



SONGWRITING WORKSHEET

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SMASH HIT - SONGWRITING WORKSHEET

“It’s time to express yourself!”

HOW DO YOU WRITE A SONG?

A hit song can come from anywhere. There is no secret formula or ingredient and there are no set of skills that a person needs to compose one. The most important part of the process is authenticity. What is it that you want to say? What is it that you care about? By starting with these questions, you are setting yourself up for success. All art comes from within, so find your unique perspective on the world and put it to music.

This worksheet will not only guide you through the steps of how to write a song at home but it will guide you through the three fundamentals: chords, lyrics and melody! So, why not pick up your instrument, a piece of paper and your favourite pencil and give it a go!

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Whilst younger children will need adult guidance, this resource is made to be used over multiple writing sessions, however, there is also nothing wrong with completing it in one go if your song and ideas fall into place! This worksheet also suits those who play/own an instrument and those who don’t. It can also be used independently or within a group as a collaboration.

Once you have completed your song, remember to share it with your friends and family. Music has the power to bring people together, so use your new super power, share your voice and express yourself!

WHAT IF I DON’T PLAY AN INSTRUMENT?

If you don’t have access to an instrument or if you don’t currently know how to play one, you can download a keyboard app on your tablet or mobile device. This will help you with the first task. However, there are many songwriters out in the world that only write lyrics and melody. If this is more what you are interested in, then head to step two!

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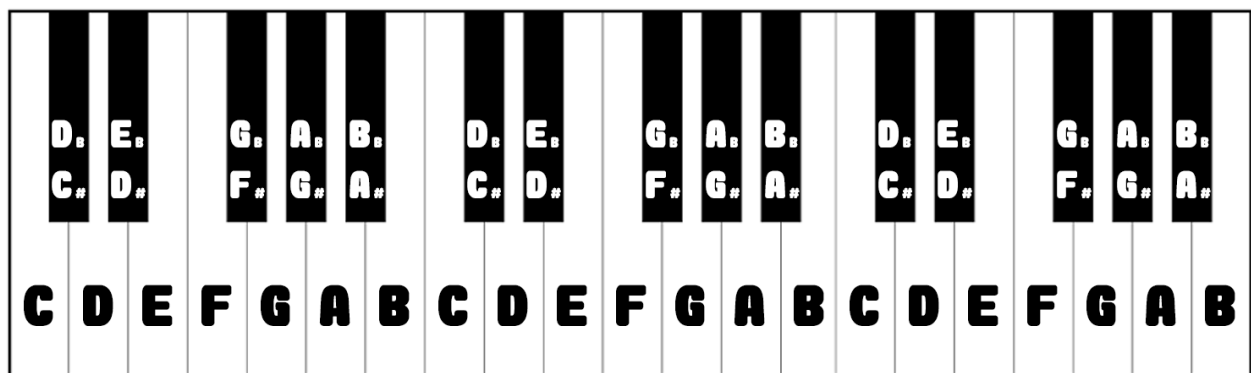
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STEP 1: NOTES

WHAT IS A NOTE?

The term "note" in music describes the pitch and the duration of a musical sound. By looking at the image of a keyboard below, you will see that every single white and black key represents a different note.

If you have access to a keyboard, see if you can find some of the notes that are listed below to hear what they sound like. Bear in mind that the musical alphabet only runs from A to G, with the addition of sharps and flats.



WHAT IS THE PITCH OF A NOTE?

The pitch of a note describes how low or how high the note might sound. If you have access to a keyboard, you will notice how the notes around the bottom of the keyboard have a deep low sound and the notes at the very top have a high pitched sound!

If you press the keys on your keyboard, can you hear the difference? Each of these sounds will be useful tools when composing your song as a low note has a sadder feel to it, whilst a high note has a happier feel. Think about what the theme of your song will be and that will help you to decide what notes to use.

