

The Breaks plugin and the Split System Break

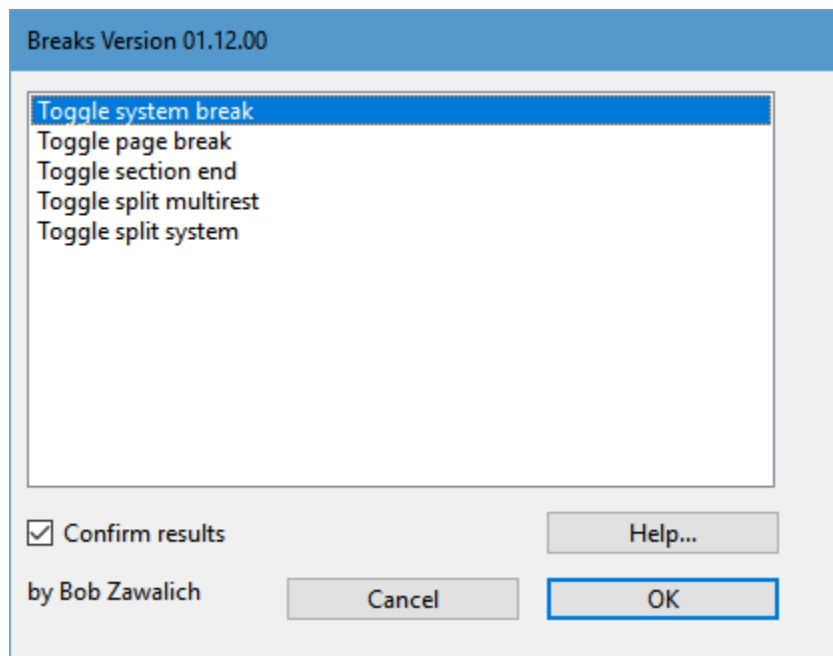
Bob Zawalich November 3, 2019

Updated November 28, 2023

The *Breaks* plugin was updated in November 2023 to make breaks added to multirests apply the break to the last bar of the multirest, this keeping the multirest intact. Previously, the break was added to the first bar of the multirest, which split off the first bar from the rest of the multirest. This change is described in the [Appendix](#).

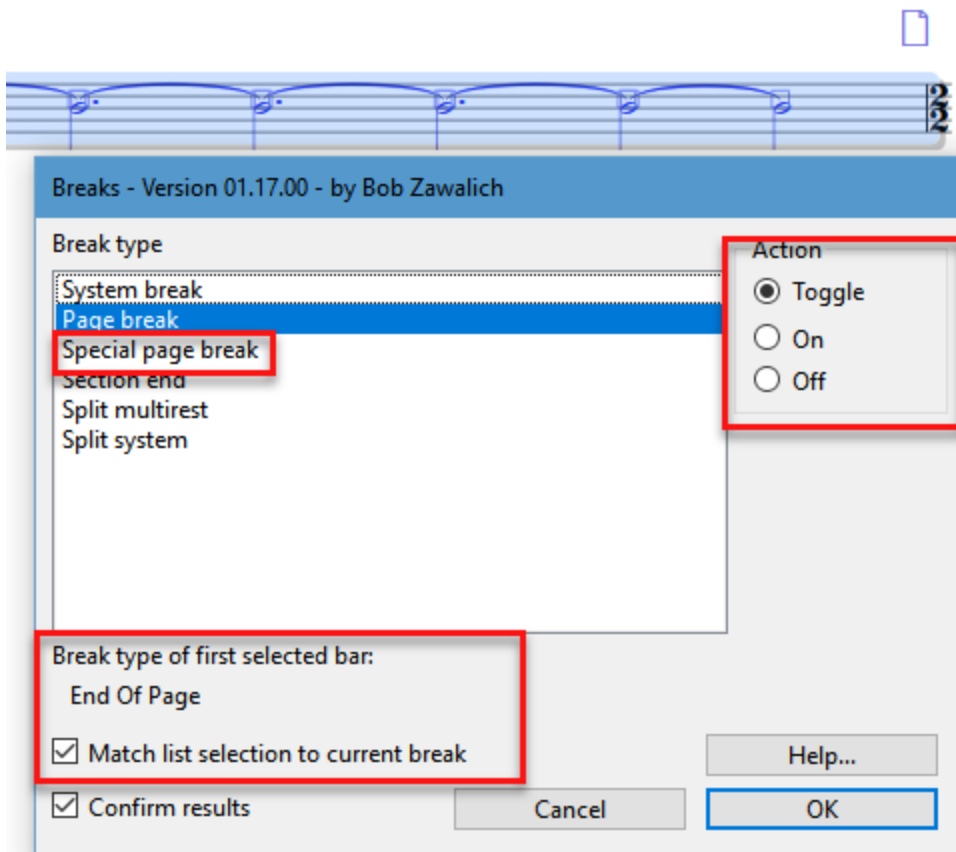
The *Breaks* plugin is one of the plugins in the category *Sight-Impaired*, written to assist users with limited or no vision. Usually, in order to add a system break or page break (among others), you need to select a barline first, which is difficult to do without vision, and it has to be done using a mouse.

