. In Sibelius, if an instrument is tacet in a section between two final barlines, the part will automatically have one giant "TACET" multirest for those measures. Both programs can automatically place full instrument names in the score at the start of a section.



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Parts			
Parts	tossup	tossup	<p>Each programs offer advantages over the other: Finale is the only program to feature voiced linked parts; in other words, parts that automatically split a score staff with two musical lines into independent parts. It mostly works, but there are a few glitches, like with grace note spacing. Only Finale can respell a note enharmonically in the part while keeping the original in the score; useful for concert pitch scores. Finale has more sophisticated options for independent settings for time signatures in the score versus the part. Sibelius allows independent text sizes for the score and parts; Finale doesn't. Copying the layout from one part to another is built into Sibelius; in Finale a plug-in must be used.</p>
Multirests	✓		<p>Finale has an edge—with caveats. Multirest settings can be controlled on an individual basis, and you can break multirests in one part of your document and display them elsewhere. The caveats: It's easier for multirests to go awry in Finale if they aren't set to update automatically; Sibelius will automatically make space in a multirest with a clef change (in Finale this must be done manually); Sibelius will automatically size multirests proportionally (in Finale this must be done with a plug-in).</p>
Cues		✓	<p>The Paste as Cue option in Sibelius is superior to the Finale plug-in Add Cue Notes. The Sibelius option can hide the music in the score, show it in the part, reduce the size, add a default rest and mute playback all in one go. In Finale these steps are separate and found in different areas of the program.</p>



Item	Advantage: Finale	Advantage: Sibelius	Comments
Other features			
Playback		✓	Sibelius 7.5 offered enhancements to playback that addressed certain deficiencies that otherwise would have made this category a tossup. Quickly initiating playback is a little easier in Sibelius; you can select a staff or staves to solo them without having to use the Mixer, like in Finale. Sibelius does a better job of interpreting a wide variety of staff and system text, including advanced navigation like endings, repeats, codas, and even a custom playback structure. Both programs support third-party libraries, but the Sibelius sound set ecosystem is better.
Video		✓	Both programs support video sync and offer various frame rate and playback options. Sibelius has a hit point feature and supports ReWire syncing with DAWs and sequencers, which Finale does not.
Backwards compatibility		✓	The edge to Sibelius, but only for the moment. It is possible to export Sibelius files all the way back to version 2. Finale 2014 can only export back to Finale 2012 format (and to MusicXML). Finale 2014 and future versions of Finale will be written in a “future-proof” way such that exporting should not be necessary, though this remains to be seen in practice.
Plug-ins and extendibility	tossup	tossup	Both programs have a small number of active developers that create useful plug-ins for the program. In Sibelius 7, you can download plug-ins directly from within the program. Finale doesn’t offer this, but it does have a more user-friendly way to write macros.
Sharing and MusicXML		✓	Sibelius 7.5 gained some features that allows for automatic sharing of video and audio to YouTube, Facebook and SoundCloud. Both programs can export audio of the score, MIDI, and PDF. Both programs can import from and export to the MusicXML format, although expect Finale to be more tightly integrated with this format, since MakeMusic controls it.
Support	✓		MakeMusic offers unlimited complimentary phone support; Avid offers only 90 days. Both companies have official reps on social media and forums.