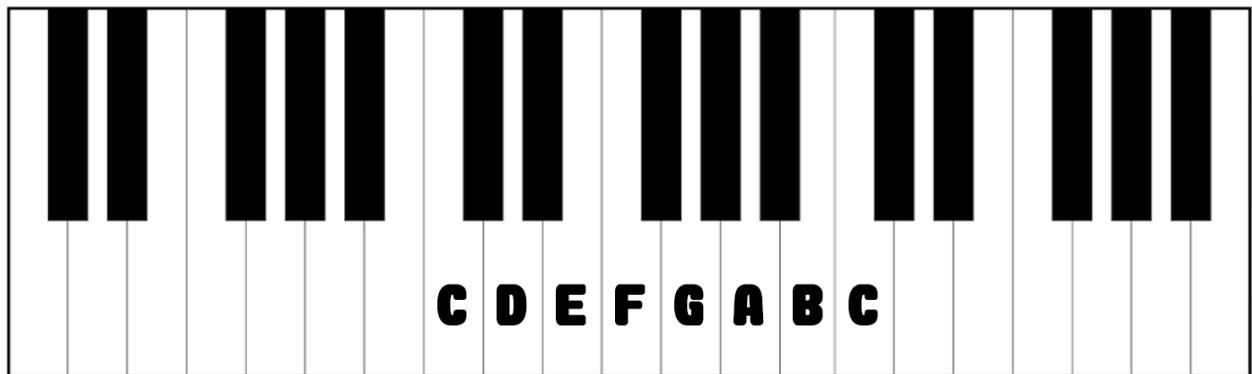
WHAT IS AN OCTAVE?

As you can see on the diagram above, after the first note of C, this note is then repeated twice more. These are called octaves and that means that these are all exactly the same notes but they have a different sound and feeling depending on if they are high or lower. See if you can find the different octaves at home.

WHICH NOTES SHOULD YOU USE?

That's the best part about songwriting, the choice is all yours! However, what you do need to do is pick notes that all take place within the same key signature, which means that they will sound good when played before or after each other.

To start with, let's write a song in the key signature of C. The best part about this key signature on the keyboard is that the key of C is all of the white notes, which makes it easier to find, remember and execute. However, this does mean that you can't play any black notes/sharps/flats for this composition. Below is an example:

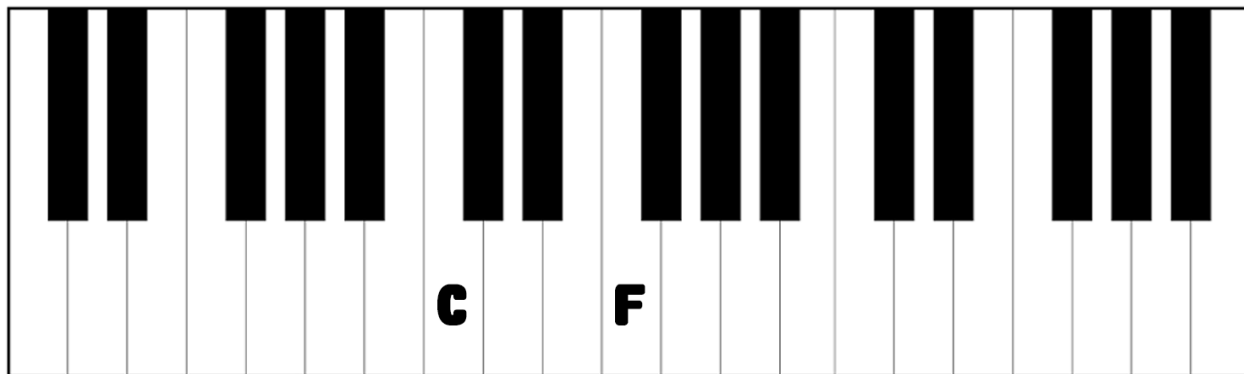


As you can see from the diagram above, you have a maximum of seven notes that you can use for your song. This may not seem like a lot but the variations are endless! You may have also noticed that there are two C notes on the keyboard. That means that one of them is the octave of your starting note, which will have a higher pitch.

WHERE SHOULD YOU START?

Well, that's completely up to you! However, it's always a good rule of thumb to start on the first note of the key signature, which in this case would be the first letter C. In many cases, this one note is all you need to start composing a song. If you have access to a keyboard, try pressing it to see how it makes you feel. The letter C is known for a very warm and familiar sound, does it make you think of anything in particular?

Once you are comfortable with the first note, it's time to start thinking of the second. Try playing an F after your C and seeing how that makes you feel. That pattern is very common as it uses the first note and the fourth note, which is a great starting point for any song. When played one after another, they provide a sense of warmth, familiarity and structure, which are key ingredients for any hit song.



HOW SHOULD YOU PLAY THE NOTES?