The original design of the plugin was to let you make a selection anywhere in a bar (if you select more than one bar, the plugin processes only the first selected bar), and the plugin would toggle the break at the end of that bar, turning it on if off, and turning it off if on. It was set up to toggle system and page breaks, section end, split multirest, and split system breaks. Here is the original dialog.



One problem with this is that if you are going to toggle a break, you really need to know what the current break is, and you need to know the state of that break so you toggle it to the desired state. Another problem is that these breaks are really not all the same property, and in particular the *split system* break is tricky to toggle even if you are not sight impaired.

To address these problems, *Breaks* was updated to allow the explicit turning on or off of a break in addition to toggling it, and it can tell you which break is currently present. Here is the updated plugin dialog.



The changes include:

- New actions: toggle, on, off
- Special page breaks can be modified
- The break type of the first selected bar is displayed below the list box
- The list box will select the current break if possible for easier toggling.

This is really all you need to know to use the plugin, so feel free to install it and use it if you like. There are a lot of details in making this work, though, so I will discuss them below.

The nature of breaks

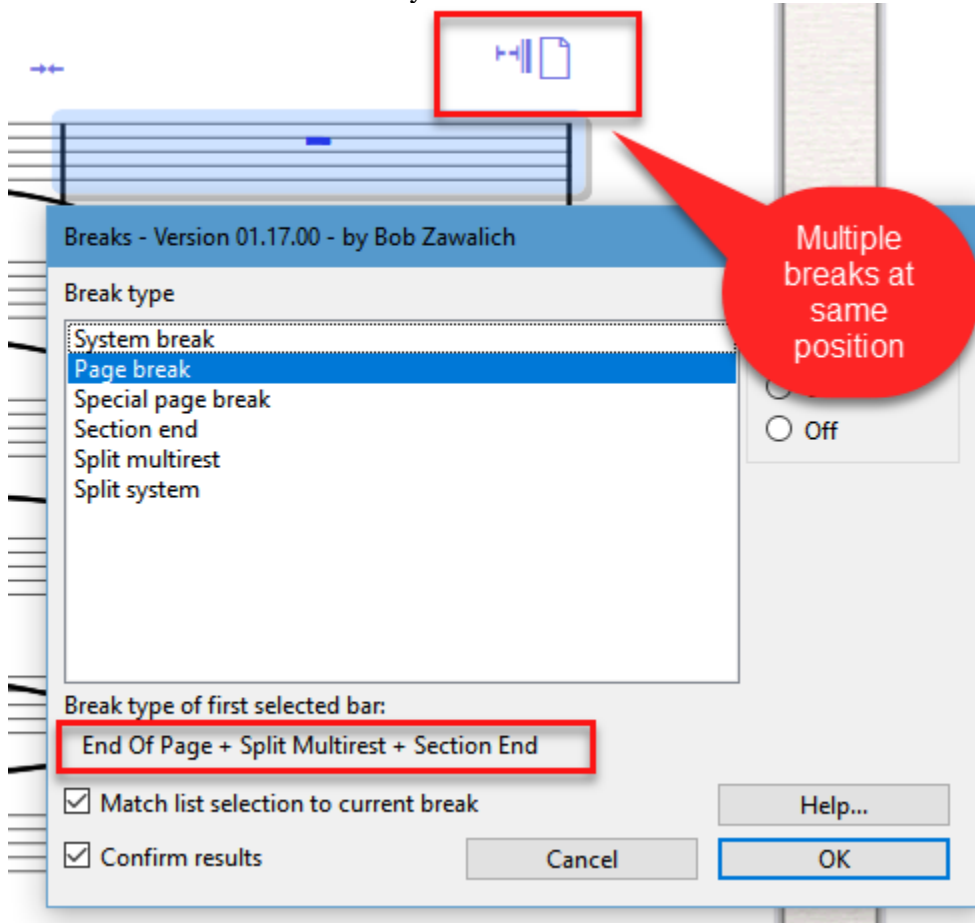
Most breaks from *Layout>Breaks* affect only the bar to the left of the selected barline, and adding a break typically changes the *BreakType* property of that bar. *Breaktype* can have several values, but it can be changed directly by users to be *Default*, *End of System Or Page*, *End of Page*, or *Special Page Break*. If you really want to get all the details look up *Global constants Break* in *File>Plug-ins>ManuScript Language Reference*.

