

THE 4-WEEK SONGWRITING CHALLENGE

WEEK 3: THE STORY

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For this challenge, we're going to write a song starting with a story. We're going to ignore all the other aspects of the song (lyrics, melody, harmony, etc.) and not try to worry about writing singable words, or following a rhyme scheme.

(This is kind of similar to the "outline/summary" section of the hook-based writing challenge, but we're going to go even deeper!)

1. Come up with a story or idea.

First, think about what you want to write about. Don't think because I use the word "story" that it has to be fiction, though! It can be about something you're going through right now, or a topic you've been wanting to write about.

Here are a few things to consider: Who are the characters in the song? Are you writing from your own perspective? Is the song about a person? What tense will you write in? Are you addressing a specific person directly in the song, or just telling a story to your audience?

2. Write the chorus in paragraph form.

We'll start with the chorus. I'm sure you already know: the chorus should convey the main idea of your song. So write out in a few sentences what you want the chorus to say.

NOTE: If you want to write your song in verse-verse-verse form without a chorus, that works really well with a story-driven song. If you choose to do this, try using your chorus material (which will probably end up being your "hook") as the first or last line of each of the verses. This will help create a little repetition in your song, which is the biggest challenge of writing in verse form!

Then decide where they would fit best in the song. Remember the chorus is usually the most memorable part of the song, so I'd put the catchiest bit of melody in the chorus.

Also keep in mind, the verse and the chorus should be somewhat contrasting (ex. faster paced chorus, slower melody in verse).

Now go back and repeat steps #2 and #3 until you have your verse and chorus pretty much worked out.

4. Repeat the process for the bridge

Now that you've got the verse and the chorus worked out, try something crazy different for the bridge! Try improvising in a higher (or lower) part of your vocal range, or slowing down the rhythm of the words. If your song isn't very repetitive, maybe make the bridge the most repetitive part. Or vice versa.

5. Start adding lyrics

Take some time to consider what you want the song to be about, and start adding in lyrics piece by piece.

You may need to tweak the melody a little bit to fit the right number of syllables in (or avoid awkward pronunciations), but you should be able to keep the overall structure of your melody the same.

This can be a great way to write songs for you natural lyricists out there, because it forces you to put more thought into the melody itself, instead of just singing the default melody that comes easiest to you based on your lyrics.