



STORYTELLING IN SONGWRITING

21 STEPS TO A WRITTEN LYRIC

OR A SONGWRITER'S ROADMAP
TO NARRATIVE SONGWRITING

LyricMastery

THE #1 SECRET OF A GREAT SONG

Picture this: *you're sitting in a dimly lit room, the strumming of a guitar filling the air as the lyrics of a song weave a story that draws you in, transporting you to another world. The melody is mesmerizing, but it's the story within the lyrics that truly captivates your soul. You might wonder, what's the secret behind these captivating songs that not only move us but that communicate a meaningful message that lingers in our minds long after the last note has faded?*

The secret is narrative songwriting.

Narrative songwriting is the art of telling a story through your lyrics, creating a vivid tapestry that pulls listeners into the heart of your song.

Using the power of storytelling in songwriting will allow you to emotionally **move** your audience, keep them **engaged**, **communicate** what matters to you with **universal appeal**, and provide a **meaningful** takeaway that can make all the difference in your listeners' lives.

It's not just throwing things at the wall and seeing what sticks. It's about skillfully crafting powerful and impactful lyrics that can change people's lives - every time.

NARRATIVE SONGWRITING

If you're interested in learning how to write kickass song lyrics that resonate with your audience, you've come to the right place! My secret sauce? Storytelling!



Let me tell you, storytelling has more power over humans than a box of donuts 🍩 in an office break room. Storytelling connects us, intrigues us, and keeps us on the edge of our seats.

I mean, **have you ever tried to resist a good story?** Impossible!

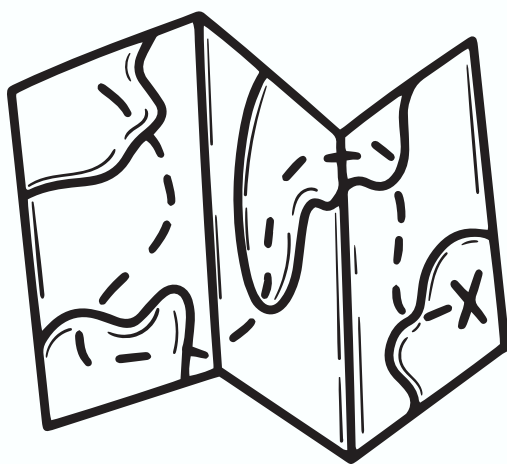
They're everywhere because we just can't get enough. Plus, they used to be crucial for our survival, and now they're essential for our entertainment and enlightenment.

And you know what else stories do for us?

They make us feel a little less alone in this crazy world. They show us what's good, beautiful, and meaningful in life. That's why songs that tell a story are so important! They have the ability to empower us and lift us up when we need it the most (and some even provide us with a warning!)

But let's be real. **Writing a song that truly connects with people isn't easy.** It's a long and winding road full of obstacles like procrastination, writer's block, and insecurity.

It can be a real struggle, when you don't know where to begin or where to go, or how to weave it together. But don't worry, I've got your back!



I've developed **a roadmap for successful songwriting** that includes 21 steps to writing lyrics that people will love to sing along to. It your blueprint to come up with song ideas and develop the story into a finished lyric.

Trust me, you're not alone on this journey, and **I'm here to help you navigate the twists and turns along the way.** And who knows, there may already be a crowd of people out there waiting to hear your amazing song!

Narrative songwriting is the key to writing captivating lyrics.

And most of all, narrative songwriting is not dependent on a music genre like i.e. country, but even today's most popular songs as well as the songs that lasted over decades rely on the power of narrative songwriting.

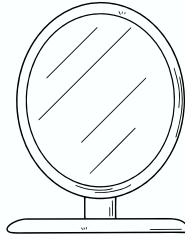
"Flowers" by Miley Cyrus

From the very beginning, Miley shares her story with the audience, stating *"We were good. We were gold"*. By using the past tense, she hints that things have taken a turn. This raises the question, *"What happened?"* and we soon learn about their breakup. However, the real essence of the song lies in its chorus, which carries an empowering message.

Miley wants her listeners to know they are good enough, even if they are single again. The chorus is so captivating that it makes people want to sing along, believing in its message.

And was the song successful? Yes, the song is incredibly successful and broke multiple records. It became the most streamed song on Spotify during both its first and second week. It has reached 1.16 billion global audio streams (*April 2023*). It debuted at number one on the Billboard Global 200 chart and topped charts in 40 countries, including the US and UK.





"Mirrors" by Justin Timberlake

"Mirrors" by Justin Timberlake is a heartfelt love song that tells the story of a deep and profound connection between two people who perfectly complement each other. The lyrics explore the idea that the protagonist's partner is a reflection of himself, acting as his "mirror" and showing him who he truly is. The song delves into themes of self-discovery, love, and the power of a strong emotional bond between two individuals.

And was the song successful?

Released in 2013 as part of Timberlake's third studio album, "The 20/20 Experience," "Mirrors" was a **major commercial and critical success**. The song reached the top 10 in numerous countries, including the United States, where it peaked at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. It also topped the charts in the United Kingdom and several other countries.

"Mirrors" has received widespread acclaim for its heartfelt lyrics, Timberlake's emotive vocal performance, and the song's lush production. The track has been recognized with several awards and nominations, including a Billboard Music Award for Top Radio Song and an MTV Video Music Award for Best Editing.

The song's success and enduring popularity have solidified "Mirrors" as one of Justin Timberlake's most iconic and beloved tracks, **showcasing his growth as a songwriter** and performer while **resonating with fans** worldwide.

"I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor

This song, released in 1978, is a powerful and iconic disco anthem that tells the story of a woman who discovers her inner strength and resilience after a heart-wrenching breakup. The song's main character initially feels shattered by her lover's departure, but as the song progresses, she realizes that she can overcome the pain and emerge stronger than before.

The lyrics depict her journey from vulnerability to empowerment, as she asserts her independence and ability to move forward without her former partner.