There are some exceptions to this.

1. A *Split Multirest* break changes the bar to the left of the selected barline, but it does not affect the *BreakType*. It sets a separate and independent *SplitMultirest* property. A bar can have both *SplitMultirest* set, and have a *BreakType* such as *End of System* at the same time.
2. *Section End* is also an independent property of a bar, like *Split Multirest*. A Bar can have *Split Multirest*, *Section End*, and a non-default break type active at the same time.
3. A *Split System* break is completely different from other breaks, will be described separately.
4. A *Special Page* break has some additional properties that must be dealt with.

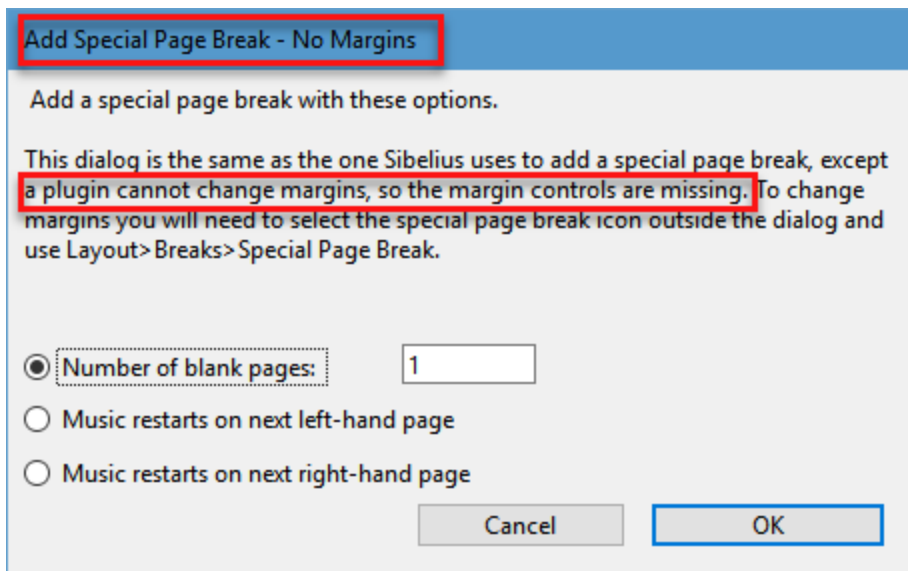
How *Breaks* deals with Split Multirest and Section End breaks

- If *Match list selection to current break* is checked, the plugin tries to choose the most useful break to be selected. If it is not checked, *System break* will be selected.
 - The selected item will be *System break*, *Page break*, *Special page break* or *Split system break* if one of these is set.
 - If none of the above is chosen, *Split multirest* will be used if set.
 - If none of the above is chosen, *Section end* will be used if set.
 - If none of the above is chosen, *System break* will be used.
- The *Break type of first selected bar* field below the listbox will be set to *Default*, *System break*, *Page break*, *Special page break* or *Split system break*.
 - If *Split multirest* is set and *Split system break* is not set, you will see "+ split multirest".
 - If *Section end* is set you will see "+ section end".