Most songs are written in the time signature of 4/4. This means that there are four beats in a bar and there are four bars that repeat themselves for the entirety of the song. To help make this easier to understand, think about the speed of a clock. Tick, tock, tick, tock. Count to four each time the clock ticks. One, two, three, four. That can be the tempo of your song and the tempo means the speed.

Now try playing your first note on number one, holding it down until the fourth beat and then playing your second note on the next number one. Repeat this until you're confident with playing your notes in time with one another.

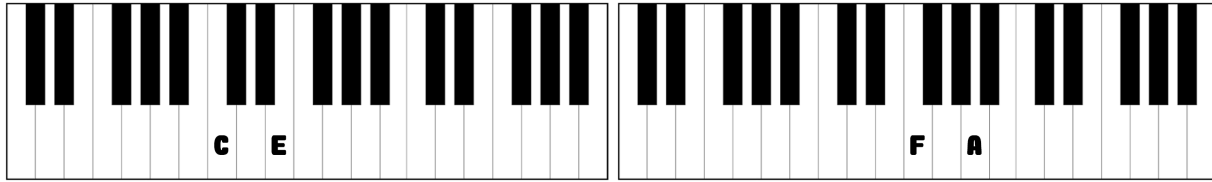
HOW DO THE NOTES MAKE YOU FEEL?

Music has a natural superpower that can make you feel all sorts of feelings. When you're playing your note pattern, think about what it reminds you of. Maybe it reminds you of your favourite place, your favourite meal, your pet or even your last family holiday. If you can find an association with the sound, this is a great place to start for the next part of your songwriting journey.

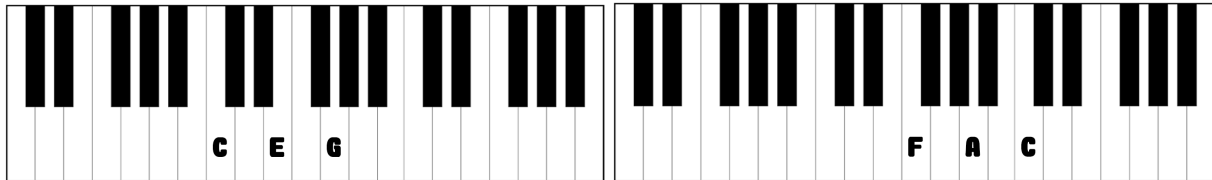
WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

When you are comfortable with single notes, your next step would be two note and three note chords. Below is an example of how to add to your root notes. This will not only open up your song to additional notes, harmony and pitch but it will expand the feeling that it expresses when you play it.

TWO NOTE CHORDS:



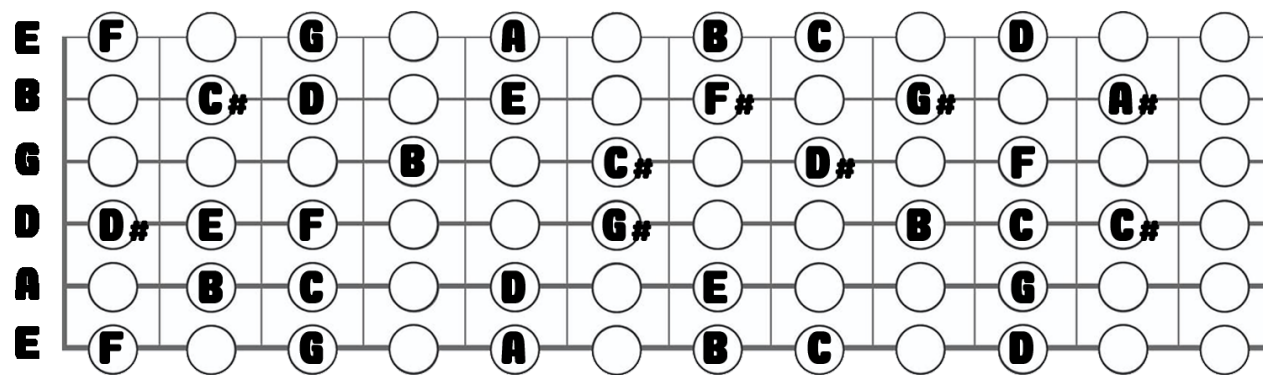
THREE NOTES CHORDS:



Both of these are examples of C major and F major. As you'll be able to see by looking back at the diagram of the C major key signature, all of these notes are within that scale. This means that by adding the notes, you are still within the key by working towards complete chord structure which will bring a new layer to your songwriting.

