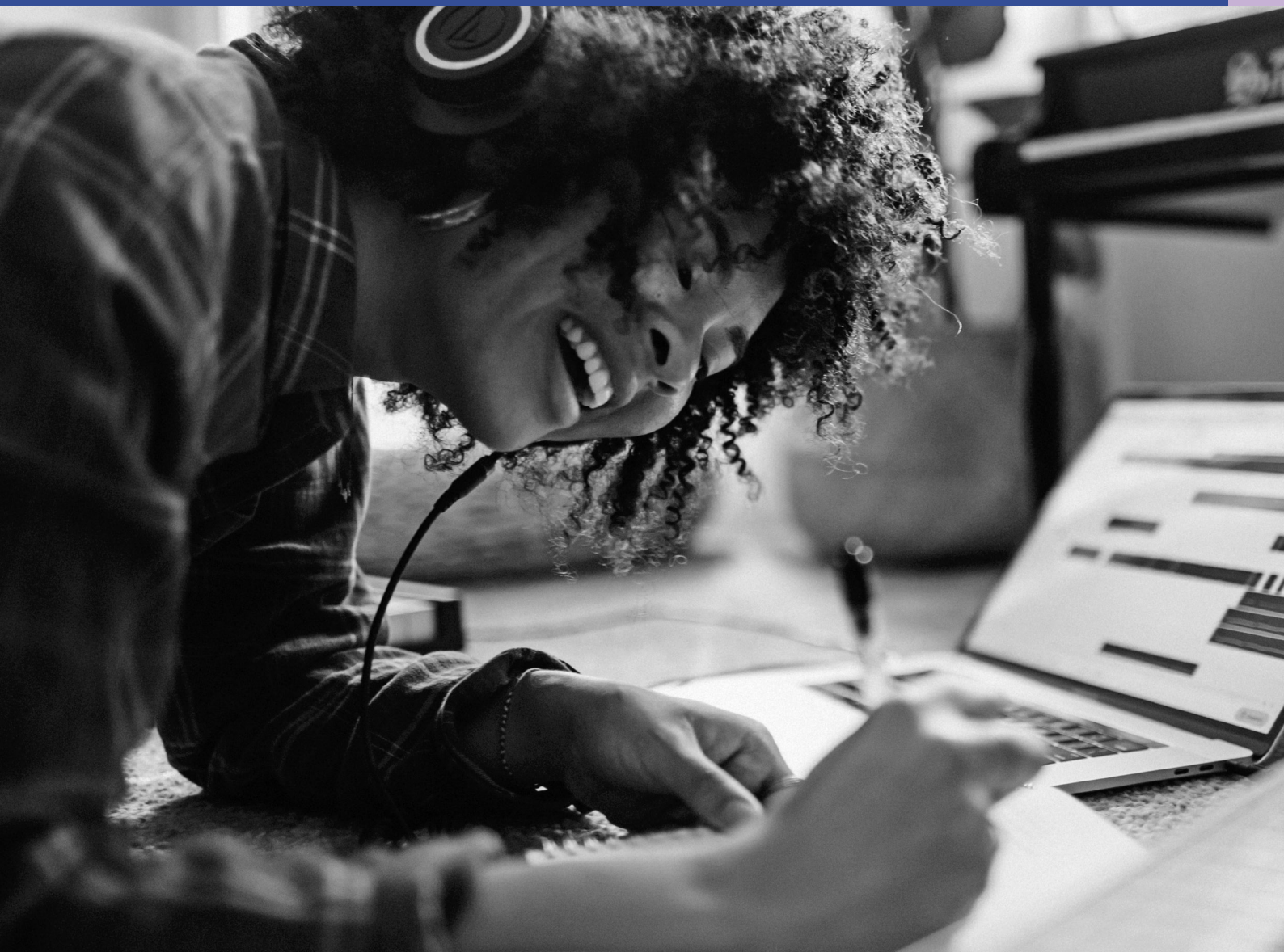




MERSEYSIDE
CREATIVE FUTURES
Songwriting



**Exercise & Resources
Booklet**

SPRING 2023

Songwriting

Preparation and Lyrics 1: Getting Started

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 1

List as many of the following popular song elements as you can:

- **Sections:** How many different sections of a song can you list? What is their purpose?
- **Elements:** What are the important musical and non-musical elements needed for a song?