How *Breaks* deals with Special Page Breaks

- If you add a special page break, you will see this dialog, similar to what Sibelius provides if you add a special page break, *though a plugin cannot modify margins, so that feature is not available here*. You can change them manually later, but you would need to be able to select the special page icon to do that.



- If you delete or toggle a special page break, the break and any associated blank pages will be deleted, and you will see a warning message that the break has been deleted.

Split System breaks and Gap Before Bar

Sibelius requires you to select a single barline in order to set a break in *Layout>Breaks*.

As far as Sibelius is concerned, *a selected barline is the end of the bar to its left*, not the start of the bar to its right.

If I select the barline between bars 3 and 4 and type *Return* to create a system break, Bar 3 will be at the end of the system, and bar 4 at the start of the next system, and Bar 3 will be marked as having a *System* break.

The nature of a *Split System* break

A *Split System* break is used for *Codas* and for *Prefatory Staves* in Sibelius. A search on "Split System" in the *Sibelius Reference* will show some examples of its use.

When you add a *Split System* break, it affects both the bar to the left of the barline and the bar to the right.

- for the bar to the left it adds a *Split Multirest* break.
- for the bar to the right it changes the *Gap Before Bar* setting to 10 spaces.

(According to the *Sibelius Reference*, a coda is marked as such by a barline that has *Split Multirest* switched on with a *Gap before bar* of greater than 0, which explains why the *Split Multirest* break is used).

Here is an example of a *Split System* break in the middle of a system.

The break type of bar 3 is Split Multirest

Bar 4 has Gap Before Bar set to 10 spaces

If you select the last barline on a system and add a *Split System* break, the 2nd bar will have a gap at the *start* of the system:

Split System break added here. This bar has Split Multirest set

This bar has GapBefore set to 10 spaces (check in the Inspector)

Unlike most other breaks, selecting the same barline and choosing *Layout>Breaks>Split System* again does not remove the break. *Unlock Format* will remove neither the *Split Multirest* break nor the *Gap Before Bar* so it will not help with removing a *Split System* break. (*Unlock Format* will also not remove Special Page breaks.)

How to remove a Split System Break, as created in the Ribbon.

If you act quickly enough, *Undo* will remove such a break.

The general rule is to remove the 2 parts separately:

- Select the barline that displays the *Split Multirest* icon above it, and choose *Layout>Breaks>Split Multirest* to toggle the break off.
- Here are 2 ways to remove the gap before bar:
 - Select the left barline *after* the gap and choose *Appearance > Design and Position > Reset Position*.
 - Passage select the bar following the gap, or select the barline at the right end of the bar following the gap, so that *Gap Before Bar* appears in the *Bar* panel of the *Inspector* (or the *Property Window* in Sibelius 6). Uncheck the *Gap Before Bar* checkbox or set the gap to 0.

If there is a gap at the start of a system or at the end of a system, you can remove that gap by clicking on the handle just to the left or right of the staff (*View>Handles* will make these easier to find) and choosing

Appearance>Design and Position>Reset Position. *Reset Position* will not remove a gap in the middle of a system.