And was the song successful? Heck, yes!

"I Will Survive" was an instant success and has become an enduring classic. It topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the United States and achieved similar success in several other countries. The song's **powerful message** of self-reliance and perseverance resonated with audiences worldwide, turning it into a timeless anthem for those facing adversity.

The song has been covered by various artists over the years and has been featured in numerous films, television shows, and commercials. Its enduring popularity and cultural impact have cemented "*I Will Survive*" as one of the most successful and influential songs in popular music history.



"Like A Rolling Stone" by Bob Dylan

This is a landmark song that tells the story of a once-privileged woman who experiences a dramatic fall from grace. The protagonist, once wealthy and influential, now finds herself alone and adrift, "*with no direction home*." The song's lyrics convey a sense of disillusionment and a loss of innocence, with the chorus repeatedly asking, "*How does it feel to be on your own?*" The narrative serves as a critique of societal norms and superficial values.

And was the song successful?

Released in 1965 as a single and part of Dylan's album "Highway 61 Revisited," "Like a Rolling Stone" was an immediate success and has since become one of the most influential songs in the history of popular music. The song peaked at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the United States and reached the top ten in several other countries.

"Like a Rolling Stone" is often hailed as a groundbreaking track due to its innovative fusion of rock and folk music, its **poetic and evocative lyrics**, and its unconventional length for a single at the time (over six minutes). The song's impact has been recognized by numerous publications, including Rolling Stone magazine, which ranked it as the greatest song of all time in its 2004 and 2010 lists of "The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time." The song has been covered by various artists and continues to be celebrated for its boldness, **its introspective storytelling**, and its role in shaping the direction of popular music.

"Like a Rolling Stone" remains one of Bob Dylan's most successful and iconic songs, highlighting his **exceptional talent as a songwriter** and musician.

"Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson

This song tells the story of a young woman who claims that the protagonist is the father of her child. The lyrics revolve around the protagonist's insistence that the child is not his son and that the woman's accusations are false. The song's narrative touches on themes of deceit, obsession, and the burden of fame.

And was the song a hit?

Released in 1983 as part of Michael Jackson's sixth studio album, "Thriller," "Billie Jean" was a massive success, both commercially and critically. The song topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the United States for seven weeks and reached the top of the charts in numerous other countries as well. It has since been recognized as **one of the greatest songs of all time**, with its innovative sound, memorable bassline, and **captivating storytelling**.

The song's enduring popularity, along with its influence on pop culture and music history, has solidified "Billie Jean" as one of Michael Jackson's most successful and iconic songs.

Still in Doubt? Check out the accolades for Eminem's song "STAN", or the concept album "The Black Parade" by My Chemical Romance! or Bob Dylan! or... or... or

Now if you want to leverage the power of narrative songwriting and write song lyrics that resonate with your audience and that they want to listen to and sing along with, then diving into the craft of storytelling in songwriting without a plan won't work because that's the #1 mistake that only leads to getting stuck. Here's why...

THE #1 MISTAKE

One of the most common mistakes made by songwriters is starting to write lyrics **without having a clear idea** of what they want to express / where they want to go in their lyrics.

This misconception often arises from the belief that creativity is an uncontrollable force that can only be harnessed by waiting for inspiration to strike and then riding its unpredictable waves. Maybe you've tried to stay on those waves. Then you know how hard it is to get back into the emotion and the mindset of the song.

For some, the idea of planning feels like constraining their inspiration, limiting their artistic freedom, and hindering their creative flow. But if you continue to write without a plan, this approach can backfire!



If you write without a clear direction, you may experience consequences that are as tangled as a ball of yarn after a playful kitten gets ahold of it. Frustration, confusion, and despair can become your constant companions as you attempt to **navigate the labyrinth of your own creation.**

The first verse may become a crowded party, with every idea vying for attention, while the rest of the song lingers awkwardly in the corner. Months may pass, and yet the song remains a patchwork of disjointed thoughts, never seeing the light of day.



That's why it's time to let blueprinting the lyrics take center stage!

By sketching out the main theme, message, and narrative structure before penning the lyrics, you can give your creativity a playground instead of a cage. This roadmap acts as a trusty guide, ensuring lyrics stay on course and ideas blossom with purpose. Embracing the art of blueprinting allows you to blend inspiration with intention, crafting lyrics that captivate and resonate while finally waving goodbye to those unfinished lines collecting dust in the corner.

ABOUT ME



My name is Melanie Naumann.

I'm a writer, developmental editor, and founder of the project "Lyric Mastery", where I help aspiring songwriters with writing a song lyric from the initial idea to completion.

Lyric Mastery is about teaching you how to tell captivating stories in your song lyrics by leveraging the power of narrative songwriting.

I'm honored to have you on this this adventurous journey with me.



EVERY SONGWRITER TACKLES ONE BIG CHALLENGE:

Writing a song from start to finish is one big adventure.

Wrapping what's on your heart and mind into a compelling experience that engages your audience and makes them feel better is a challenge, but it's one we can master together.

And to help you get started with writing your lyrics with intention and clarity, here are my 21 steps to getting your lyrics finished.

21 STEPS TO A WRITTEN LYRIC



1. Start with an idea for your song

such as a personal experience, struggle, desire, or something that's been on your mind & that is important to you!



2. Check the relevancy of your idea

Check if your idea addresses a common human need or experience so you can ensure it resonates with others.



3. Define the main problem

or obstacle/challenge you want to address. What's the mess your song's main character will find themselves in?



4. Clarify how the narrative in your song should end.

This may evolve during the writing process, but you need to establish the ending at the beginning.



5. Stories are about Change!

Consider what transformation the song's main character will undergo.



6. Define your Message

Identify the message you want to convey in your song. Condense it into a single sentence to stay focused.

21 STEPS TO A WRITTEN LYRIC



7. Define your song's main character's goal

and motivation. What do they want and why do they want it?