What instruments do you hear that are common in popular music?

Common Song Structures

AABA – this structure was popular in the 50s and 60s and uses a 32 bar form.

Examples are:

- “Great Balls Of Fire” by Jerry Lee Lewis
- “Surfer Girl” by The Beach Boys

Verse-Chorus Form – this structure, like the AABA, uses only two different sections; a verse and chorus. Examples are:

- “Penny Lane” by The Beatles
- “Smoke On The Water” by Deep Purple

Verse/Chorus/Verse/Chorus/Middle 8 (Bridge)/Chorus – for greater depth and contrast you can add a third section, using a Middle 8 (or Bridge), often to tell the story from another angle. Examples are:

- “High And Dry” by Radiohead
- “Hot N Cold” by Katy Perry

Listen to your
favourite songs;
what sections
and instruments
do they have



Songwriting

Preparation and Lyrics 1: Getting Started

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 2

External Detail:

- Check out the first verse of 'Common People' by the Britpop band Pulp.
Underline the words or phrases that paint the picture (anything you can see, smell, taste, touch or hear).

*She came from Greece she had a thirst for knowledge
She studied sculpture at Saint Martin's College
That's where I
Caught her eye*

- Try underlining the external detail in this Beatles song.

*Eleanor Rigby
Picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream*

- What about this part of the verse and chorus sections from Prince's "Raspberry Beret".

*I was working part time in a five-and-dime
My boss was Mr. McGee
He told me several times that he didn't like my kind
'Cause I was a bit too leisurely...*

*She wore a Raspberry Beret
The kind you find in a secondhand store*

- For extra practise, do the same for this extract from "Red Vines" by Aimee Mann.

*So, you're running 'round the parking lot
Till every lightning bug is caught
Punching some pinholes in the lid of a jar
While we wait in the car*

Pulp front man
and songwriter
Jarvis Cocker gives
us a wonderful
introduction to his
new love interest in
the song. We know
where she's from,
her passions and
where they met.

Extended Learning:

- Using idioms, metaphors, similes and other literary devices is a great middle ground between purely external or internal lyrics and is very common in popular music. Check out these Florence and the Machine lyrics from "Cosmic Love".

*A falling star fell from your heart and landed in my eyes
I screamed aloud, as it tore through them, and now it's left me blind*

She uses concrete words or phrases such as falling star and screamed aloud, that we could identify as external detail, things we can see, hear, touch, smell or taste. However, the context is an abstract one, used to describe her emotions. It still has a greater impact on the listener than the writer simply telling us their emotions directly.

You could search for lyrics of other songs and find the detail that creates the visual image.

Songwriting

Preparation and Lyrics 1: Getting Started

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 3

Try this process a few times to develop your skills

Freewriting

1. **Picture a place/object/person/scene/action** – it could be your favourite cup or coat, your bus stop or local park, an incident that happened yesterday (if you're struggling for a starting point, try using an idea from the getfreewrite.com web link in the resources).
2. **Spend 5-10 minutes freewriting** – detail everything, don't let the pen stop, give as much external detail as possible.
Use all of your senses – sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste.

“ I don't really know what to write. I can't think of anything because **the extractor fans are buzzing like a swarm of bees in the distance.** My teacher is sitting in her **grey swivel chair** waiting for us to finish but **my hand aches from gripping my cracked black plastic biro.** I'm just staring up at the **pale square ceiling panels** trying to find ideas. This room smells like the **sports hall floor cleaner;** it **burns your nostrils!** ”

Example

3. **Go through your freewriting raw material and underline or list the external detail and strong idioms, metaphors and similes.**

We can list the external detail from the above example as:

- Extractor fans buzz like a swarm of bees in the distance
- Grey swivel chair
- Hand aches from gripping
- Black plastic biro
- Pale square panel ceiling
- Sports hall floor cleaner
- Burns your nostrils

Extended Learning:

→ Consider your additional senses; organic sense is your awareness of inner bodily functions (heartbeat, stomach pain, breathing), and kinaesthetic sense is your sense of relation to the world around you (seasickness, rollercoaster experience, when your train is standing still and the one next to you moves) (Pattison, 2009).

