

Songwriters must ask:

What's my idea, how do I want to feel, and what are the tools I can use to express and support those feelings?

Prosody - The only rule to Songwriting!

- Means that everything fits together to support the central message of the song
- In other words, everything works together.
- Supports Emotion through stability or instability
- You must preserve the natural shape of the language by creating melodic rhythm that matches your syllabic rhythm (patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables) perfectly.
- This is called setting.

Vehicles to express Prosody:

1. Stable - is your idea stable? If so, use your tools to develop - the statement will sound like a fact!
2. Unstable - something sounds off like there is something you want to be there but isn't, sounds like something is missing "...but..."

Craft your idea - After you ask, "How am I feeling in this song?" – Answer with either Stable or Unstable?

- Ask yourself if you are Stable or Unstable after each Verse or even after every line.
- Build everything up to the 'Why' of the song

The Six best friends to use to start crafting a song (use these to set up the boxes):

1. Who and / or to whom am I speaking?
2. What do you have to say?
3. When does it happen?
4. Where is the song I am writing taking place?
5. Why are you saying it?
6. How does it all come together?

List of tools to help you craft your ideas:

1. Melody
2. Harmony
3. Melodic Rhythm
4. Harmonic Rhythm
5. Lyrical Tools (separate list)

Melody - "the Noun"-the thing with meaning

Harmony - the chords-"the adjective", the coloring or description of the melody

Rhythm - "the verb"

- Start with setting the title first and then move to the less important sections. "Keep the title special."
- Focus your brain and try to think about what you want rather than just trying to see what happens.
- Use "informed" instinct.
- Avoid the "hit or miss" technique.

I. Song Form and Idea Construction – First Stage of writing a song

- This worksheet is about ideas, not rhymes.

Boxes - simply a description of how ideas move

- Not a preset idea of a Pre-chorus, Chorus, Verse, etc.
- Build up each box bigger than the last
- Ask yourself "How am I feeling in this song?" "Do I want to feel stable or unstable?"
- Use the appropriate tools to help the feeling.
- Develop the Point of View. Who is talking and to whom?
- Develop your tense, is it past, present, or future?
- Decide how intimate you want the story to be. Keep in mind that direct address in present tense is the most intimate.
- How are you talking about your subject?
- Why is it interesting?
- Choose your Point of View.

Point of View

1. Direct Address – most intimate (Close-up: Feelings) – you, pouring your heart out to someone
2. Second Person Narrative – conversational not narrative, personal information that the character could not have known
3. First Person Narrative – I, we, us, tell the listener about a conversation you had with someone
4. Third Person Narrative – most objective (Long Range: Facts) – he, she, it, there is never an "I", narrative

II. Building Worksheets

1. Thesaurus - List the ideas
2. Rhyming Dictionary - for both rhymes and new ideas
 - This helps you to work on both the level of ideas and the level of sound at the same time.
 - "Sonically related ideas."
 - Using Rhyme to help you find new ideas.

Key Words

- "Words in the musical sense of Key." Look for words that fit diatonically with an idea.
- These are one-word ideas that relate through the sounding out of syllables using the different types of rhymes.

How to construct the actual worksheet of concept ideas:

1. Try to get at least 5-6 ideas. "Key Words"
2. Pay attention to the vowel sounds of your keywords.
 - The more vowel sounds the better.
3. Use both stable and unstable ideas.
 - Be sure to use the different rhyme types to help you develop whichever (stable or unstable) idea you choose.
4. Analyze the title first. Use the vowel sounds in the rhyming position (last word).
5. Idea - Use words such as rush that can be used as both a verb and a noun. Creates a "sonic fabric."
6. Use adjectives to describe the nouns in your title.
7. Use the Family Rhyme substitution chart
 - Look for the companions.
8. Additive/Subtractive Rhymes
9. Do not mix metaphors. If your title is already one thing, stay focused and try not to let it do something new.
10. Try to avoid cliché ideas unless you can take them into original territory. Ex. door
11. Look for echoes of the vowel sounds by themselves compared to the entire word.
12. Use 1, 2, and 3 syllable words.
13. You can find ideas from all of the keywords.
14. Let old ideas lead to new ideas.

III. Parts of the Song:

Typical Song Construction:

- There are several verses made up of 4-8 lines with the last line preparing the listeners for the chorus.
- The chorus is the part of the song that often sticks to the mind of a listener because it contrasts with the verse and is repeated several times.
- The title of the song is usually included in the chorus as well as the main theme.
- One important rule of thumb when writing the verse/chorus song is to try to get to the chorus quickly, so avoid writing verses that are too long.

