

# WRITING A SONG

So, you want to write a song?

1 hour



EROUND  
US

Think like an artist

So you want to write a song? Sounds a bit overwhelming right? But it's easy when you break it down into steps, a bit like a recipe. Before you start, there are three important things to remember:

- **Start!** Even if you don't know what you're starting yet. The water doesn't flow until the tap is turned!
- **Keep it real and from the heart;** this is **YOUR SONG**, no one else's
- **Allow time and space to make changes.** This is an important part of the process and can take just as much time as writing



## You need:

- An instrument (or music software)
- A pen and paper or your phone for notes
- A quiet and comfortable place
- Something to record audio (optional)



## 1. Find some chords

A chord is two or more notes played together at the same time.

Find a chord that you like the sound of, one that speaks to you and fits your mood. Take your time. You might find a chord you like immediately or want to explore different ones.

Think about where you want to go to next. Higher? Lower? Happy? (major) Sad? (minor) Somewhere in between? Trust your ear to decide where your mood wants to take you.

Once you've decided where to go next, practise moving between the chords. You can change chords quickly or slowly depending on your mood. Play them a few times so they become familiar.

Why not try adding a third or fourth chord or returning to a chord you've used before. There are no rules to how many chords you use, it's up to you.



## 2. Create a melody

A melody (also called a tune) is a group of notes which are played one after another.

Think about what mood you're going for. Do you want something upbeat or more laid back?

Start with a single note. Try using one from your first chord.

Decide if you want the next note to be close to your first note or further apart. You can experiment moving between different notes to see what they sound like. Repeat this until you find a group of notes you like.

Don't be afraid to play around with different ideas! A melody can be short or long, a bit like a thought or sentence. The great thing about melodies is that you can repeat them. If you choose to do this try varying your melody by changing one of the notes.

**TOP TIP:** If you can, record your chords (you can do this as a voice note on a phone) and practise playing or singing your melody over the chords. Remember you might want to make changes to your melody to fit the chords or lyrics.



### 3. Write some lyrics

Lyrics are the words of a song.

Make a list/mind map/vision board of your thoughts and ideas. Ask yourself: What am I passionate about? What am I affected by? What moves or inspires me? Think about your own experiences and feelings. YOU are your own resource.

Listen to your chords and melody, which of your ideas come to mind? What story do you want your song to tell?

Lyrics can be hard at first, but don't worry, here are a few prompts to get you started: Who are you? Where are you? What's happening? Why are you here? Use your senses: what can you see, hear, taste, touch, smell? Describe a scene or a situation in the same way you would tell a story.

Here are some examples you can use:  
Today I woke up feeling.../Everyone keeps asking me what I want to be.../Outside my window the sky looks...

If you don't want to write about yourself you can:

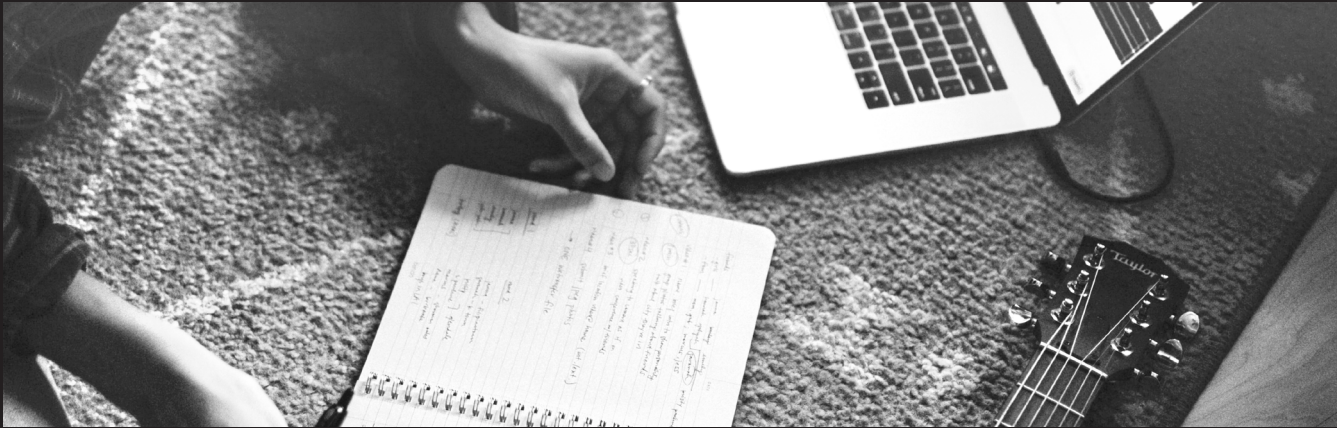
- Listen to and observe what's going on in the world and write about that
- Listen to what others aren't saying and write about that
- Use a theme. Here are some examples: **Change, Love, Life, Loss, Home, Time, Identity**

**Ever heard the phrase there's two sides to every story?**

As well as telling your own story, songs can tell other people's stories and are a great way to explore or challenge different points of view. Try exploring a theme from two different perspectives.

**TOP TIP:** Lyrics are really powerful when they are both personal and universal; the theme is universal but the story is personal.





**TOP TIP:** Adding a middle section offers a new musical or lyrical idea which can help break the song up and provide a moment of pause, reflection or realisation. A middle section can go anywhere you think the song needs it. You can return to a verse or chorus afterwards.

## 4. Build a structure

Structure refers to how a song is put together. Structure is there to help tell your story and create a beginning, middle and end. In a song the main sections are often referred to as the verse and chorus.

**VERSE:** Your verse usually opens your song and sets the scene. It might introduce a character, an idea, a theme or a situation.

**CHORUS:** Your chorus is a new section, often with a different set of chords, melody and lyrics (although it doesn't have to be all three). The important thing here is that there is some contrast with the verse. The chorus is normally where you state your message or summarise what the song is about. It's often the part that people remember so try to make it catchy!

Think about what you have written, is it a verse or chorus? Once you've decided this, use this section to help you write your next section. Arrange your sections in a structure, let your lyrics and story guide your structure.

Song structure example:

- **Verse 1**
- **Chorus 1**
- **Verse 2** (you can use the same chords and melody as verse 1 but change the lyrics to develop your idea/story)
- **Chorus 2** (repeat chorus 1)

You can put these sections in whatever order you like, for example you might want to start with the chorus or end with a double chorus.

**So, here's your recipe, why not give it a go! Keep it simple and take one step at a time. And remember, there's no right or wrong to writing a song!**



Written by  
Alice Hale