Pat Pattison, a lyric writing lecturer at Berklee College of Music, likens freewriting to a tropical island diver freediving for pearls, holding their breath for a little longer each time. The longer you hold your breath, or in this case keep writing, the closer you get to the pearl!

Songwriting

Preparation and Lyrics 1: Getting Started

Exercise & Resource sheet

Suggested Listening:

- The Beatles – “All You Need Is Love”
- Robbie Williams – “Strong”
- Madness – “Baggy Trousers”
- Taylor Swift – “You Belong To Me”
- Ed Sheeran – “Castle On The Hill”

Resources:

60 Ideas You Can Use Today – Writing Prompts:

This is a super list of ideas to ignite your inspiration and get you started with your freewriting:

www.getfreewrite.com/blogs/writing-success/writing-prompts-60-ideas-you-can-use-today

How To Write Vividly Descriptive Lyrics – Lyric Workroom:

<https://lyricworkroom.com/how-to-write-vividly-descriptive-lyrics/>

TIP

Turn Off Your Inner Editor During Freewriting

1. **Turn off ‘show misspelled words’ in your writing program** – if you’re using a computer, disarm those little wiggly red lines that make you want to go back and correct mistakes. You don’t need that distraction!
2. **Use Word Sprints** – stick to your timer, write at a good speed and don’t worry about typos. Will it be messy? You betcha. But it’s a way to train yourself to ignore inner editing.
3. **Write or edit** – don’t do both. Use your writing session to write and another session to edit.
4. **Don’t look at what you’ve written** – then you won’t be tempted to go back and correct or change anything.

blog.janicehardy.com/2019/02/5-ways-to-turn-off-your-onner-editor.html for a full explanation of the above points.

References:

Freewrite (2021) Writing Prompts:

www.getfreewrite.com/blogs/writing-success/writing-prompts-60-ideas-you-can-use-today

Pattison, P (2001) Writing Better Lyrics: Writer’s Digest Books; 1st Edition Thus. (July 15, 2001).

Writers Digest (2009) Generate Ideas Through “Object Writing”:

www.writersdigest.com/wd-books/writing-better-lyrics-excerpt

Janice Hardy’s Fiction University (2019) 5 Ways To Turn Off Your Inner Editor:

<http://blog.janicehardy.com/2019/02/5-ways-to-turn-off-your-inner-editor.html>

Songwriting

Lyrics 2: Rhyme and Rhythm

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 1

In this exercise, develop your understanding of rhyming types:

1. Fill the table below with words that use the same rhyming type.
 2. Discuss with your class to see how you did
- **Perfect** – identical vowel and consonant sound e.g. sand, land
 - **Imperfect/Family** – identical vowel, different consonant sound e.g. bend, lent
 - **Additive** – where a consonant is added to the identical vowel sound e.g. flew becomes flute
 - **Subtractive** – where a consonant is removed e.g. blanked becomes crank

Starting Word	Perfect	Imperfect	Additive/Subtractive
Burn			
Float			
Cause			

Extended Learning:

There are other rhyme types that do not give as strong a rhyme but can still be used effectively. Using strong rhyme is great for choruses or ends of a section; try using weaker rhymes in the middle of a section.

- **Assonance Rhyme** – this is where the vowel sound is the same but the consonant at the end doesn't rhyme strongly, for example plain, gate; float, roam; preach, beast.
- **Consonance Rhyme** – this is where the consonant sound at the end is the same but the vowel is different, for example tail, foil; guard, bird; brace, mice.

Think of words
that have a similar
rhyme sound and
consider which
category they fit into.

