

R&B Songwriting

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Welcome to your first songwriting class from the comfort of your home.

This hand out will be a different structure to an interactive class and for that reason, I invite you to become even more creative, free, uninhibited and inspired as you go through the exercises of the class.

Things you will need:

- A pen and paper
- A space in which you feel comfortable singing / playing an instrument.

Exercise 1: Tension release

Lets begin with relaxing the muscles in your body. This is an important step to take before we start singing and creating.

Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds whilst raising your shoulders. Hold this for 2 seconds and then exhale through the mouth, releasing your shoulders and all of the tension.

Repeat this exercise 2 or 3 times

Exercise 2: Vocalisation

Humming

Humming is a great way to wake up your vocal cords and prepare them for singing.

Start by gently humming a low note, with lips slightly parted.

Hum the note slowly, 4 times.

Focus on your breathing each time you hum the note.

Sirens

Now lets take that low note and siren up to the highest note you can reach, then back down again. (Imagine the sound of a siren and try to mimic that using your whole vocal range.)

Lets repeat that 4 times.

Exercise 3: Mind Mapping

So now that your vocal cords and your body are relaxed, you are ready to start writing some lyrics.

Lyric writing is a very personal experience and there really is no right or wrong way to express yourself. The words that your instincts tell you to write, are usually the right ones.

I'm only here to give you ideas, tried and tested formulas and structures that a lot of popular music follows.

I'm going to offer you a different theme each week.

This weeks theme: **Relationships**

You can now take your pen and start jotting down ideas and feelings that come to mind around relationships.

Remember to think outside of the box. A relationship could be -

- one of romance between a man and a woman
- a relationship with a friend/family member or an enemy.
- the relationship you have with money, food, animals etc.
- It could even be the relationship you have with yourself.

Begin by writing down what type of relationship you want the song to be about.

Now decide if this relationship brings you feelings of pleasure or

pain - this will help the listener understand the tone of the song. Is it

- happy
- sad
- angry
- funny
- sentimental

Exercise 4: Lyric Writing

Once you have deciphered these 2 elements, you can start brainstorming a few words or phrases.

The goal today is to come up with at least one lyric that you are happy with and can continue to expand upon.

Here are a few pointers when writing lyrics.

1. Decide who is the subject of the song. If you are the subject of the song, you will be writing in first person and it will be from your perspective.

I.e. *'yesterday, all **my** troubles seemed so far away, now it looks as though they're here to stay, oh **I** believe in yesterday'* – Yesterday, John Lennon

Are you singing to somebody else, this would be second person I.e. *'**You** can dance, **you** can jive, having the time of **your** life...'* - Dancing Queen, Abba

Or are you singing about somebody else, which is called third person I.e. – *'**Eleanor Rigby**, picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been, lives in a dream'* – Eleanor Rigby, The Beatles

2. Think about your rhyming pattern. Once you have come up with a decent first lyric, is the second lyric going to rhyme, or are you going to rhyme the third line with the first line.

Also be mindful of the amount of syllables in each line.

3. **FYI – do not get too bogged down by this, be free. Lyric**

writing is more about rhythm and melody than strict rhyming structures, but usually when words rhyme and have similar amounts of syllables, they end up falling into line with the metre of the song more naturally than if they don't.

A helpful way of going about this, is by clapping out a beat. (Or if you have an instrument, choose 2 chords) Start clapping out a consistent rhythm of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 to give yourself a beat. Keep this looping.

Now try singing or rapping your lyrics in time with your beat and figure out where the words are landing.

4. Do exercise 3 for as long as you want until you begin to formulate something that you feel satisfied with. Once you begin to like what you are writing, make the decision on whether or not it should be a verse or a chorus.

Exercise 5: Song Structure

At the start of last term, we looked quite deeply into song structures. Here is a refresher on 2 of the more common song structures.

- **verse / chorus/ verse/ chorus/ bridge/ chorus** Also known as an ABABCB structure, where A is the verse, B is the chorus and C is the bridge
- **verse/ pre chorus/ chorus/ verse/ pre chorus/ chorus/bridge/chorus** think of 'Son of a preacher man' This song has this structure. The lyrics 'that's when Billy would take me walkin' – is an example of a pre chorus.

As a final exercise, choose one of these 2 structures for your new song and keep the structure in mind whilst writing it.

Happy song writing and good luck! :)