WHAT IF I PLAY GUITAR?

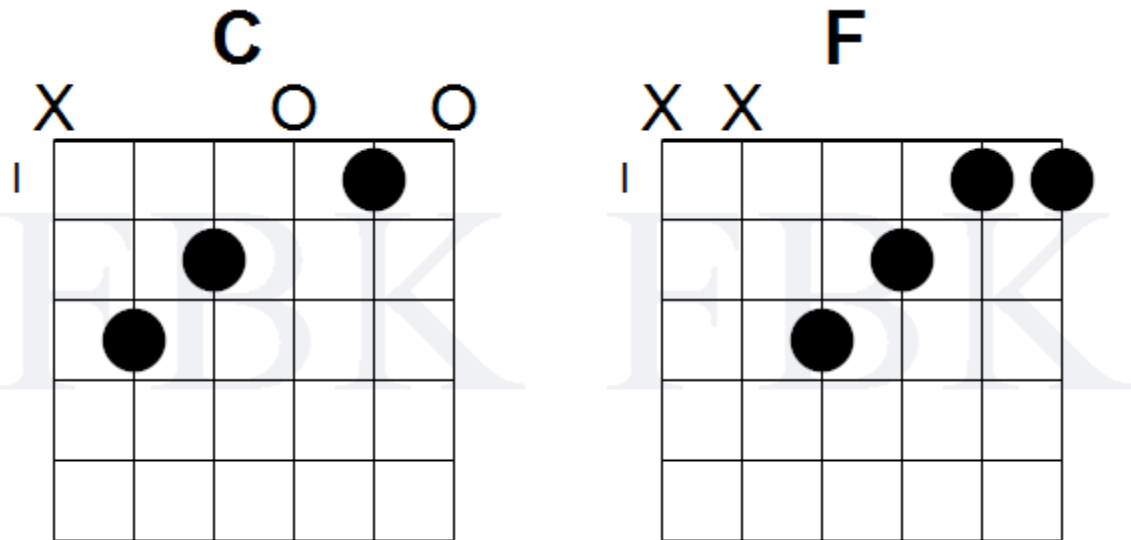
The same rules apply! Below is a diagram of all of the notes on a guitar's fretboard. The single notes of C and F are most suitable on the low E string, which is the bottom string in the diagram. Can you fill in the blanks?



GUITAR CHORDS:

If you are a more advanced player, the next step would be open chords. These can take a while to master, especially on smaller hands, so the idea is that all guitar players

should start with the single notes on the low E string and then slowly progress to open chords once they have mastered the time signature of when to play and when not to play their notes.



As you can see, you have to use more fingers for the open guitar chords but to help you learn to play them, start by adding the first note, then the second, then the third. By gradually learning the chords you will set yourself up for success without straining your wrist, hand or fingers.

WHAT IF I'M A DRUMMER?

If you are a drummer wanting to write your own songs, you will follow a similar set of rules. However, instead of picking notes, you will choose drum beats. If you have access to a drum kit, or even some pots and pans or table tops, think about what makes the right sound for your song. Once you've found it, you want to start putting a beat together. This is where you'll follow a similar rule. You want to make sure you can play your beat in the 4/4 time signature. Once you've done that, you will be ready to start composing. Below is a great example of an initial drum beat:

[Easy First Drums Lesson For Kids](#)

If you want to add more unique and complex beats, a great way to do this is by thinking of things that you like and creating rhythms from them. For example, think of phrases such as 'chocolate-cake' and try playing the syllables on the drums. Below is a great video that shows this in action:

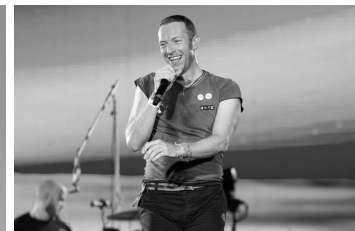
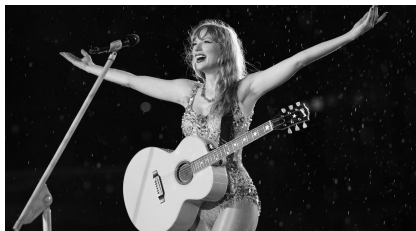
[How to Teach Kids Simple Rhythms](#)

It's also worth remembering that on the drums the possibilities are endless and whilst it is tempting to play at full volume all of the time, the best drummers know when to play quieter and when to play louder. When you're songwriting you need to think about how your instrument works within the song. If it is a quiet sad song, then your drums need to be soft and quiet. If it is a loud, fast song, then your drums need to match that feeling.