Songwriting

Lyrics 2: Rhyme and Rhythm

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 2

1. Form a list of, or underline, the external detail from your freewriting session
2. Create groups of rhyming words

EXERCISE 3

Search the lyrics to a favourite song and try to observe or highlight the following:

- contrast in line length between sections (number of syllables)
- number of lines in each section
- rhyming patterns
- rhyme types (strength of rhyme)

The Suggested Listening list below has some examples of great popular music songs with strong lyrical content

EXERCISE 4

1. Write pairs of lines ending with similar rhyming words from your freewriting
2. Start to form longer sections of lyrical content

Extended Learning:

Learn from Andrea Stolpe, a songwriting teacher at Berklee, California, how to 'toggle' your external and internal detail lines for the strongest impact – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBoSMVkwjvg>

Suggested Listening:

Strong external detail and clear rhyming patterns:

- Jamiroquai – “Cosmic Girl”
- Pulp – “Disco 2000”
- Estelle – “American Boy”
- George Ezra – “Shotgun”
- Cornershop – “Brimful Of Asher”

Resources:

60 Ideas You Can Use Today – Writing Prompts:

This is a super list of ideas to ignite your inspiration and get you started with your freewriting.

How To Write A Song: Use Toggling In Your Lyrics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBoSMVkwjvg>

Songwriting

Lyrics 2: Rhyme and Rhythm

Exercise & Resource sheet

TIP

The Message Always Trumps The 'Perfect Rhyme'

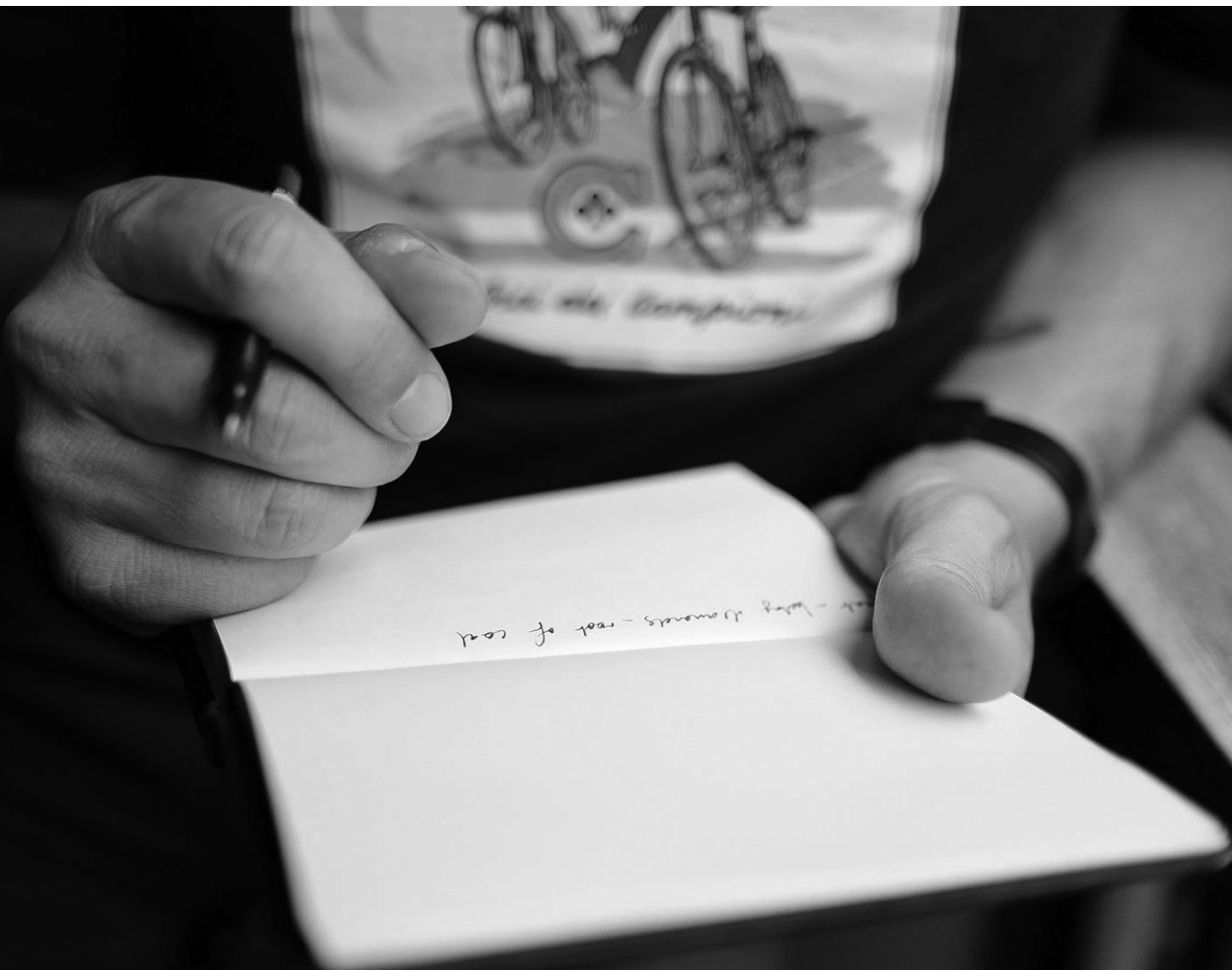
'Allowing yourself to access the full range of different rhymes in your songwriting can allow you to focus more on the message you wish to convey and less on trying to find the "perfect rhyme".'

