



# How To Drastically Improve Your Songwriting Skills

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**Note from the Songwriter Advisor:**

In this highly competitive songwriting market, songwriters need to find ways to set themselves apart from the crowd. How many times haven't we, as songwriters, been reminded that one of the best ways to learn songwriting is to study successful songs?

With this e-book, you will learn exactly how to exploit this theory to its fullest for your maximum benefit. After analyzing a few songs using this e-book's principles, you will begin to show drastic improvement in a fairly short amount of time. You will become stronger each day at your craft with each song analysis!

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## Introduction: Benefit Of This E-book

Thank you for downloading "**How To Drastically Improve Your Songwriting Skills**".

If you're a beginner, you need to know the basics of songwriting, so you can supplement this e-book by reading the only three songwriting books you'll ever need: "**The Craft of Lyric Writing**," by Sheila Davis, and "**Writing Music for Hit Songs**," by Jai Josefs, and "**Writing Better Lyrics**," by Pat Pattison. These 3 books can be purchased new or used on Amazon.com at a very cheap price, or visit [Songwriter Advisor](#) for a more detailed review of these books. **As an alternative, you can get a grasp on the basics by visiting the [Songwriter Advisor step-by-step guide](#) for free!**

With this e-book you will learn how to drastically improve your songwriting skills easily, by knowing how to pick apart and analyze your favorite songs, learning cool tips and tricks from them, and in turn, applying these techniques to your own songs.

Many times, even hit songs contain basic songwriting flaws that'll make our jaws drop in horror, only to watch them climb to the very top of the charts.

But with all these flaws most hit songs usually contain many proven songwriting tricks up their sleeves that reel in listeners getting them to come back for more!

With this e-book you'll learn how to dissect your favorite songs and you'll be surprised at how many nifty time-tested tricks and even occasional fresh ideas the songwriters used to construct their little ditties!

The end result will be that you will have a tremendous advantage over the average songwriter because you will have trained yourself to study songs and immediately know what to look for, and each song will reveal techniques to make your songwriting progressively powerful.

## How To Use This E-book

- 1. First, read Step 1- Song Checklist, and print it out for your reference.**
- 2. Next, read Step 2 and learn how to analyze a song by applying the song checklist.**
- 3. Read Step 3 to see the cool tips, tricks, and techniques you've learned from analyzing a song.**
- 4. Apply the same process to your original songs.**
- 5. Repeat steps 1 through 3 until you've mastered the routine, and keep a list of all the tips, tricks, and techniques you've learned with each song!**

**Here's to your songwriting!**

If you need help with this guide, ask the Songwriter Advisor a question at:  
<http://www.songwriteradvisor.com/ask-advisor.html>

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## Step 1 - Song Checklist

### 1. Song Title

**(a). Does the title stand out as interesting and original on its own?**  
-----

Develop a memorable title. You're less likely to grab the listener's attention with a common song title that's been used and sung to death.

Suggestion:

Take a common song title and use your imagination to put a fresh spin on it. i.e., instead of "I'm In Love" use something like "I'm Done"!

**(b). Does the title reflect what your song is about?**  
-----

The whole concept of writing a song is to write about something of interest, so let your title reflect something that will interest you as well as your listeners.

**(c). Does the title repeat itself throughout the hook of the song?**  
-----

Repeating the title in the hook is one of those elements that make songs stick to the listener's minds upon their first listen.

However, in the spirit of creating something original and straying from the norm, you can create a song with just as much impact by exercising freedom here and not even using the title at all in the song, as long as your title evokes the general idea of the song, and as long as you have other certain elements in your song such as unique phrasing, awesome melody, surprise chords, tempo changes, a time signature change consistently right before a certain section, etc.

Dare to be original and different!

## 2. Song Form

(a). **Does the song form you have chosen feel natural?**

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One of these song forms is usually a good choice:

Verse-Chorus-Verse-Chorus (ABAB)

Verse-Chorus-Verse-Chorus-Bridge-Chorus (ABABCB)

Verse-PreChorus-Chorus-Verse-PreChorus-Chorus (ABCABC)

Verse-PreChorus-Chorus-Verse-PreChorus-Chorus (ABCABCDC)

Verse-Verse-Bridge-Verse (AABA)

However, If your song is missing that "extra ingredient", why not try experimenting with a different song form or better yet, using these common forms, start twisting them around a bit.

For example in an (ABAB) format, go into an instrumental break after the second verse instead of the normal chorus and hit the 2nd chorus with even greater impact. Freak everybody out!

Or take an (AABA) song and add a section after the "B" either instrumentally or a contrasting vocal/melody part totally different from any other section of the song.

The point is experimenting with a song that's missing that special something by shuffling a song form could be what the song needs.

## 3. Hook/Chorus

(a). **Does the hook/chorus stand out as being the most powerful, exciting, and/or interesting part of the song?**

-----

The hook has to make the biggest impact on the listener regardless of whether the melody is sung using higher or lower notes than the verses.

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Try this as an alternative to the common chorus using higher notes: Use lower notes in the whole chorus for a cooler effect, or start out with lower notes in the chorus and break into a higher note section than the verse towards the end of the chorus.