WHAT IF I'M A SINGER?

The majority of songwriters are also singers. This is because singing is a very personal skill. As a singer, you are the one standing on the front of the stage, you are the one that everyone hears above the rest of the band, and most of all, the audience will listen to what you have to say. That's why lyrics and melody are so important!

It's also worth learning how to compose music with a keyboard or a guitar, as you will be singing the notes that are being played for the melody. So, if you haven't yet done step one, it would be wise to learn the basic keyboard skills to aid your singing talents! You may have also heard the term singer-songwriter before, this is a pop or rock star who sings and writes all of their own songs like Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran or Coldplay. They are popular because of their authenticity, so aim to find your voice in both areas.



WHAT'S NEXT

Once you can play the single notes competently on your instrument with a count of one, two, three, four, your next step is lyrics and melody! This is a great place to pause if you are getting tired or losing focus, as you'll want all of your energy for the next step.

STEP 2: LYRICS

HOW TO FIND A THEME

By this point you will have a certain feel for your song from your note choices in the previous task, or if you've come straight to this one, that might mean that you already have an idea for lyrics and are ready to put pencil to paper! However, no matter the case, the first thing you want to do is brainstorm. Below is a step by step guide to coming up with your idea:

1. Choose a subject.

What should your song be about? Maybe you would like to write a song about the place you live, your favourite food, a recent family holiday or even about your friends. There is no wrong answer! All a song needs to be is true to the writer and the writer is you!

2. Brainstorm

Think about any words or phrases that come to mind when you think about your subject. What words do you associate with the place you live? Maybe it's surrounded by trees, within a city or maybe you have a garden or a balcony. These are just examples but the words you choose can be anything.

3. Describing Words

Can you think of any describing words for the subject of your song? These will come in handy when you are trying to describe it within your lyrics. If so, write those down as well! For example, a dark cosy house that is surrounded by wet trees.

4. Find some initial rhymes

Can you think of any rhymes for the words that you have written down? For example, trees-please, city-pretty, house-mouse, garden-pardon. These are just examples but if you find yourself struggling to think of any rhymes for your words, here is a resource to help you: [RhymeZone for Kids](#)

HOW TO FORM LYRICS

The first step is all about trying to write your first line. Sometimes this can be the hardest part as you want it to be perfect. However, it's worth remembering that this can change later on. For now, you want to write your first sentence to get you started. Below is an example with the ideas that have been listed above:

*Rainy days watching the trees
From the window I feel a breeze
I'm stuck indoors for the day
I wish I could go out to play*

From that example you might notice that there is a rhyming pattern to the lyrics. The first two lines rhyme (trees-breeze) and the last two lines rhyme (day-play). This is called an AABB rhyming pattern. You can have many different rhyming patterns but this is a great place to start if you are unfamiliar with rhyming structures. Below is an example:

A: *Rainy days watching the trees*
A: *From the window I feel a breeze*
B: *I'm stuck indoors for the day*
B: *I wish I could go out to play*

Another way this could be structured is with an ABAB rhyming pattern. This will create a different feeling with the lines being written in a different order. Read the example below to see which one you prefer:

A: *Rainy days watching the trees*
B: *I'm stuck indoors for the day*
A: *From the window I feel a breeze*
B: *I wish I could go out to play*

Hopefully these two examples give you a sense of what direction you'd like to go in when writing your song. Think about your lyrics, words and sentences that you have written down. How will they go together? What story are they trying to tell and what would be the best way of structuring your lyrics?

YOUR FIRST FOUR LINES

Now it's your turn to write down your lyrics. This will form your first verse of the song. The verse is a series of lyrics that tell the main story of the song and keep the action, description and thoughts moving forward. Verses are a very important part of the song and have many sections throughout a composition.

Using the lines below, see if you can form four lines of lyrics out of your ideas:

REMEMBER!

You don't have to stick with anything and you can change your lyrics at any point! This means that you can cross out words, change words or even change the whole line. Use the space below to continue experimenting with your lyrics.