8. Consider the stakes & sacrifices

Determine what's at risk if your song's main character fails to overcome their challenges. Decide what sacrifice they must make to succeed.



9. Choose the trigger event

that throws your song's main character's life out of balance and introduces the problem/challenge that is to overcome.



10. Find the Turning Point

Identify the pivotal moment that changes everything for your song's main character and throws them into a binary "This-or-That" crisis



11. Know the dilemma of your song's main character and their decision!

Build tension by including or hinting at a difficult decision that shows the stakes come with a cost. It should transform the character or situation and their choice should reveal their true nature and priorities.

21 STEPS TO A WRITTEN LYRIC



12. Create the outline of the narrative

you want to tell in your song. Use the previous elements to outline your lyric's structure. Show how your lyrics' narrative changes from the beginning to the ending of the song.



13. Define when and where

the song's narrative will take place.



14. Define what and why

Define the literal actions that show your song's main character dealing with the problem they face, and remember their reasons of why they do what they do. Their literal expression is always an expression of their microstrategy and/or their climax decision!



15. Choose the Point of View and the Tense

What is the perspective from which you tell the story? And will you use past, present, or future tense? Or a combination?



16. Write the chorus

that summarizes the overall message of your song. What are the words you want your audience to sing along to? Or not?



17. Craft the verses

that build on the story and lead to the chorus.

21 STEPS TO A WRITTEN LYRIC



18. Keep your target audience in mind.

and use language and references they will understand.



19. Edit your lyrics multiple times

to refine and perfect them so that you get your message across in the best possible way without being preachy.



20. Practice performing your song

to make sure the lyrics flow naturally and are easy to remember.



21. Play the song to a small audience.

Do not record or release the song without having at least three people giving feedback on the lyrics.



Ideas



STEP #1

Start with an idea for your song such as a personal experience, struggle, desire, or something that's been on your mind & that is important to you!

If you want to write a killer song, the first step is to come up with an idea. But where do you start? Well, **it can be anything that inspires you** - a personal experience, a story you've heard, a feeling you're trying to express, or something that's been on your mind for a while.

The key is to **choose an idea that you're passionate about** and that you can connect with on a personal level. Your audience will be able to tell if you're not invested in your own lyrics and trust me, nobody wants to listen to a song that the artist doesn't even care about. So, pick something that you care about deeply and that you know your listeners will relate to. What works best is a struggle, a problem, a deep desire or something you would take a stand for/against.

Once you have your idea, it's time to get creative! Think about how you want to **approach your idea**. Do you want to write about it from your own perspective, or do you want to create a character to tell the story? Do you want to write a happy-go-lucky song or something more melancholic? Don't worry about getting everything perfect at this stage, just let your ideas flow and jot them down as they come to you.

Another thing to keep in mind is that **your idea should be engaging and interesting**. Nobody wants to listen to a song about something boring or mundane. Try to find the hook or the unique angle that will make your idea stand out.

To sum it up, step 1 is all about starting with an idea that you're passionate about, that your audience can connect with, and that is interesting and engaging.



STEP #2

Check the relevancy of your idea and that it addresses a common human need or experience so you can ensure it resonates with others.

Writing songs with universal appeal is the ultimate goal to take something that is meaningful to you and write it in a way so that other people get it, relate to it, feel it. And even think this song has been written just for them. So we aim to write songs that are not only personal and speak to you — to you as the writer — but that also speak to lots of people.

That's why we have to pay attention to our universal human needs — even in our songwriting. Abraham Maslow came up with the Hierarchy Of Needs. We all have that need to survive, right? That is our most basic, physiological need. And then we have that need for SAFETY, for LOVE and Belonging, for esteem, for achievement, for self-respect, third-party respect, and admiration. Last but not least, we have the need for Self-Actualization and for self-transcendence.

And when it comes to writing songs with universal appeal, the first thing you need to know is which human need will you address. Every song we write should revolve around one of those universal human needs.

Because those things are the universal things anyone can relate to.

Make sure you know what universal human need your song should revolve around. Check out songs you like and categorize them to collect examples for each human need! You'll be surprised!

STEP #3

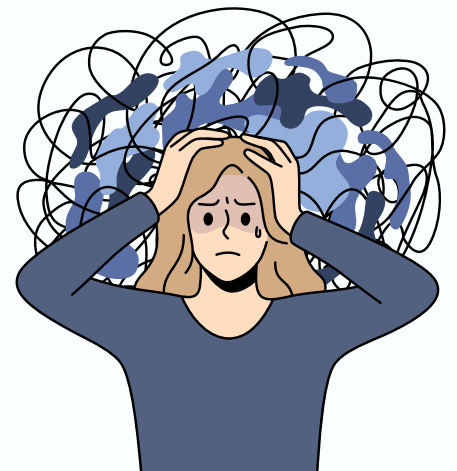
Define the main problem or obstacle/challenge you want to address. What's the mess your song's main character will find themselves in?

Think of your song's main character as the protagonist in a story. They could be a real person, a fictional character, or even yourself. Regardless of who they are, **every narrative needs conflict** to keep things interesting. This conflict could be anything from a broken heart, a difficult decision to make, or even a struggle to find one's place in the world.

So, why is defining the main problem or obstacle so important?

Well, **it gives your song focus and direction**. When you know what your character is up against, it becomes easier to create a narrative that builds towards a resolution. Plus, it helps your listeners connect with your lyrics on a deeper level. They may even relate to the problem or obstacle in their own lives, making your song all the more impactful.

Don't be afraid to get creative and think outside the box. The problem or obstacle doesn't have to be something dramatic or life-altering - it could be something as simple as getting over a bad breakup or struggling to find motivation to chase your dreams. **The key is to make it personal and relatable.**



Take some time to define the main problem or obstacle/challenge you want to address in your song. Get specific and don't be afraid to let your imagination run wild. With a clear problem in mind, you'll be on your way to creating a compelling and unforgettable lyric.

