

Songwriter's Cheat Sheet

Here is a summary of everything you may need to consider when writing a song.

Use this as a quick reference whilst you're in your creative writing mode.

For more details on each section, please read: [How To Write A Song: Songwriting Basics](#).

General

SONG TITLE

Summarizes the song as a whole.
You can base this on a phrase in the song, the overall implied meaning or a question/statement.

TEMPO

How fast or slow do you feel your song should be?
This is measured in beats per minute (bpm).

BEAT

How are you counting the beat to your song?

Lyrics

YOUR STORY

What is the story behind the lyrics?
What is the message, the emotion that's driving it?
Remember you're taking the listener on a journey.

RHYMING

The most common rhyming schemes are:
Rhyming couplets (AABB)
Rhyming alternatives (ABAB)

VERSE

Your verse expands on the message of the story with more detail, it is usually more lyrical and rhythmical.

CHORUS

Your chorus is the main issue at hand and is catchy and repetitive.
Keep your choruses simple.
It is the part people will usually remember, so spend more time on perfecting it.

PRE-CHORUS

Use a pre-chorus to bridge the gaps between verses and choruses if feel like the transition doesn't work.

BRIDGE

A bridge gives the listener a change to the feel of the song, and is different from the verse and chorus.

OUTRO/INTRO

You can prepare the listener for the journey ahead or leave them wanting more.

Melody

SCALE

What scale are you basing your song on?

RHYTHM

How will I structure my melodic phrases?
How will my rhythm vary throughout the song?

RANGE

What notes should I focus on in the verses?
How can I differ this in the chorus?
What notes am I comfortable with?

MELODIC PHRASES

Focus on a few melodic phrases in each section, don't over do it.
Repeat melodic phrases so listeners become familiar with the melody.

HARMONIES

Do we need to harmonize our melody?
Will it bring any benefit to the song?

LINKS

Your melody should contain notes from the chord progression for it to sound pleasant to the listener.

Chord Progression

MAJOR OR MINOR

Am I aiming for a happy or sad sounding song
Use a major key for a positive/happy based song, and a minor key for a negative/sad based song.

COMMON CHORDS

Common chord progression or experimentation?
If you're a beginner, common chord progressions are:
1-6-4-5
1-5-6-4
1-4-5

BASIC CHORDS?

Sticking to basic major/minor chords is the best option if you've never written a song before.
Also, if you're unfamiliar with music theory, it is easier to choose these types of chords.

Finishing Touches

ARRANGEMENT

Spend time reviewing and editing your song.

Is the arrangement at its best?

Do you need more, perhaps a pre-chorus?

Does your verse feel too long?

Do your lyrics sound good when sung?

MELODIC ADDITIONS

Consider these 4 melodic additions in your song: riffs, motifs, licks & interludes.

Do you need them?

Certain genres are known for certain melodic additions.

Most rock music includes riffs, blues music includes licks.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Are you writing as a singer-songwriter, or from the perspective of a band?

Do you need drums, pads, strings or any other instrument in your song?

RECORDING/PRODUCING

Are you considering taking your song to the next level?

Look into making your own home studio and checking out all the gear and plugins (free & paid) that can assist you on your journey.