SONG STRUCTURE

Once you have your first four lines, let's call them the verse and write them down under the header that says 'Verse 1'. After that you then need to write the lyrics for the rest of the sections in your song. As we now know, the verse is the part that moves the story forward but the chorus is a section of a song that is repeated at least twice. It should be catchy and include the main message and tone of the song. Can you think of any choruses to songs you like to sing either at home, school, with your friends or your family in the car? Think about what makes them get stuck in your head!

VERSE 1

CHORUS

VERSE 2

CHORUS (SAME AS ABOVE)

LYRICS COMPLETE?

If you have now written all of the lyrics to your song, you can officially call yourself a lyricist! Not only have you formed sentences but you have made words rhyme and you have expressed yourself! This is a huge achievement and you should be very proud!

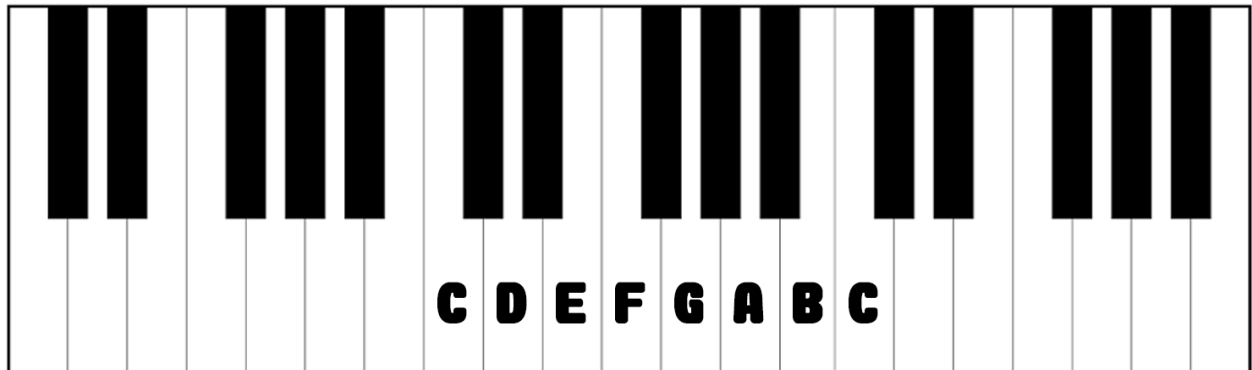
STEP THREE: MELODY

WHAT IS MELODY?

In music, the melody is the tune or the song. It consists of notes being played in a specific order to create something that our brains can hear as happy, sad and everything in between. When thinking of your favourite songs, it's not just the lyrics that make it catchy is it? It's also the way in which it is sung by the singer. A good melody can create a hit song out of anything and that's your goal!

HOW DO I CREATE A MELODY?

A melody is made up of a selection of notes from your key signature, which in this case is C major. As you can see, you have seven notes and your octave to choose from. If we use the example from above of C and F,, then a good place to start would be on these notes and then you can go from there.

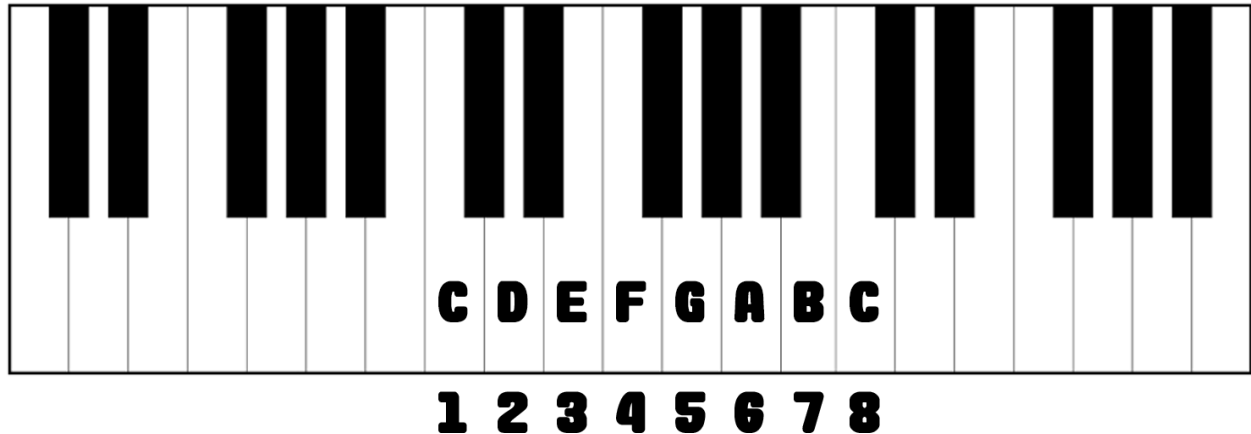


Start by playing your C and your F one at a time, maybe a melody is already coming to your mind. Many songwriters can think of a melody just from the first note. Try and sing your lyrics with just your first note, does a melody form as you begin to sing? If so, you are already on your way and at this point, it is just about practising your melody as you sing to make sure you can repeat it throughout the song.