STEP #4

Clarify how the narrative in your song should end. This may evolve during the writing process, but you need to establish this at the beginning.

Step 4 is all about establishing the ending of your narrative. Now, you might be thinking, *"Why do I need to know the ending already? Can't I just see where the story takes me?"* Well, my friend, while it's true that the narrative of your song may evolve as you write, **it's important to have a general idea of where you want it to end up.**



Think of it like taking a road trip without a destination in mind. Sure, you might enjoy the journey, but you'll likely end up driving in circles and wasting time. When you know where you want to go, you can map out your route and get there efficiently.

The same goes for songwriting. **When you have a clear idea of the ending you want to achieve, you can craft your verses in a way that builds towards that conclusion.** It helps you stay focused on the message you want to convey, and it gives your listeners a satisfying resolution to the story you're telling.

Of course, that doesn't mean you have to stick to your original ending no matter what. As you write, you may find that your narrative takes a different turn, or that a different ending would better suit the story you're trying to tell. That's all part of the creative process, and it's important to be open to those changes.

By clarifying your desired ending at the beginning, you give yourself a solid foundation to build upon. You'll be able to craft your lyrics with intention and purpose, and that intentionality will shine through in the final version.



STEP #5



Consider what transformation the song's main character will undergo.

Step 5 of writing a song lyric is all about transformation – specifically, the transformation of the song's main character.

Now, you might be thinking, *"What the heck does that mean? Are we talking about werewolves and vampires here?"* Not exactly (but hey, if that's your thing, go for it!).

Transformation in narrative songwriting refers to the change that the main character experiences throughout the course of the song's narrative. Maybe they start out as a jaded, closed-off individual, but by the end of the song they've learned to let their guard down and let love in. Or maybe they're struggling with addiction, but through the course of the song they find the strength to seek help and turn their life around.

Think of transformation as **the journey that the character** goes on throughout the song. It's the arc of their story, and it's what keeps your listeners engaged and invested in the lyrics. Without transformation, your song can feel flat and one-dimensional – and nobody wants that!

So start by asking yourself: What is the character's starting point – where are they emotionally, mentally, physically? What is the key event or experience that leads to their transformation? What does their transformation look like? How do they feel at the end of the song?

These questions will help you create a dynamic, multi-dimensional character that your listeners can relate to and root for.

Plus, by focusing on transformation, you'll be able to craft a story that's not only engaging, but also emotionally resonant. Trust me, your listeners will thank you for it.

STEP #6

Identify the message you want to convey in your song. Condense it into a single sentence to stay focused.

We've all had moments when we fell to pieces and didn't know how we could pull ourselves off the ground and put us back together. And a song can turn a hopeless situation into a new perspective. And when it comes down to it, when we're teetering on a razor's edge, a song can save a life.



Every songwriter should be aware of the power of the words they write. They can use their words to change someone's beliefs. They can give them the certainty they need to get back into a positive mindset. They can show what's wrong and what's right. They can show what actions are prescriptive, and which ones we shouldn't do to avoid pain. And even in those cautionary tales, we find meaning.

A song can guide us. It's all about that emotional connection you have with someone and addressing their problem so they feel understood, and through that, help them recognize, understand, and solve the problem they're dealing with. And when it's about addressing a problem, challenge, or a struggle, you can draw inspiration from your life. And you can show how you made your way through the mess. And with that story, you can turn that mess into a message.

You can show how people can triumph even after going through bad times. You can empower them to believe in themselves and find the confidence to carry on.

Define the message that you want your lyrics to communicate. Start by making a choice between wanting to tell a prescriptive or a cautionary tale. Then, dive deeper, look at the transformation / change, and ask yourself: what do you want the listener to take away from the story?

STEP #7

Define your song's main character's goal and motivation. What do they want and why do they want it?

Every great story needs a protagonist with a clear goal and motivation, and your song is no exception.

So, what do we mean by "goal and motivation?"

Essentially, you want to define what your main character wants to achieve and why they want to achieve it. Are they searching for love? Longing for acceptance? Striving for success? Whatever it is, you need to make it crystal clear in your lyrics.

Why is this important, you ask?

Well, for starters, it gives your audience something to root for. When we hear a song, we want to connect with the lyrics and feel like we're going on a journey with the singer.

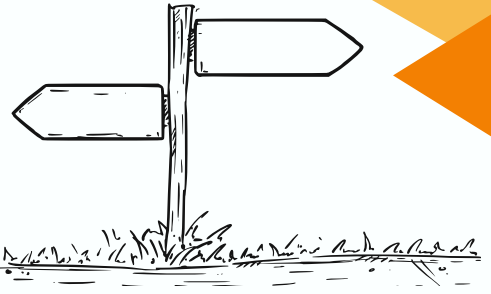
By giving your character a relatable goal, your listeners will be able to put themselves in their shoes and feel invested in their story.

But it's not just about making your audience feel something – defining your character's goal and motivation can also help you as a songwriter. It gives you a clear direction to take your lyrics, and can help you come up with more specific and powerful imagery to describe the character's journey.



Take some time to really think about your character and what they want. Write it down, brainstorm different scenarios and emotions that might be involved. And don't be afraid to get creative – the more unique and specific your character's goal, the more compelling your song will be. *(And it must be connected to the chosen human need!)*

STEP #8



Determine what's at risk if your song's main character fails to overcome their challenges. Decide what sacrifice they must make to succeed.

In every story, the protagonist will have a choice to make. And they will be at a crossroads where there is no going back and no moving on without making a decision first. In that choice, they will understand what is at stake and the sacrifice they have to make for one or the other option.

And when we talk about stakes, there must be something at risk. There must be something to gain, but also to lose – for both options.

Because if we want their crisis decision to be meaningful, we need to include **stakes**. Otherwise, their choice won't matter and it won't make an impact on the audience. If nothing is at stake, why should we care about what choice the protagonist makes, right?