Also, some words won't strictly follow the rhyming types, 'such as nervously and murmuring' but may still work together. Andrea says to trust your most valuable tool: your ears.

Andrea Stolpe – <https://www.andreastolpe.com/articles/rhyme-types>

References:

Stolpe, A. (2021). Rhyme Types. <https://www.andreastolpe.com/articles/rhyme-types>



Songwriting

Video 3

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 1

Listen to songs and analyse the melodies. Are they single note melodies, small number of notes or big leaps? Can you identify the scale used? Are the rhythms short or longer, held notes? Where is the repetition? Variation? What is the hook?

EXERCISE 2

1. Start by underlining or highlighting the stress syllables of your lyrics
2. Speak the lines to get a feel for the rhythm of each
3. Start to sing the lines with a single note melody
4. Develop the lines by adding extra notes if needed and be conscious of using repetition, variation, and if it's the chorus consider the hook.

When you have written a section, try writing a contrasting bridge section. Contrast can be achieved in a number of ways:

1. Using a different number of lines in each section e.g. "What Makes You Beautiful" 4 line verse, 2 line bridge, 9 line chorus
2. Primarily external detail in the verse, internal detail in the chorus
3. Number of pitches used e.g. 1 note verse, 5 note bridge with leaps, 3 note chorus using scalar steps (G.R.L's "Ugly Heart" uses a single note chorus followed by a much more complex bridge)
4. Varying the rhythms and/or number of words in each line or section
5. Different chords (see below)

Want To Learn Some Chords?

As a songwriter, being able to play a few chords on an accompanying instrument like guitar, ukulele or piano could really help with your writing. You don't need to be a virtuoso; it's a writing tool for supporting your melodies. Search for some easy chords to play and try making a chord sequence out of them (keep it simple – many songs use only 2, 3 or 4 chords).

Try listening to songs
you've never heard
before to broaden your
musical horizons.
Have you ever listened
to David Bowie? How about
Kate Bush?

Songwriting

Video 3

Exercise & Resource sheet

Suggested Listening

Use of single note melody:

- The Killers – “Mr Brightside”
- Toto – “Africa”
- Taylor Swift – “Style”, “Out Of The Woods”, “Blank Space”
- G.R.L – “Ugly Heart”

Use of three notes:

- One Direction – “What Makes You Beautiful”
- Chainsmokers – “Closer”
- Oasis – “Don’t Look Back In Anger”
- Leona Lewis – “Bleeding Love”
- Fall Out Boy – “Sugar, We’re Goin’ Down”

Big leaps:

- Judy Garland in The Wizard Of Oz – “Over The Rainbow”
- Labrinth – “Jealous”
- Elbow – “One Day Like This”

It's more important
that your hook
follows the
stressed syllable rules
than other sections.

Extended Learning

A great example to study is BTS’ “Dynamite”. See if you can identify the following:

- The verses are largely static but use around 3 notes
- The bridge/pre-chorus is predominantly a single note, an almost rapped section
- The chorus has a big leap and a descending scalar run for the main hook
- The ‘Na, na, na...life is dynamite’ vocal hook is on a single note and accompanied by an instrumental version of the chorus melody

Also, here is the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDxTtE3wBy8> to the example “Africa” by Toto being sung in four-part harmony. You can hear how the melody uses a single note and is made more interesting by each additional harmony.

TIP

ALWAYS record your writing sessions!