I. Song Title:

- The title of the song is very important, memorable, and fitting to the theme of the song.
- You should also highlight your title by placing it within the lyrics of the song.

Title Placement:

- In the AAA song form, titles are placed either at the beginning or end of each verse.
- In the AABA, the title usually appears at the beginning or end of the A section.
- In the verse/chorus and verse/chorus/bridge song, the title begins or ends the chorus.

Developing the Title:

- The strongest syllable needs to be on the strongest beat.
- After that, look for the strong stresses for the more important words.
- If the words and stresses are not perfectly matched, you will lose meaning and emotion.

II. Verse - to give us the fundamental story / feeling (the platform) that the song develops from

- The basic information of the song that tells a story.
- Gives listeners more insight leading to the main message of the song and it moves the story forward.
- A song may have a number of verses, depending on the form, consisting of several lines each.

Writing the lines:

- You want to see how they move, what expectations they raise, and you want them to say something.
- Finding Metaphors is a great way to start a song. A metaphor compares two objects that are normally unrelated. It's a type of analogy without using "like" or "as" (simile).

1. Once you write your first line, you need to map out the rhythm of the stressed syllables.
 - Then you either:
 - Match that line (Couplet) or
 - Not match that line. (Keep moving)
 - Keep in mind; a shorter second line will create forward motion.
 - A longer third line will create expectations that the second line will be matched and rhymed.
2. Once the verse rhythm is set, both the stress rhythm and rhyme scheme must be repeated in the other verses.
 - If you do not match, you have Statement/Variation instead of Statement/Repetition.
 - You introduce a new idea rather than continuing on the story.
 - This also prevents the Bridge from being as powerful and it negates both tension and resolution between the sections.
3. Appeal to the listener's senses. This helps jumpstart their imagination and it help them relate to your song.
 - The more abstract the language, the less involved the listener can become. The song is more about the storyteller than the listener.
 - Try to start with more of a specific picture then if needed, go into the vivid or abstract language.
4. Keep referring back to the boxes to ensure that your ideas stay on track.
5. Relating to the Central Idea (The title of the song)
 - Chorus vs. the Verse
 - Choruses are meant to highlight the section
 - Verse - meant to diminish compared to the Chorus
 - Try not to repeat the highlighting path of the Chorus (this could be a chord or particular note / word / phrase)

III. Refrain: A refrain is a line or title that is repeated at the end of every verse and is different from the chorus.

IV. Pre-Chorus:

- Links the Verse and the Chorus, also known as the "climb", this part of the song differs melodically and lyrically from the verse and comes before the chorus.
- The reason why it's called a climb is because it heightens the anticipation of the listeners for the coming chorus.

V. Chorus - repeated section - needs to be able to grow and state the central idea of a song

- "Chorus"-means many people singing together
- Should be easy to sing and easy to remember
- Almost moves the song to a new level but does not
- Does not advance the plot
- Instead, it is more of a reiteration of the song as we move forward

Chorus:

- The chorus is the part of the song that often sticks to the mind of a listener because it contrasts with the verse and is repeated several times.
- The main theme is expressed in the chorus; the title of the song is usually included in the chorus too.

Differences Between Refrain and Chorus:

- The refrain is shorter than the chorus; often the refrain is composed of 1, or at most, 2 lines while the chorus can be made up of several lines.
- The chorus is also melodically, rhythmically and lyrically different from the verse and expresses the main message of the song.

VI. Bridge

- "Nobody lives on the Bridge".
- Connects song sections
- Typically unstable and needs to move forward.
- Needs to contrast using melodic rhythm and stress.

Bridge (AABA):

- In the AABA song form, the bridge (B) is musically and lyrically different than the A sections. In this form, the bridge gives the song contrast before transitioning to the final A section; therefore it is a necessary part of the song.

Bridge (Verse/Chorus/Bridge):

- In the verse/chorus/bridge song form however, the bridge functions differently. It is shorter than the verse and should offer a reason why the final chorus needs to be repeated. It also differs melodically, lyrically and rhythmically from the verse and chorus.

Write the Bridge last, or at least the final version.

- Should not be written until you get the note values of the verses at least.
- If you use eighth and quarter notes in the verse, use maybe half and whole notes.
- ! -Make sure that the Bridge is unstable.
- Use an odd number of lines and leave it asking for more with either a rhyme or stressed syllable.
- Back-heavy and weak-bar phrasing works great in the Bridge.

VIII. Coda:

- Coda is the additional lines of a song, which brings it to a close.
- The coda is an optional addition to a song.