So stakes help to keep your audience engaged. Because a compelling problem will only get your audience so far before the excitement wears off. As your song's character starts their quest to pursue their goal, the risks to them must intensify. And that will keep the listener invested in paying attention to the lyrics to find out what happens.

So, with each turn, with every choice, the stakes increase. They will have more skin in the game. More to lose! And at one point, when they hit the crisis, they will have to make a **sacrifice**. They will sacrifice one option because in a real choice with meaningful stakes, they cannot have all they want. The choice the song's main character faces must be between two mutually exclusive options.

By choosing option A, the character completely forgoes option B and vice versa. No matter what the character chooses, they are giving up something. So that's what we mean by including a sacrifice. It's to renounce something. In order to get something else.

STEP #9

Choose the trigger event that will throw your song's main character's life out of balance.



Choosing the trigger event that **sets your song's story in motion is like choosing the opening scene of a movie** - it's what grabs your audience's attention and sets the tone for what's to come. It's the moment when your main character's life is thrown out of balance, and everything changes.

This trigger event could be anything - a breakup, a death, a new job, a move to a new city, a personal realization - **anything that creates conflict** or disruption in your character's life. It's the moment that sets your song's story in motion and sets your character on a journey of self-discovery, growth, or change.

The trigger event is important because **it sets the stakes for your character's journey**. It creates a sense of urgency and purpose, driving your character forward and giving them a reason to keep going even when things get tough. It also helps your listeners connect with your character on a deeper level, as they empathize with their struggles and root for them to overcome their challenges.

When choosing your trigger event, it's important to think about what kind of story you want to tell and **what message you want to convey**. Is your song about heartbreak and loss, or about new beginnings and second chances? Whatever the case may be, your trigger event should be a reflection of your song's overall theme and tone.

So, take some time to brainstorm and think about what kind of trigger event will best serve your song's story. Get creative, take risks, and most importantly, have fun with it!

STEP #10



Find the Turning Point & identify the pivotal moment that changes everything for your song's main character and that throws them into a binary "This-or-That" crisis

The trigger event awakened a goal state and set up the problem / a disturbance your song's main character will have to deal with. And they get on their way to solve that problem to either get back to how things used to be, or get to a better place. And on their way to reach that goal, they encounter obstacles that stand in their way, affordances that help them move closer to their goal, as well as irrelevancies that they can't make sense of yet. And all those **progressive complications** are nothing else than the invisible phere gorilla poking them to understand the real problem that they're facing.

Because when our song's main character sets out to get what they want, they have certain micro strategies that they use to address each obstacle or affordance that they encounter with each progressive complication. But when they reach the **turning point**, they find that the initial strategy that they were employing no longer works. So all that means is that the initial disturbance now turns into an internal problem!

This moment illustrates that their tactics are failing because of a larger problem. Their strategy is not suited to the situation at hand. It shines a spotlight on the invisible phere gorilla, revealing its true nature and, at the same time, exposing the flaws in the character's worldview, or their cognitive frame that had allowed the true nature of the inciting interaction to stay invisible for so long. So you can look at the turning point as a special progressive complication – another unexpected event – but in comparison to the inciting interaction – the turning point is all about problem realization – which is all about coming to understand that you have a problem you don't know how to solve. Because it's a double-factor problem. That's what the protagonist comes to understand. There are stakes involved. There's something to lose, there's something to gain. But there's a risk, and they have to sacrifice something or someone to be able to move forward.

STEP #11

Know the dilemma of your song's main character and their decision! Build tension by including or hinting at a difficult decision that shows the stakes come with a cost. It should transform the character or situation and their choice should reveal their true nature and priorities.

The crisis is a choice between incompatible options with meaningful stakes. And the turing point catapults the song's protagonist into a crisis in which they learn that the inciting interaction means they face a double-factor problem which is a specific dilemma with two options left to influence the inevitable value shift.

The crisis can be a best bad, irreconcilable goods, or a tragic choice. At the core, the crisis is about whether to transform and grow as a person, or to double down on their existing worldview and tactics and try to hold on to what they've done before (only possible when the character is aware of the real problem they face and the options available).

And when the character must choose one path, it forces them to reveal their true character. We learn about them by observing which values they prioritize over others and which costs are justified to achieve an outcome. For example, it's easy to say what we value but the true test is whether we will stand by that value when we must pay a price. Because when they face a dilemma, the kind of person who goes left is not the same kind of person as the one who goes right.

Furthermore, it is important that these risks are embedded within the text – so they are either seen, known, or understood.

Remember, you don't have to mention the crisis explicitly. But the listener must be able to tell through how the narrative progresses, what the crisis options must have been – as well as what the stakes of each option were.

STEP #12

Create a rough outline of the story you want to tell in your song. Define what will happen in your lyrics' narrative. How will it change from the beginning to the ending of the song?

A vertical list of five numbered boxes (1-5) with arrows pointing down between them, each followed by a horizontal line for writing.

This step is where the real magic begins. It's time to start shaping your ideas into a rough outline of the story you want to tell in your song. This is where you define what will happen in your lyrics' narrative and how it will change from the beginning to the end of the song.

Think of it like a road trip - you need to know where you're starting from, where you're headed, and all the exciting stops you'll make along the way. This is what your rough outline is all about. **You want to map out the journey your song will take your listeners on, with a clear beginning, middle, and end.**

Start by jotting down the **main idea or message** you want to convey in your song. From there, think about the emotions and experiences you want to evoke in your audience. Do you want them to feel sad, happy, or inspired? What events or experiences will help you achieve this?

As you begin to flesh out your lyrics, focus on creating a narrative that has a clear arc. Your story should build to a climax, and then resolve itself in the end. This doesn't mean your song has to have a happy ending, but it should feel complete and satisfying to your listeners.