Removing a Split System break with the *Breaks* plugin

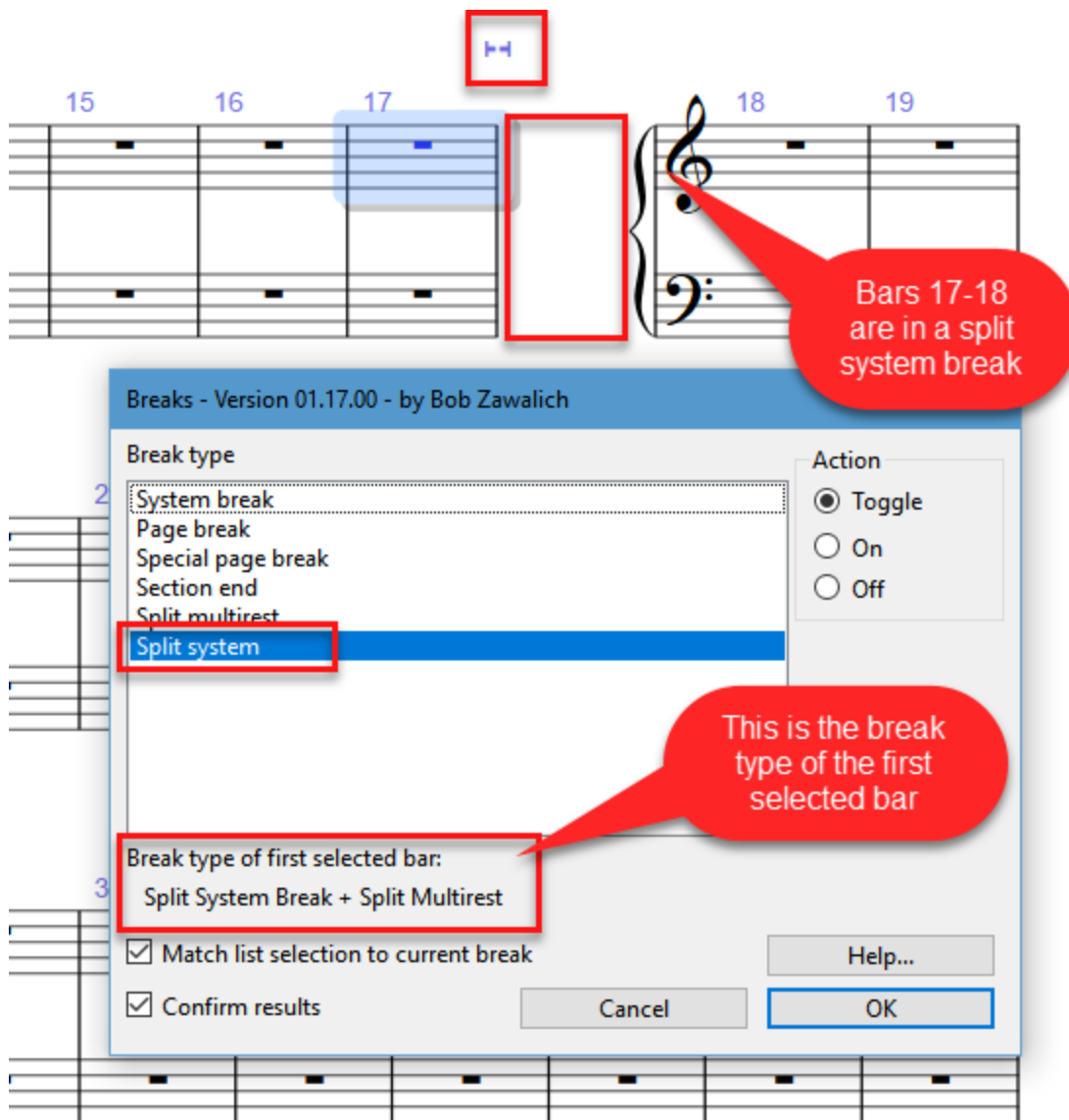
Breaks is set up so that you can select anywhere in a bar, and the plugin will act as if you had selected the barline at the right end of the bar. This is usually easier than selecting a single barline. If multiple bars are selected it only looks at the first selected bar.

In version 01.13.00 or later, *Breaks* will look at a selected bar and determine if it can be considered to be a part of a pair of bars that have a *Split System* break. This makes it easier to toggle off such a break. It does not really care if there is a *Split Multirest* break, though it will turn it off if present. It only looks for a *Gap before bar*.

- If the selected bar is not the first bar in the score and its *Gap before bar* is non-zero, the selected bar and the *previous* bar are considered to have a *Split System* break.
- If the selected bar is not the last bar in the score and it does not have a non-zero *Gap Before Bar*, but the *next* bar has a non-zero *Gap Before Bar*, the selected bar and the next bar are considered to have a *Split System* break.

Breaks will display the break type of the selected bar when its dialog comes up. If *Breaks* recognizes a *Split System* break, it has determined which pair of bars are affected, and *Toggle Split System Break* will remove the gap from the bar that has the *Gap before bar*, and remove the *Split Multirest* break, if any, from the other bar in the pair.