IV. Melodic Rhythm (Tone of Voice)

A. How do you get your syllables to fit in your rhythmic and / or chord progression idea?

- Stressed syllables on stressed beats.
- Start slow then speed up.
- Find the beat then sub-divide the beat into eighth notes.

B. Ask yourself "What do I have?" in reference to note values.

C. Stable and Unstable Tones

1. Tonic - most stable tone in key
 - Expresses the truth, belief in what you are saying, a fact, and honesty, a statement
2. Second - least unstable next to the major 7th, wants to move to the tonic
3. Third - next most stable
 - Happy in major thirds.
 - Whine and tease in minor thirds.
4. Fourth - Unstable, not sure where it wants to move, subdominant, used in excited conversation
5. Fifth - next most stable but still considered a little unstable
 - We ask questions in fifths.
 - Tends to sound aggressive in conversation.
 - We sound like we are threatening someone when dropping to the fifth an octave down (fourth below) the tonic.
6. Sixth - Unstable, wants to move to the fifth
7. Seventh - Most unstable, wants to move to the tonic, "I don't want to die!"

All unstable tones are not at rest and should be used to move your melody. Creates a longing and a desire to move somewhere we just are not able to get to, yet.

- Minor thirds, sixes, and sevens are less stable than major thirds, sixes, and sevens.
- Minor thirds are used in whines and teases.
- Make sure that the stability of the melody matches the lyrical meaning. A stable lyric needs a stable tone.
- Say your lyric with feeling, and then listen to where your pitches are.
- Invite your listener into your song. Try not to over complicate your sections.

D. How does your melody move?

- Up or down or stagnant?
- How does it relate to what you want to say?
- Does it follow the rule of Prosody?
- Follow the chords rather than the key.
- The more important the lyrics are the bigger the role of the melody.

E. Setting Adjustments or "Body Language"

- Comparing the first verse setting to the other verses
- Avoid prepositions, articles, and personal pronouns in strong beats. Avoid the spotlight.
- Very important when expressing doubt versus a fact.
- Depending on the relationship of the phrase to the downbeat of the bar, you will get four different emotional responses or combinations.
- Amazing contrast and emotional resonance.
- Can be spread out over multiple measures.
- Starting on the strongest beat of the strongest measure is the most stable spot.

G. Front-heavy versus Back-heavy:

1. Any phrase that starts on the downbeat of the bar is called "Front-heavy".
 - This is the strongest part of the bar and emphasizes the stressed syllable.
 - Stable
 - Sounds like you want an answer, "I mean it", a series of facts.
2. Any phrase that starts after the downbeat of the bar is "Back-heavy".
 - Is in motion toward a stronger beat.
 - Unstable
 - Sounds like the speaker is puzzled, in doubt, questioning.
 - "Weak bar phrasing". -Very useful tool in the phrasing bag of tricks.

V. The Five Compositional Tools/Elements of Song Form and Structure:

A. The number of lines

B. Matched or Unmatched line lengths

C. Rhyme Scheme

D. Rhyme types

E. The rhythm of your lines

- -Includes where the phrases start, relative to downbeats of the bars and relative to strong versus weak bars.

A. The number of lines is a planned writing tool.

- You do not just let it happen.
- Make a decision before you start.

The number of lines creates:

1. Spotlights a section - especially important ideas or a balanced section
 - Subtracting a line creates unbalance / instability
 - Adding a line draws attention to an idea or lyric
2. Creates stop motion or forward momentum
 - Even creates a feeling of resolution, doneness - "stop"
 - Odd creates a sense of undone, forward motion - the PC for example
3. Contrast between sections
4. Prosody

Number of lines – has to be either even or odd

1. Even - tend to feel stable, balanced, resolved, truthful, and factual
 - Useful depending on the genre and intent of the song
2. Odd - Unstable, unbalanced, unresolved, uneasy, and questioning
 - Tends to move the song forward (especially repeated lines)
 - This idea can be used to create a separate section (Pre-chorus for example)

B. The effect of line length to create Prosody (Stable or Unstable):

- Stability - stops us
- Instability - By using shorter lines for forward motion we create a feeling of missing something
- Matched line lengths feel stable / balanced / complete / resolved.
- Different line lengths feel the complete opposite
- This is a great tool for moving verses into a chorus
- Longer lines create spotlights - also helps to stabilize shorter lines, especially when the shorter line comes first
- Resolving line - Long, Short, Long, Longest

