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**The Art of Writing a Good Song**

**By Kathy Unruh**

**The Art of Writing a Good Song by Kathy Unruh**

Did you know that good songwriting is often the key to establishing a successful music career? But more than that, it can be fun! When you write a song you are able to express yourself in new and creative ways. Whether you're sad, happy, angry, or in love... with words, you can fly!

Freedom of expression is one of the greatest privileges we have, but with it comes some responsibility. Words are very powerful and have been used successfully by many for better, or worse. When writing a song, consider how your words are going to impact your listener. Do you wish to alienate them, or draw them into your perspective on things?

A good song will create an emotional reaction in people, and that's exactly what you're trying to achieve! You want to get your listener to feel with you. You want to move them emotionally. You want them to like your song and be willing to listen to it again and again. If you can get your audience to identify with you on some level, you will be on the road to creating a good song.

As you are stirring up your creative juices you may discover that finding just the RIGHT word is sometimes a bit frustrating. But with the RIGHT songwriting tips and resources it becomes a lot easier! Here are three of the most important songwriting tools you should have:

1. **DICTIONARY** – A dictionary is essential when writing. Besides giving you the correct meaning of a word, it will also help you to express yourself more clearly. You will discover new words while expanding your vocabulary too!
2. **THESAURUS** – A thesaurus is another important tool to help with creating your songwriting material. You can use a thesaurus to find different words that have similar meaning.
3. **RHYMING DICTIONARY** – As the name implies, a rhyming dictionary organizes words that rhyme in alphabetical order using the vowel sounds A E I O U. For example, if you were looking for a word that rhymes with Abel you would look under A sounds. Words rhyming with Abel would be listed in alphabetical order.

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There isn't really a secret formula for writing a good song because determining what is "good" is subjective and a matter of personal opinion (some great songs have broken all the so-called "rules"). However, many successful songwriters have used the following format to write a "Hit" song:

**INTRO:** Approximately 4–8 measures of instrumental music that contains part or all of "the hook" (a part of the melody that is easy to remember).

**VERSE:** Each verse should be written in such a way as to "set up" the chorus. Try to keep the meter of your song even by matching the syllables of your words. Be consistent with the sentences that rhyme. Verses should create an anticipation of fulfillment.

**CHORUS:** This is where you make your statement. Stress the most important part of your song and make it tasty. Think of your chorus or "hook" as being like the icing on a cake. You want your words to be worth remembering.

**VERSE:** Continue to follow the idea of your song all the way through, don't get side-tracked!

**CHORUS:** This is where you have the opportunity to repeat your "hook" which should continue to emphasize your song's main theme.

**BRIDGE:** This is where you can create some interest and tension by changing your melody line, modulating to a different key, or adding an instrumental guitar part, etc. Don't make it too long, approximately 8 measures or so. It should build or crescendo to the final chorus.

**FADE CHORUS:** This is generally the same as your first chorus, but you will end by repeating it over and over, then gradually fade out to end your song. Use your "hook" generously, but don't over-kill!

Be flexible and use your imagination! Don't just copy or mimic what is currently popular. Remember that some of the biggest names in the music business made it to the top because they were not afraid to be **ORIGINAL** or have a different sound. So, experiment, be yourself, and most of all— have fun!

Kathy Unruh is a singer/songwriter and webmaster of ABC Learn Guitar. She has been writing songs and providing guitar lessons to students of all ages for over 20 years. For free guitar lessons, plus tips and resources on songwriting, recording and creating a music career, please visit:  
[www.abclearnguitar.com](http://www.abclearnguitar.com)

### On Picking The Right Graduation Song

**By Martin Stoleman**

When I was graduating from high school and then from college, there were many details that I was trying to think through and many decisions that I was trying to make, not the least of which was what graduation song I would choose to represent my transition from one season of life to the next. You see, among my family and friends it is tradition for anyone graduating to choose a graduation song to be

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sort of the theme of their accomplishment and their place in life.

If you have never heard of this, then I'll suggest that you quickly make a graduation song part of your traditions surrounding graduation. Allow me, as an expert on the subject, to enlighten you with some suggestions about how to go about choosing the appropriate graduation song for you.

First of all, keep in mind the significance of choosing the perfect graduation song. Why is it so significant? Because it is not every day or even every year that you will graduate from something. In fact, most people only experience one or two graduations in their lifetime, so don't downplay the importance of the situation. Instead, realize how significant it is that you are about to graduate and therefore take seriously the privilege of choosing a graduation song that will represent your achievement.

A perfect graduation song is one that incorporates two main things. First, any good graduation song should reflect some on the past and how it has affected you up to this point. The worst thing that you can do is to pick a graduation song that means nothing to you and that you've never heard of before. The wise way is to choose a song that you are familiar with and that really means something to you.

A second important element of a good graduation song is one that says something about the hope and purpose you have for your future. Graduation is, after all, not just the end of a season but it is also the beginning of a whole new season of life. So choose a graduation song that reflects how you're feeling about moving forward into something new. No matter what season of life you are ending, you are also about to begin a new and great season, so let that be reflected in your song choice.

A graduation is a small but significant tradition that I think everyone should take part in. What a great way to symbolize a part of your journey and to represent your thoughts for moving on. So choose a great graduation song today! It is one decision that you'll never regret.

Martin Stoleman is a career counselor who works mainly with students dealing with the transition of graduation. He encourages all students to find a great graduation song. See

for more details on the right song for you.

On Picking The Right Graduation Song  
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