Remember, your rough outline is just that - rough. It's okay if it's messy or incomplete at this stage. The important thing is that you have a general roadmap to follow as you begin to craft your lyrics. With a strong narrative foundation, you'll be able to create lyrics that are both cohesive and impactful, leaving a lasting impression.

STEP #13

Define when and where the song's narrative will take place.

When? Where?

Step 8 of writing a song lyric is all about **defining the time and place where your story will unfold**. This may seem like a small detail, but it can actually have a huge impact on the overall feel of your song.

Think about it - if you're telling a story that takes place in the 1950s, you'll want to use language and references that are appropriate for that time period. On the other hand, if your story takes place in the present day, you'll want to use more modern language and references.

Similarly, the location of your story can have a **big impact on the mood and tone of your song**. If you're telling a story that takes place in a bustling city, you might want to use fast-paced, energetic language to reflect the frenetic energy of the setting. On the other hand, if your story takes place in a quiet, rural town, you might want to use more mellow, relaxed language to reflect the peaceful atmosphere.

Defining the time and place of your narrative also allows you to **use imagery and sensory language to paint a vivid picture** for your listeners. By describing the sights, sounds, and smells of your chosen setting, you can transport your audience to another time and place, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in your story.

Think about how you can use language and imagery to bring your setting to life and create a mood that complements your story. And also how can the setting create or enforce the conflict your song's main character faces?

What? **STEP #14** Why?

Define the literal actions that show your song's main character dealing with the problem they face, and remember their reasons of why they do what they do. Their literal expression is always an expression of their microstrategy and/or their climax decision!

To best understand **literal action**, imagine you were a camera watching the song's main character through your camera lens. So this is all about what you can see. It has nothing to do with what you feel about it or why they might be doing what they do... it's just the things you can observe them do. What can you watch them literally do? What are they saying? What can we see from the outside? Think about this step in terms of an activity that they do. And include at least one literal action in your lyrics – preferably their climactic choice. It's always great when the listener can picture your song's main character doing something instead of just floating in an empty void.

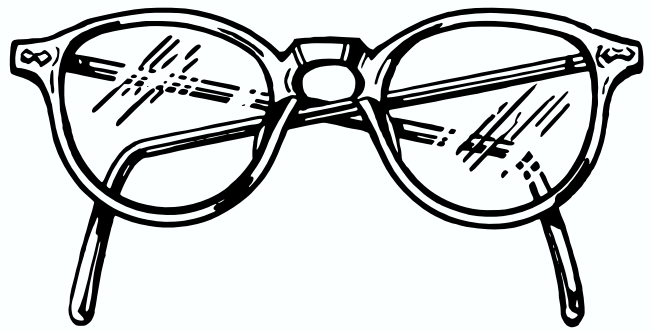
And when we want to understand why the characters do what they do, and why it is happening, we have to break out of that frame of just being a camera. We have to focus on the character and on the problem, their desires, and the conflict that they face between where they are and what they want ... and the roles other people play in that context.

So there's a reason why each one of them is doing – on the surface – what they do, because of their intention that is not visible to the audience. A character's **microstrategy** is their intention of how they are trying to achieve what they desire. And they pursue that microstrategy by applying a tactic or certain tactics that are expressed in their literal action. So you know, the strategy is the overarching plan, and a strategy can exist out of different tactics that all serve that big plan, that big strategy. And so the tactics are the execution of that strategy and the character's get feedback from the context as to what tactic works and which one does not... and then they have to switch to the next and the next. So, behind every literal action (what), there should be a reason why the character does that particular action (why).

STEP #15

Choose a perspective or point of view from which to tell the story.

First things first, let's define what we mean by "perspective" or "point of view." Simply put, it's the lens through which your story is told. It's the voice or character that delivers the message to your audience.



You might be thinking, *"Why does it matter which perspective I choose? Can't I tell the story however I want?"* Well, the truth is that the perspective you choose can greatly impact how your audience connects with your song.

Let's take a look at the different perspectives you can choose from: first person, direct address, second person, and third person.

First person is when the story is being told from the perspective of the character or narrator, using "I" or "we" pronouns. This creates a sense of intimacy. **Direct Address** is combining "I" and "You" and the lyrics seem like they address the listener directly.

Second person is when the listener is forced into the song's main character's shoes. It's very hard to pull it off so that the listener doesn't feel like they're violently pushed into this position or hear things they already know.

Third person is when the story is being told from an outside perspective, using "he," "she," or "they" pronouns. This can create a sense of detachment and observation, as if the story is being told from an observer who just tells what happened.

The perspective you choose depends on the story you want to tell and the emotional impact you want to have on your audience. Each perspective has its own strengths and weaknesses, so it's important to choose the one that best serves your song.



Choose what tense to write in. Will you tell the narrative in past, present, or future tense? Or use a combination?

Ah, the age-old question: past, present, or future? No, I'm not talking about a time machine - I'm talking about choosing the tense for your song lyrics! This step may seem small, but it can have a big impact on the overall tone and feel of your song.

When it comes to tense, there are three main options: past, present, and future. But that doesn't mean you have to choose just one. Using a combination of tenses can add depth, complexity, and a sense of progression to your lyrics, so don't be afraid to mix it up.

So, how do you choose which tense (or tenses) to use? It all comes down to the story you're trying to tell. **Past tense** is a natural choice if you're describing something that has already happened. It can also add a sense of nostalgia or longing to your lyrics.

Present tense, on the other hand, can create a sense of immediacy and make your lyrics feel more urgent. It's great for describing something happening in the moment or expressing emotions in real-time.

Future tense can be a bit trickier to use, but it can add a sense of hope and optimism to your lyrics. It's great for describing a future that you're looking forward to or imagining what could be.

Ultimately, the choice is yours. Don't overthink it too much - go with your gut and what feels right for the story you want to tell. And remember, you don't have to stick to just one tense. Mixing it up can add a unique flavor to your lyrics and make them stand out. So, take a deep breath, make your decision (or decisions), and let your lyrics take flight!