C. Rhyme Scheme-a a b b, a b a b, etc.-

- Rhyme is always a function of your stronger, stressed syllables.
1. End line Rhyme-creates a roadmap for your ear
 - Stable-2 equal length lines that rhyme-creates a "Fact"
 - Couplet-the alone mentioned stable, 2 equal length lines that is considered the most stable unit in song lyrics
 - Fragmentation-A split in a verse between 2 couplets
 - ! -Too many couplets become boring and make a song too long -x-is notation for an unrhymed line
 - Anything unexpected like one longer line or an added line is considered "Deceptive".
 2. "In Memoriam" Rhyme scheme -ABBA-
 - Simplest example of an unstable rhyme and does not create a sequence but does create longing and unease.
 3. ABAB Song Form:
 - An A-section composed of 8 bars followed by a B section of 8 bars, then repeated.
 4. ABAC Song Form:
 - An 8-bar A-section followed by an 8 bar B-section that then returns to the A-section before going into a C-section. The first bars of the C-section begin melodically similar to the B-section before it changes.
 5. ABCD Song Form:
 - Refers to a type of song where the melody changes and the story progresses for each section.
 6. Verse/Chorus Song Form:
 - Verse/chorus, this type of song form is often used in love songs, pop, country and rock music.

D. Rhyme Types

1. Perfect Rhyme - ex. Mud/Blood

- A. Vowel Sounds are identical
- B. Consonant sounds following the vowel (if any) are identical
- C. The rhyming syllables begin differently
- D. Fully (most) resolved

- Identity – is repetition, not rhyme, ex. Blood, Blunt

2. Family Rhyme

- Perfect Rhyme substitutions
 - Consonant sounds following the vowel (if any) are phonetically related
- A. Plosives - stop the air and push forward
 - Plosives are the least amount of sound you can add to a rhyme.
 - B. Fricatives - impedes the air and creates friction
 - C. Nasals - sound out your nose

Family Rhyme Chart:

	Plosives	Fricatives	Nasals	
Voiced	b d g	v Th z zh I	m n ng	< companions
Unvoiced	p t k	f th s sh ch		< companions

- Partners are above and below each other – match plosives with plosives, etc.
- Sounds missing from the chart - l, r, w, y, x - all consonants (nothing uses these sounds for rhyming)
- Go through all of the 5 vowel sounds that could be used with the consonant. A, E, I, O, U

How to find Family Rhyme:

1. Find your vowel sound
2. Use your partners - plosives, fricatives, and nasals (be sure to find the consonants)
3. Use the 1, 2, 3 syllables of each

3. Additive/Subtractive Rhyme

- No consonants after the vowels - everything ends with a vowel sound
- A. Additive - try to add the least possible sound after the vowel to get a new word - use the chart
 - Very stable rhyme
 - B. Subtractive - Unstable, something missing
 - Just flips Additive Rhyme

4. Assonance Rhyme

- Always Unstable
- Only the vowel sounds are similar
- Always have different phonetic families (fricative vs. plosive)
- Slows down the pace and diminishes the resolution
- ! -Works great within lines but not as an end line rhyme

5. Consonance Rhyme

- Least Resolved
- Different vowel sounds but consonants are the same
- Ex. friend/wind, one/gone, one/alone, scars/fears
- Very Unstable

Examples of each type of rhyme:

1. Perfect - fun/sun
2. Family - fun/rum
3. Additive - fun/lunch
4. Subtractive - lunch/fun
5. Assonance - fun/love
6. Consonance - fun/on

E. Rhythm in Lines

- The number of stressed syllables determines a line's length.
- What is a stressed syllable?
- Try to preserve the natural shape of the language.
- Do not emphasize words in song that are not emphasized in normal conversation.
- If a syllable is unstressed as you speak it, let it remain out of the musical spotlight. (Weak beat)
- Still try to communicate emotion as effectively as possible.
- Only worry about stressed accents not pitch.
- Higher linguistic pitch = stronger position in the musical bar.
- Compound Words, ex. Raincloud, midnight - the first syllable is always the stronger stressed syllable.
- Strong beats in the measure are spotlights. Use them well.

Setting - Finding the appropriate placement of lyric rhythm with the melodic rhythm in a song.

Melodic Rhythm

1. Beat 1 - Strongest
2. Beat 2 - Weak
3. Beat 3 - Strong
4. Beat 4 - Weakest
 - Any off beats are even weaker.
 - Never put prepositions on strong beats.
 - "Into" is the most misplaced word in songwriting.
 - "In" must be stressed and not "to". Also, it works better with a rest before the word.