It can be very frustrating when you weave a colourful new melody through a series of emotive chords, only to get to the end and realise you can’t remember what you have just created.

All smart phones have a voice memo app – press record and never lose that golden moment again.

Songwriting

Video 4

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 1

Learn to play some new chords and create a chord sequence to play.

Search for common chord sequences and chords that work well together for inspiration.

EXERCISE 2

Write a chord sequence to fit under one of your melodies.

1. Sing your melody over a single chord.
2. Choose another chord (maybe from the same key) and try changing to it at different points in your melody.
3. When you've written a sequence for the section, test it as an accompaniment for other sections of melody and write a new sequence if it sounds like it doesn't work as well with other melodies.

EXERCISE 3

Using the four types of accompaniment described in the video, turn your chord sequence into more interesting musical parts you might use underneath your melody.

1. Play notes from a chord at different times such as in "Imagine". This method can be found in John Legend's "All Of Me".
2. Arpeggiate each chord of the sequence like Adele's "Someone Like You". See "Clocks" by Coldplay for another great example.
3. Create a specific rhythmic pattern to play your chord sequence in such as "Foundations" by Kate Nash, "Dance Monkey" by Tones And I or Emile Sande's "Next To Me".
4. Turn your chord sequence into a riff by writing a melodic line for an instrument to play such as in The Stone Roses' "I Am The Resurrection", Metallica's Enter Sandman or "Cake By The Ocean" by DNCE.

Listen to the kind of music
you'd like to write.
Can you hear a lot of
different chords? What
instrument would be
best to write your
chords on



Songwriting

Video 4

Exercise & Resource sheet

Suggested Listening

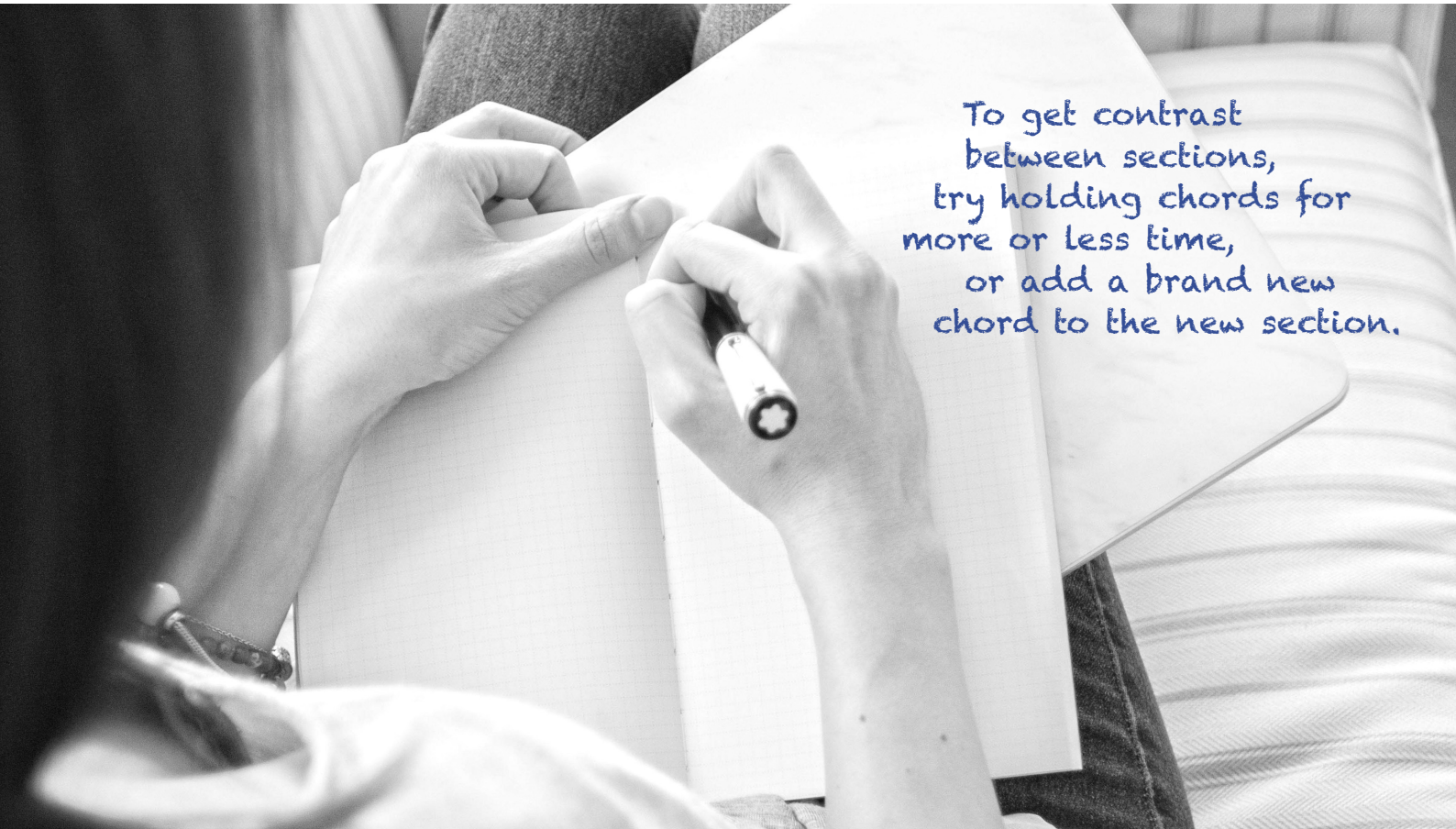
- **4 Chords** – Watch the video to see lots of examples of songs using the same 4 chords found in “What Makes You Beautiful”. This is Axis Of Awesome – “4 Chords” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOIDewpCfZQ>
- **Songs with 2 Chords** – “Lively Up Yourself” by Bob Marley, “You Never Can Tell” by Chuck Berry, “Uptown Funk” by Bruno Mars, “I Think Therefore I Am” by Billie Eilish and many more songs simply alternate between 2 chords.
- **Rock like ACDC** – In this video for guitarists, you can learn to play the chords commonly used by rock legends ACDC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1t8x4zkeVM>
- **Creating Piano Accompaniment** – From beginner to pro, watch how to develop a chord sequence into a piano accompaniment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJM8Qmoalyg>
- **Writing Ukulele Chord Progressions** – Understand keys and related chords on ukulele in this informative video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIBVNZuLnY8>