STEP #16

Elaborate on the chorus and on what you want the chorus to be and feel like. If you have an empowering message for your audience, put that in the chorus.

You've got your story down, you're feeling pretty good about where it is headed, and now it's time to really dig into that chorus. **The chorus is the part of your song that will really stick in your listener's head**, so it's important to get it right. After all, the chorus is the first thing the audience will remember of your song lyrics. So make the lines so empowering that the listeners just want to sing along!



When thinking about what you want the chorus to be and feel like, think about the emotional impact you want **on your audience**. Do you want them to feel empowered, joyful, sad, or maybe a mix of emotions? This is your chance to make sure the chorus delivers that emotional punch that ties everything together.

One thing to remember when elaborating on the chorus is to make it memorable. You want your listener to hum your chorus for days after hearing it. This is where a catchy melody and hook come into play. Think about some of the most popular songs: *What about the chorus that sticks in your head?* **If you have an empowering message for your audience, don't be afraid to put that right in the chorus.** This is a great way to ensure your message is heard clearly. Whether it's a call to action or a message of hope, make sure your chorus expresses what's at the heart of what you want to share in your lyrics.

Remember, the chorus is the heart of your song. It's the part that brings everything together and gives your listeners something to hold onto. Take your time with it, experiment, and don't be afraid to try something new. The most important thing is that it feels authentic to you and your message.



The chorus is the part of the song that everyone sings along to, even if they don't know any of the other lyrics. It's the heart of your song, the part that will get stuck in your listeners' heads for days, maybe even weeks. No pressure, right?

So, how do you write a catchy chorus? Well, the first thing you need to do is **figure out the overall message of your song**. What is it that you want to convey to your listeners? Is it a message of love and hope? Is it a call to action, urging people to make a change in the world? Whatever it is, you need to distill it down to a few simple words or phrases that can be repeated over and over again in the chorus.

Think of the chorus as a sort of **summary of your song**. It's the part that ties everything together and drives home the main point. So, take some time to really think about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Keep in mind that your chorus needs to be memorable and easy to sing along to. You want your listeners to be able to hear it once and then be able to sing it back to you.

So don't be afraid to use repetition. In fact, **repetition is key when it comes to writing a catchy chorus**. Repeat the same phrase or word a few times, maybe even add in some simple, easy-to-remember rhymes. And don't forget to keep it simple – the best choruses are often the ones that are the easiest to remember.

Think about one empowering line you want your audience to shout back at you when they listen to your song? What's the one empowering phrase that will make them feel so much better, stronger, or more helpful than before your song started?

STEP #17

Determine the transitions from Verse to Verse. Consider how your song's narrative progresses from verse to verse



Take a step back and look at the big picture. **How does your song's narrative progress from verse to verse?** Are you building up to a climax, or gradually revealing more information as the story unfolds? Once you have a clear understanding of your song's overall narrative arc, you can start to think about how each verse fits into that structure.

Moving from one verse to the next, you want to ensure **the transition feels natural and seamless**. One way to do this is by using a common thread to tie each verse together. **The verses must progress** so that the chorus gains meaning each time the audience hears it. It's like the verses enforce what is said in the chorus.

A common thread will help your listeners follow the story as it unfolds. **Be clear on what part of the narrative will be placed in which verse to support the message communicated in the chorus.** And take linear storytelling into account. If you throw events out of chronological order, you must ensure the audience can follow along the first time they listen to the song.

Another thing to consider is the pacing of your song. For example, building up to a climax, you might want to gradually increase the intensity with each verse. On the other hand, if you're telling a more introspective story, you should slow things down as the song progresses. Whatever pacing you choose, ensure the transitions between verses feel organic and keep the song's momentum moving forward.

Determining the transitions from verse to verse is all about making sure that your song's narrative flows smoothly and naturally. By keeping the overall structure of your song in mind, and using a common thread to tie each verse together, you can create a song that feels cohesive and engaging from start to finish.



Crafting the verses is not only about telling a compelling story but also lead your listeners to the big moment – the chorus.

Think of your verses as the building blocks of your song. Each verse should add something new to the story, whether it's a new character, a new setting, or a new conflict. By the end of your verse, your listeners should be eagerly anticipating what's coming next.

But, here's the thing – your verse can't just end abruptly and lead straight into the chorus. You need to give your listeners a little taste of what's to come. You can do that by creating a "pre-chorus" or a "lift" section.

The **pre-chorus** is like the bridge between the verse and the chorus. It's a section that builds on the emotion and tension of the verse and leads into the big, explosive moment of the chorus. The pre-chorus can include a melody that repeats or builds up to the chorus, or it can include a line that sets up the theme or emotion of the chorus.

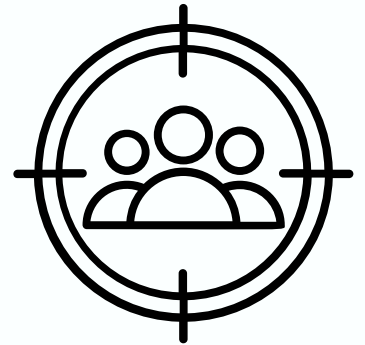
Crafting verses that build on the story and lead to the chorus can be a tricky task, but it's also one of the most rewarding aspects of songwriting. When you get it right, your listeners will be on the edge of their seats, waiting for that moment when the chorus hits and they can sing along with all their heart and soul.

Take your time with this step. Keep the big picture of your song's narrative in mind. How does the story progress and what's the logical next step that develops your song's narrative from one verse to the next, and enforces the chorus. Write your verses first draft now.

STEP #18

Keep your target audience in mind and use language and references they will understand.

This may seem like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised at how many songwriters forget this crucial step. Think about it – your song is going to be heard by a lot of different people with a lot of different backgrounds and experiences. It's important to keep your target audience in mind and use language that resonates with them.