Multi-Syllable Words (2 or more syllables) - Use the Dictionary to help find the stresses in a word

- Primary Stress = Highest pitched syllable in phrase
- Unstressed Syllables tend to be lower in pitch
- Always creates a melody, especially when you slow down the pronunciation of the entire word
- Use regional accents to your advantage when describing a character in your song
- ! - A stronger stressed syllable should be placed with a strong beat in the measure compared to the secondary stresses, which should go on weak beats
- Unstressed should hit on the off beats of the measure

One Syllable Words

- Are not stressed based on a melody but rather on their function

Meaning Function (also called the Semantic or Cognitive Function) and can be used as:

1. Nouns
2. Verbs
3. Adjectives
4. Adverbs
 - These cause us to automatically raise our voice and to automatically spotlight those words

Grammatical Function - are meant to support the Meaning Function, "The Sign Holders"

- Grammatical functions express the tonic (the fundamental in speech).
- Are not stressed unless presenting a contrast
- Lower in pitch than the stressed syllables.

1. Articles - the, a, an
 - Announces a noun or a noun phrase
1. Conjunctions - and, but, yet, if, or
 - Joins together 2 things
2. Prepositions - in, on, at, into, before, after, etc.
 - Shows How things are related
 - Watch the prepositional phrases
5. Personal Pronouns - I, you, he, she, it, they, us them, etc.

Clichés

Phrases

way down deep inside
hand in hand
face to face
back and forth
walk out that door
feel the pain
gotta take a chance
night and day
take your time
the rest of time
end of time
no one like you
say you'll be mine
how it used to be
it's gonna be all right
set me free
work it out
true to you
kiss your lips
falling apart
taken for granted
lost without you
safe and warm
broken heart
all we've been through
end of the line
always be true
pay the price
right or wrong
what we're fighting for
you know it's true
hold me close
forget my foolish pride
drive me crazy

touch my very soul
heart to heart
side by side
up and down
we've just begun
can't stand the pain
give me half a chance
last chance
all night long
rest of my life
no one can take your place
losing sleep
made up my mind
get down on my knees
end it all
had your fun
done you wrong
back to me
make you stay
asking too much
no tomorrow
give you my heart
aching heart
want you / need you/ love you
hold on
never let you (me) go
rise above
all we've done
worth fighting for
nothing to lose
losing sleep
treat me like a fool
going insane
rhyme or reason

such a long time
take my hand
eye to eye
in and out
by my side
hurts so bad
can't take it
the test of time
someone like you
all my love
lonely nights
I'll get along
calling out your name
more than friends
fooling around
heaven above
break these chains
take it easy
can't live without you
somebody else
break my heart
try one more time
can't go on
keep holding on
now or never
over the hill
know for sure
hold me tight
tear me apart
play the game
see the light
O baby
all my dreams come true

Rhymes

hand / understand / command
walk / talk
kiss / miss
dance / chance / romance
friend / end
cry / die / try / lie /
good-bye / deny
best / rest / test
love / above / dove
hide / inside / denied
forever / together / never
blues / lose

lover / discover / cover
light / night / sight / tight /
fight / right
take it / make it /
fake it / shake it
change / rearrange
stronger / longer
eyes / realize / sighs / lies
fire / desire / higher
burn / yearn / learn
begun / done
tears / fears

door / before / more
heart / start / apart / part
wrong / strong / song / long
word / heard
arms / charms / harm / warm
true / blue / through
pain / rain / same
maybe / baby
knees / please
touch / much
ache / break

Images

lips
face
soft skin
smooth skin
eyes
hair
stars
night
tears lock
cuts like a knife
perfume
dance floor
telephone
flashing lights

sky
smile
silky hair
kiss
light
shadow
crying
key
chains
glass of wine
feel the beat
bed
knock

voice
moon
sun going down
warmth of arms
hands
door
flowers
fireplace
sweat
lying in bed
door
wall
rose

Metaphors

Broken heart

Drown - in love

Rain - for tears

Storm - for anger, including thunder, lightning, dark, clouds, flashing, wind, hurricane, tornado, etc.

Fire - for love or passion, including burn, spark, heat, flame, too hot, consumed, burned, ashes.

Cold - for emotional indifference, including ice, freeze, frozen, etc.

Light - for knowledge or happiness, including shine, sun, touch the sky, blinded by love, and others

Darkness - for ignorance, sadness and loneliness, including night, blind, shadows, etc....

Seasons - for stages of life or relationships

Walls - for protection from harm, especially from love.

Prison, prisoner - used especially for love, includes chains, etc.

The only way that a writer can use a cliché is to put it in a context that brings out its original meaning or makes a listener see it in a new way. Use your senses and personal experiences if you must use them and try to be original.