

Songwriting

Let me start by saying that there isn't any one way to write a song. What I can do is give you starting points and ideas on how you can discover and create your own method.

There is one very important thing a songwriter must learn to do. You must be able to ignore the little voice we all have inside our head that says, "This sucks! You suck! You'll never be able to do this ... " This is difficult to do, especially at first, but the only way around it is to keep telling yourself that it doesn't matter, that the only way you will get better is by trying and doing it over and over. Everyone goes through this process. Give yourself permission to be bad. It's the only way to get better.

You can start with the words or you can start with the music. If you start with the words, or lyrics, don't try to write a hit song. Never try to write; just write. Let go your stream of consciousness: Write anything and everything that comes to mind. Write every day at the same time for fifteen to thirty minutes.

When you find a good concept for a song, try to use it for the chorus. The chorus is the three or four lines that are repeated the most often in a song. The chorus lyrics are often used as the title of the song as well.

Once you have the chorus, write other lyrics around it. You don't necessarily need to rhyme, but sometimes it adds to the sound of a song. Listen to your favourite songs to learn typical rhyming patterns. You can find lyrics on the Internet for probably every song ever written.

Keep your lyrics short and to the point. Edit out unnecessary lines. Try to make sure that your song has a message, that it says something.

When you want to focus on the music, or melody, of the song, pick up a guitar or sit down at a keyboard and play some chords; or, have a friend do it for you. Use the lyrics and their story to help decide if the song should be fast or slow, in a major or minor key, soft or loud ... If what you first choose isn't working, try the opposite.

Sing a melody with your lyrics. Keep experimenting with your melody and the lyrics until you find something you really like, something that inspires you. But don't overdo it. Don't keep reworking the same song over and over again until it's perfect. It will never be perfect. Finish the song and move on to the next one. The more songs you complete, the better they will begin to sound.

Another trick is to listen to and learn other artists' songs. They will help you develop a better feel for how a good song should work and sound. Finally, make sure that you always record yourself when you are composing. If you don't, you risk losing all your hard work if you can't remember it!