If you're writing a song for teenagers, for example, you probably don't want to use references to things that were popular in the 80s (*although, hey, you never know – maybe the 80s are making a comeback!*).

But here's the thing: you don't want to dumb down your lyrics, either. You still want to **challenge your listeners** and make them think. It's all about finding the right balance between accessibility and depth.

So start by thinking about your target audience. What are their interests? What are their struggles? What are their values? Use these insights to inform the language and references you use in your lyrics. For example, if you're writing a song for country music fans, you might use imagery of pickup trucks and dirt roads, because those are things that are often associated with the genre. But **don't be afraid to get creative**, either! Sometimes, using unexpected references or turning a common phrase on its head can make your lyrics even more memorable. Just make sure that your references are still relevant and accessible to your target audience.

In the end, it all comes down to empathy – putting yourself in your listeners' shoes and understanding what will resonate with them. This concerns the language used, but also knowing the problem they face, what they want in life, and what resonates with them.

STEP #19

Edit your lyrics multiple times to refine and perfect them so that you get your message across in the best possible way without being preachy.



Now that you've got your lyrics down on paper, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get to work on the editing process. Trust me, this step is just as important as the writing itself. **Editing allows you to refine and perfect your lyrics, making sure that your message comes across loud and clear** without sounding like a soapbox preacher.

First things first, put your lyrics away for a little while. Give yourself some distance from them. This will help you approach them with fresh eyes and a clear mind. When you're ready to dive back in, start by reading through your lyrics several times. Look for areas where the meaning may be unclear or where the words could be improved.

Don't be afraid to make big changes if necessary. In fact, it's often the big changes that can take your lyrics from good to great. Play around with different words, phrases, and even sentence structures until you find the combination that feels just right. Remember, it's not just about the words themselves - it's also about how they're delivered. Pay attention to the rhythm and flow of your lyrics, making sure they fit the melody and enhance the overall mood of the song.

But most importantly, **keep in mind that you want to get your message across without coming across as preachy**. No one likes to be lectured, and your listeners are no exception. Make sure your lyrics come across as genuine and relatable, rather than as a lecture or sermon.

In short, editing is all about refining and perfecting your lyrics. It's a crucial step that can take your lyrics to the next level and help you create a song that truly resonates with your listeners. So don't skimp on the editing - your listeners (and your future self) will thank you for it.



STEP #20

Practice performing your song to make sure the lyrics flow naturally and are easy to remember.

This step is about bringing your lyrics to life through performance. Sure, writing the words down on paper is one thing, but **singing them out loud is a whole other ballgame**. Practicing your song helps you fine-tune your delivery and stage presence and ensures that your lyrics flow naturally and are easy to remember.

Think about it – have you ever tried to sing a song but found yourself stumbling over the words or getting lost in the melody? It's frustrating and takes away from the song's overall impact. By practicing your song, you can work out any kinks in the lyrics or melody, ensuring that everything flows seamlessly and your listeners can follow along easily.

But don't worry if you're not a natural performer – this step isn't about being a rockstar (*although that's always a plus*). **It's about connecting with your lyrics and making sure that they come across the way you intended**. So, start by finding a quiet space where you feel comfortable singing out loud. Play your song on repeat, and sing along with the lyrics, paying attention to the melody, rhythm, and phrasing.

As you practice, you'll start to notice areas where the lyrics may need some tweaking, or where you might need to change up the melody to make it flow better. **Don't be afraid to experiment** – this is all part of the process. The more you practice, the more confident you'll become in your delivery, and the easier it will be for your listeners to connect with your lyrics.

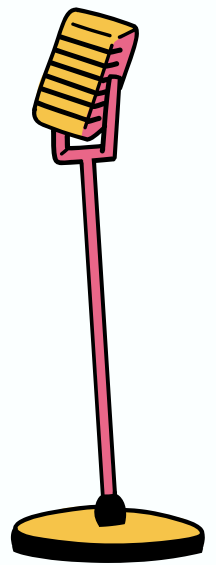
So, grab a hairbrush, stand in front of the mirror, and get ready to rock out. With a little bit of practice, your lyrics will be flowing naturally, and you'll be ready to hit the stage (*or the living room*) with confidence.

STEP #21

Play the song to a small audience. Do not record or release the song without having at least three people giving feedback on the lyrics.

By now, you've worked hard and poured your heart and soul into crafting a narrative-driven song that will resonate with your listeners. But before you hit the studio to record your masterpiece, **it's time to put your lyrics to the test and play the song to a small audience.**

Even the most experienced songwriters can benefit from **getting feedback on their lyrics.** Playing your song to a small audience – whether it's your friends, family, or fellow musicians – can give you valuable insights into how your lyrics are being received. *Are your listeners feeling the emotions you intended to convey? Are there any parts of the song that are confusing or lack clarity? Are there any parts that they particularly love or get confused about?*



It's important to note that at this stage, you should not record or release the song without having at least three people give feedback on the lyrics. **This feedback is crucial in refining your lyrics and making sure that your song is the best it can be before you share it with the world.**

Now, I know that sharing your work with others can be nerve-wracking. But trust me, this step is essential to taking your songwriting skills to the next level. Not only will you gain valuable feedback, but you'll also gain confidence in your abilities as a songwriter.

So, gather your friends, family, or fellow musicians, and share your song with them. Take note of their feedback, and use it to refine your lyrics. You'll be amazed at how much your song can improve with just a little bit of constructive criticism.

Do You Want To Tell Captivating Stories in Your Song Lyrics? And be able to Hook, Engage, and Connect with Your Listeners through your Words.



And achieve all of that while leveling up your lyric writing skills so that you can take your audience along on a narrative journey, make them invested in your song's story, and have them root for your song's main character.

Yes? Then, I invite you to join the Lyric Mastery Success Path, the most in-depth step-by-step program on telling powerful stories in your song lyrics that move people and make a difference in their lives through the meaningful message your story communicates without being preachy.



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