



Ideas: Songwriting Toolkit

Objectives:

- How to get started
- What to focus on in the beginning
- How do I create powerful imagery for my lyrics?
- How can I set the music for my song ideas?
- How can I structure my song?

How do I get started with a song?

- Try to come up with a topic / idea / thought that really catches you. Write down your first thought on this. Mostly, the first thought is the most powerful one and thus a great and entertaining way to start off.
- Time to create more ideas from your initial thought / idea. Take a look at the ideas for poetry writing (see 'Useful tips for writing poetry' on the activity page) . Especially the mind map activity and from word to word activity are very useful to find good further ideas based on your initial idea.
- Don't forget: Every song consists of: lyrics, chords and melodies! One of these three things should be the starting point. Sometimes it's a melody that's stuck on your mind or a chord progression you're doodling over and over again.

What to focus on in the beginning?

- Remember: The first idea is mostly the strongest and so it is perfect chorus material
- After you sorted what your chorus is supposed to be about, think about what could go in the verses. The verses normally tell the story, while the chorus mostly contains the main feeling / thought. Very often the chorus only makes sense when you know what goes on in the verses.
- “Don't bore us, get to the chorus”: This means that your verses should lead to the chorus. Don't make the verses too long. It might water down an excellent chorus. Nevertheless, put effort into the verses.
- Don't get too restricted by following the metre. You can always add or erase words in the process of writing the music.
- Try to write about a small moment. This way it is easier to focus on your meaningful thoughts (see 'How do I create powerful imagery for my lyrics?').

How do I create powerful imagery for my lyrics?

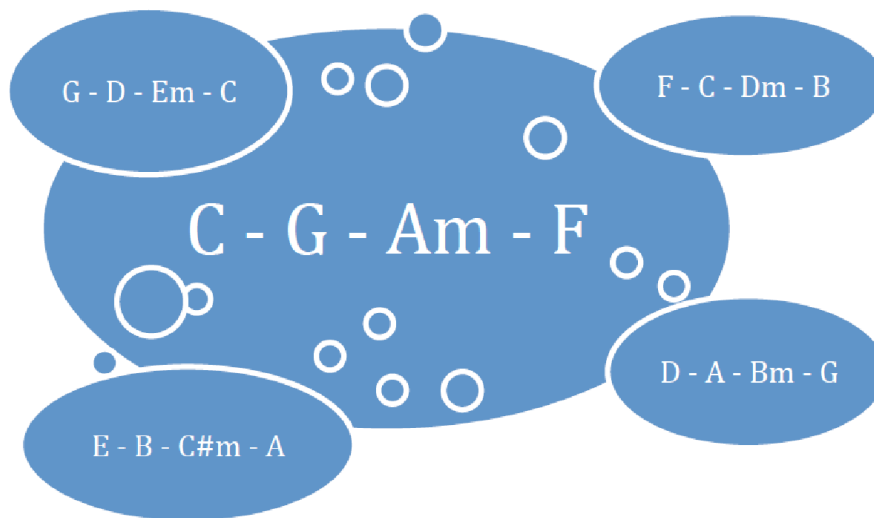
- Is there a symbol you have used with your first idea? Try to extend it to other parts of your lyrics (e.g.: If your first thought included a rose, why not think about everything else that has to do with roses? Thorns, sun, water, love, care etc.)
- Use your senses: What does the narrator see, hear, feel, smell. This does not only create powerful images, but also lets the listener feel more connected to the narrator.

How can I set the music for my song ideas?

Remember that every song consists of lyrics, melody and a chord progression? It's up to you what to start with. Either start with the lyrics (see the above) or the chords / melody. Here is some advice for the chords and melody:

Chords:

- For experimenting with the best chords for your song you preferably pick a guitar or piano / keyboard. There's nothing wrong with using already heavy-used chord progressions and experimenting with them.



- For example: the chord progression C – G – Am – F is perfect for being transposed up- or downwards as you can see in the following video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=aYB3eTPKnFQ&feature=emb_title
- Also, many world famous songs have been written on basis of this exact chord progression, as you can see in *The Axis of Awesome's* "4 chords song".
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOldewpCfZQ>

Melody:

- When you've found a chord progression you feel okay with it's a good move to start writing the melody. Sing the lyrics for the chorus over it. You will see if the lyrics need changing according to the metre (see the above).
- Repeat the chord progression and lyrical lines over and over again. Change them along the way and try to figure out what the best melody is for your song. Recording the music on a smartphone is a comfortable way to do that. So you can focus totally on the lyrics. For the verses you can either keep the chorus' chord progression and simply change the melody or you change the progression. Just give it a go:

Chorus	Verse
C - G - Am - F	Am - F - C - G

or as in the song 'Friends of the Future' (Beier, Sönmez)

Em - C - G - D	G - D - Em - C
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How can I structure my song?

- Consider the following on chorus and verses while structuring the song:

Chorus	Verse	Bridge
<p>Remember “What to focus on in the beginning”: The first idea is mostly the strongest and thus good material for your chorus.</p> <p>Spend much time on the chorus since it's the part that the listeners are most likely to remember.</p>	<p>Remember “What to focus on in the beginning”: The verses are there to tell the story and lead to the chorus. Get the listener into the story with the first verse and from then on, tell the story.</p> <p>Don't make your verses too long (never forget: Don't bore us, get to the chorus!).</p>	<p>The bridge is a totally new part of the song. Not every song needs a bridge. Just in case a further verse would sound boring, you can use a bridge to 'spice up' the song.</p> <p>The bridge involves a new melody to wake up the listener, to set a different mood, to present a sudden change of events etc.</p> <p>Your possibilities are endless!</p>

- Here are three common patterns for your structure. Nevertheless, feel free to experiment with standard patterns or the patterns of your favorite songs.

VCVCBC	VVCVC	VVCBCVC
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Don't forget: All the above are just a few ideas how you can start and not get lost while writing your song. In the end it's YOUR song. Be creative, express yourself, be unpredictable and others will enjoy your songs!