TIP

Keep it simple!

Don't overwhelm yourself and your listener with complex chord sequences. Stick to a small number of chords until you've really mastered the writing process.

...and don't forget; melody is king (or queen)! The chords are the supporting harmony.



To get contrast
between sections,
try holding chords for
more or less time,
or add a brand new
chord to the new section.

Songwriting

Video 5

Exercise & Resource sheet

EXERCISE 1

There are many ways of inputting musical ideas (laying down tracks) on Garageband. In the video you will see a demonstration of some of them. Use this written guide to support you when recording your own musical ideas.


Drag and Drop

You can drag and drop instrumental parts from the Apple Loops folder into your session. This is shown using a drum loop on the video.

1. Click on the loops to hear them.
2. Click and drag a loop into the main window to use it.

Drawing In Notes

You can draw notes into the grid on a midi track to create your own musical parts.

1. Create a software instrument by clicking the  button and choose software instrument.
2. Use the command button on the keyboard to turn the cursor into a pen – click where you want to create a part.
3. In the grid below the arrange window, use the same process to draw in the notes.
4. Listen back and move the notes around to create the part you want.

Copy and Paste

To make a riff you will need to loop a musical part. You can do this with any part in your track, whether it's an audio loop or a midi file you have created.

1. Click the part you want to repeat.
2. Click Edit>Copy.
3. Place the cursor on the timeline where you want to copy the part.
4. Click Edit>Paste.

You can do this with multiple parts and any type of part.

Adding Audio Effects

This is demonstrated in the video using reverb and echo on the vocal parts.

1. In a Real Instrument track, click on the Edit part of the instruments settings on the right side of the page (not the Edit menu at the top).
2. At the bottom are the Master Echo and Master Reverb – move the fader on each until you achieve the desired affect.

If you want to experiment with other effects, click on any of the presets above or add your own in the blank spaces.