Remember that your verses should have different lyrics but the same melody and your choruses should have the same lyrics and the same melody. This is what will make your song catchy, recognisable and stuck in your friends and family's heads!

AN ALTERNATE EXERCISE

If you are struggling to sing your lyrics and come up with a melody just from the top of your head, then here is an exercise that you can do to help you come up with a melody with the use of your keyboard. This exercise can also be done on a guitar or a bass.



CHOOSE 5 RANDOM NUMBERS FROM THE DIAGRAM ABOVE

There are two options for choosing your five numbers.

- If you have a pen and some paper, cut the paper into seven pieces. Write the number 1 on one piece of paper, number 2 on another and keep going all the way to number 7. Once you've done this, fold the piece of paper, shuffle them and pick one out. After that, open it and write down the number in the first box on the next page. Then fold up that piece of paper and put it back with the rest, shuffle them, and pick again. Repeat this until you have five numbers.
- Alternatively, if there are any other people around you, ask them to say any number between 1 and 7. After they pick a number, write it in the box. Maybe you could ask an adult at home, a friend, a classmate, a teacher or a sibling. Could you get 5 different numbers from 5 different people? If so, write these numbers in the boxes on the next page.

EXERCISE CONTINUED:

FIRST NUMBER	SECOND NUMBER	THIRD NUMBER	FOURTH NUMBER	FIFTH NUMBER

Once the boxes above each have a number, you want to turn those numbers into notes! By looking at the keyboard diagram above, you'll notice that if your first number is a 5, then the note that goes with that number is G. Give each one of your numbers a note and remember that this does not change your initial notes/chords for step 1, as you can use any notes in the key signature to form a melody around them. Here is an example of the completed boxes:

FIRST NUMBER	SECOND NUMBER	THIRD NUMBER	FOURTH NUMBER	FIFTH NUMBER
5=G	1=C	2=D	6=A	1=C

Going by this example, your order of notes would now be as follows, G, C, D, A, D. To start with, see if you can play these notes in order on your keyboard or guitar. How do they sound? Do you like the melody? If so, try singing your lyrics in time with the notes and matching the sound of the note with the sound of your voice. If you don't like it, repeat the exercise again or continue to improvise and sing freely to find the melody.

Once you have completed the verse melody, you will need to come up with a melody for your chorus that is different to your verse. You can follow the exact same instructions to do this but try to make your chorus catchy and repetitive!

YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR SONG

If you have now followed all of the instructions for each of your sections, then you now know how to write your own hit song! Whilst this is a step by step guide to one way of writing a song, what you should take away from this is that the possibilities are endless. If you feel confident enough to experiment without the guide, then go for it! Songwriting is a skill that can come very naturally to some people, so if you have a natural feel for structure and melody, then don't shy away from freestyling!

WELL DONE!

WHAT NOW?

Now that your song is completed and you are happy with all of your sections, SMASH HIT would really love to see or hear your new song! Here are a few ways that you can share it with us:

- Send SMASH HIT your lyrics, either as a photograph, handwritten or typed up. These can be brought to a lesson or you can ask an adult at home to take a photocopy and send them to us via email.
- Record your song on an adults smartphone or computer. By taking a simple voice recording you are not only making sure that you can keep your song safe forever but you can also share it with SMASH HIT.
- Ask an adult to video a live performance of your song, either of you playing your instrument and singing or doing just one of them.
- In addition to these options, you can create a piece of 'cover art' for your song. Think about drawing a picture and include your name and the name of the song and send us a photo.

CONGRATULATIONS

SMASH HIT hopes that you have enjoyed this worksheet and that you have learnt many valuable skills for your future as a songwriter. If you have any questions about anything in this workbook please email us and we will be happy to provide any further guidance.

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Song Name:
Songwriter(s):
Band Name:



VERSE 1

CHORUS

VERSE 2

CHORUS

BRIDGE

CHORUS