Breaks will let you remove a *Gap Before Bar* even if it was not created by adding a *Split System* break from the *Ribbon*.



Other removal options

The downloadable plugin *Gap Before Bar* (category *Layout*) can be used to reset gaps to zero in entire scores or even folders of score. This can be useful when you get a score from someone who has dragged barlines and then changed format so the gaps appear at unintended locations. It will not affect any *Split Multirest* breaks. Be aware that it will change *all* gaps in the selection, so be careful if you have places where you really want to keep them.

Gap Before Bar - Version 01.61.00

Process the current score, all currently open scores, or a folder of scores.

Open scores will not be saved or closed. Scores processed in a folder will be closed, and saved if changes are made.

The entire score is always processed, ignoring any selection, unless you are processing the current score only, when only the contents of a passage selection will be processed.

☒ Trace locations of gaps before and after bars

☒ Do not change any gaps

☐ Reset gaps before or after selected bars to zero

☒ Reset gaps before

☒ Reset gaps after

☐ Change gaps in the first bar in each selected system (in spaces)

☒ Change gaps before bars *

☐ Change gaps after bars *

* See Help for explanation of how Gap After Bar works

Help...

Cancel

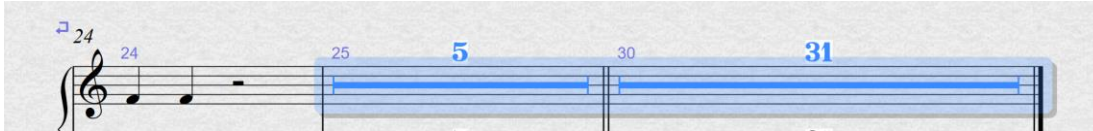
Process Folder... All Open Scores Current Score

The plugins *Gap Before Bar* and *Breaks* may be downloaded directly through Sibelius 7 and higher at *File > Plug-ins > Install Plug-ins > Text*. Users may also install it manually in Sibelius 6 or higher by visiting the [plugin download page](#) and following the [usual manual installation procedure](#), or by using the [Install New Plug-in plugin](#).

Appendix: Applying breaks to Multirests. Updated in November 2023.

The *Breaks* plugin was updated in November 2023 to make breaks added to multirests apply the break to the **last** bar of the multirest, this keeping the multirest intact. Previously, the break was added to the **first** bar of the multirest, which split off the first bar from the rest of the multirest.

For example, previously, if you started with this, where there is a multirest at the start of a selection:



and applied a system break to the selection, you would have gotten this, where the break is added to the first bar of the 5-bar multirest, which splits it:

A musical score showing the result of applying a system break to the first bar of a multirest. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows bars 24 and 25. Bar 24 has a whole rest. Bar 25 has a whole rest. A red box highlights the end of the system. The second system shows bars 26 and 27. Bar 26 has a whole rest. Bar 27 has a whole rest. A red box highlights the end of the system. The third system shows bars 30 and 31. Bar 30 has a whole rest. Bar 31 has a whole rest. A red box highlights the end of the system. Two red callout boxes provide additional information: one points to bar 25, stating 'The 5-bar multirest is split into one bar, which ends in a system break, and the remaining 4 bars in a multirest'; the other points to bar 27, stating 'This was originally the first bar of the 5-bar multirest.' The numbers 4 and 31 are also visible in the score.

With the updated plugin, you will get this, where break is added to the end of the multirest, and the multirest is not split. The plugin now treats a multirest as a single unit:

The screenshot shows a music notation software interface with three systems of staves. The first system (bars 15-18) has a treble and bass staff with a measure of 3. The second system (bars 24-25) has a treble staff with a measure of 5 and a bass staff with a measure of 5. The third system (bars 30-31) has a treble staff with a measure of 31 and a bass staff with a measure of 31. A message box is displayed in the center, stating "Breaks: System break: break added at bar 29". A red box highlights a small orange icon in the bottom right corner of the score area, with a red arrow pointing from the message box to it.

This also works if you have only a multirest in a passage selection or even if you just have the “multirest bar rest” selected:

The top screenshot shows a single staff with a multirest bar rest selected. The bottom screenshot shows the same staff with the multirest bar rest selected, but the system break is now visible as a double bar line.