Glossary

The incomplete glossary of Songwriting and Music Terminology

Add your own key words and their meanings as you move along your songwriting journey.

A

Accompaniment – the instrumentation underneath the melody

Arpeggiation/Arpeggio – playing the notes of a chord in succession instead of at the same time

Audio Interface – the technological device that allows you to record your music on the computer by plugging your microphone and instruments into it

B

Bridge – a contrasting section of music and lyrics (in the UK the bridge is often between the verse and chorus – see Robbie Williams’ “Strong”, a section the USA refer to as a pre-chorus/in the USA the bridge is often after the second chorus, a section referred to in the UK as a Middle 8)

C

Chorus – a section of a song, often containing the title, a hook, or the ‘catchiest’ melody, usually lyrically summing up the songs intent or meaning

Chord – two or more notes played together to achieve harmony*

Chord Sequence – a progression of chords serving harmonic function within a song

D

Degree – referring to the number given to a note within a scale e.g. G is the 5th degree of a C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B)

Downbeat – The accented first beat of a group of notes in any metre, e.g. in 1 2 3 | 1 2 3.

E

External detail – descriptive language that details the experience of the senses in lyrics

Effects (Audio) – devices that manipulate how an audio signal sounds e.g. reverb, echo

F

Freewriting – a prewriting technique through which a songwriter writes continuously for a set period detailing the experience of the senses on a specific subject or focus

G

Garageband – Apple’s entry Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) for recording music

H

Hook – a catchy, melodic and/or lyrical phrase in a song, often containing the title or an important message from the song

I

Intro – the opening section to a song, often instrumental

Instrumental – a section in a song not containing vocals – sometimes has its own hook or melodic theme

Internal detail – abstract language explaining feelings, emotions or thoughts

J

K

L

Lyrics – the words to a song

Line – a set of words/lyrics, usually rhymed by another line before or after

M

Melody – the musical ‘sentence’ that makes sense played or sung on its own* (the tune)

Metrical/Metre – the different groupings of beats, most commonly occurring in 2, 3 and 4 time*

Microphone – a piece of recording equipment for inputting vocals or other musical instruments

Midi Keyboard – a piano-style electronic musical keyboard, often with buttons, wheels and sliders to control pitch, modulation or other assignable parameters

N

O

Outro – the final section to a song, often instrumental

Ornamentation – the embellishment of a melody, often where notes are added and/or rhythms are changed

Glossary continued

The incomplete glossary of Songwriting and Music Terminology

Add your own key words and their meanings as you move along your songwriting journey.

P

Pentatonic Scale – A scale with five notes, e.g. C D E (F) G A (B), very common in folk music*

Pre-verse – a short musical section preparing the following verse

Pre-chorus – see Bridge

Pitch – How high or low a note is*

Q

R

Recording Software – Digital Audio Workstation or DAW, for inputting musical ideas on a computer

Repetition – to repeat or loop a musical idea

Reverb – an effect where the original sound is manipulated to sound in a different space such as a hall or cathedral

Rhyme – where words have a corresponding sound, often at the end

Rhyming pattern – a scheme of rhyme at the end of each line of a section or song

Rhythm – Variable sound patterns that fit over a steady pulse or beat. In songs, rhythms are dictated by the arrangement of syllables*

Riff – Known in classical styles as Ostinato; a musical phrase or rhythm which is repeated*

S

Scale – A sequence of eight adjacent notes which together span an octave*

Scalic (run/steps) – where a melody uses successive notes from a scale

Scanning/scan – comes from the term scansion, meaning the metrical or rhythmic pattern of a line or phrase. In Songwriting, we often try to place the stressed syllables in words on the beat for better scanning

Solo – a section of music where the focus is on a specific instrumentalist e.g. a guitar solo

Structure – how a piece is organised*

Syncopation – playing on the off-beat*

T

Title – the name of the song

Tune – see Melody

U

V

Variation (melodic) – where a melody uses a similar pitch and rhythm to the previous line but with some change

Verse – a section of a song often used to tell the story and develop characters

W

X

Y

Z

**Explanation taken from the Model Music Curriculum Glossary – For further relevant musical terminology visit [Model_Music_Curriculum_Appendices.pdf](#)*

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developing the
resources.



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