Experiment!

### 4. Verses/Pre-Choruses

(a). **Does the first line of your song make an immediate impact, making the listener want to hear more?**

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(b). **Is the last line of each verse or prechorus strong enough to help the chorus make the biggest impact?**

### 5. Bridge

(a). **Does the bridge add a whole new dimension to the song by varying the melody, rhythm, and harmony?**

### 6. Point Of View

(a). You have already picked a point of view for your song, usually "first person narrative". **Many songs have been improved dramatically by changing the point of view for added freshness.** Make sure you are using the best point of view for your song by changing pronouns to fit the other two points of view:

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Subjective    Objective    Possessive  
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### First person narrative:

Singular	I	me	my/mine
Plural	we	us	our/ours

### Second person:

Singular	you	you	your/yours
Plural	you	you	you/yours

### Third person narrative:

Singular	he/she/it	him/her/it	his/hers/its
Plural	they	them	their

**First Person Narrative** - the singer is involved in the story he or she is telling. Second and third person narrative pronouns are also commonly used while writing in this point of view.     i.e., "I saw you with him"

**Second person** - the singer is talking to another person. First and third person pronouns can also be used when writing in this point of view.   i.e., "you don't know how I feel"

**Third person narrative** - the singer tells a story with the goal of trying to get the listener to relate and feel the emotion or meaning of the story.   i.e., "She wakes up, and I....."

## 7. Rewrite

Have you rewritten and polished your song, so that aside from the first 6 checklist entries, the song:

(a.) Makes sense even though you've used metaphors and logically progresses from beginning to end unless it's a song that starts out in the future and regresses to reflect on the past?

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(b). Answers who, what, when, where, and why before it gets to the 2nd verse?  
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(c). Has a consistent rhyme scheme?  
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(d). Uses consistent verb tenses and words used in the song are sung like they are pronounced without being forced in order to fit in a line of the song?  
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(e). Is clear because it contains one single idea?  
-----

(f). Doesn't contain unnecessary words such as "a lot", very, etc.?  
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(g). Chord structure, melody, rhythm, and overall feel of the song matches the lyrics?

End of Checklist

## Step 2- Example Song, Finger Eleven's "Paralyzed" Analyzed Through Checklist

The following lyrics are copyrighted property of their owners and are provided here only for educational purposes.

Music copyright laws permit usage of the following portion for educational purposes only:

So, as a song reference, you can click on Finger Eleven's web site <http://www.fingereleven.com> and scroll to the song through the automatic jukebox player. If you like the music, you can download the single or purchase their CD and support their music.

Write down the lyrics to the song and follow the examples:

### Paralyzer

I hold on so nervously  
To me and my drink  
I wish it was cooling me  
But so far has not been good  
It's been shitty  
And I feel awkward, as I should

Now let's run the song through our checklist starting on page 4. During our check we're looking to find common techniques as well as fresh, innovative ones!

#### 1. Song Title

The song title stands out as interesting and original, and it describes the song idea perfectly.

Although the title is never used in the song, the writers used a nifty little proven technique where the singer, in the second person, calls the other person a name which describes the effect they have caused on another person. Confused?

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Many hit songs have used this, so here's an easy classic example of one that used a similar title technique - Pat Benatar's Heartbreaker.

The difference is the word "Heartbreaker" was used throughout that song unlike the word "Paralyzer" which was used in the past tense of "paralyze" (**paralyzed**). Cool idea, indeed!

### **2. Song Form**

The song form (ABAB) fits like a glove and feels natural for this song.

Notice the song starts with a strum then a drum groove intro for 1 bar. This is not very common but definitely effective.

The underlying chorus guitar riff is then introduced for four bars before the first verse. This is a common, effective intro technique used in countless commercial-type songs. It's interesting to note that you can use an element (in this case electric guitar) from the actual chorus in the intro, and its strong effect is felt almost as if the song began with the chorus!

### **3. Hook/Chorus**

The underlying riff in the intro is used in the chorus, providing great impact because we've already heard it in the intro.

The lyrics in the chorus are kept conversational unlike the verses where the lyrics reflect images popping off the top of the singer's head. This creates contrast between the verses and chorus whether intentional or not.

The metaphoric "You'll probably move right through me" stands out as a strong line which can be interpreted in several ways. My interpretation is he's telling her even though he's infatuated with her, she won't even give him the time of day! By design, this line is repeated twice right before the song ends.

This song is an example of how a hook/chorus can still have amazing impact without containing the actual title, because of many other ear-pleasing elements working together.

### **4. The Verse**

In the 1st verse, the cool chorus guitar riff used in the intro becomes a funky,

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higher note staccato-type part underneath the vocal.

Here's where it gets interesting: The first and second verse have totally different rhyme schemes.

AND I MEAN REALLY DIFFERENT!

Let's examine the 1st and 2nd verse where the beginning lines are, "I hold on so nervously" and "I hold out for one more drink":

Songwriting purists would tend to look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse's rhyming scheme and say there's a lack of focus. In part, I agree.

However, the first line, "I hold on so nervously, to me and my drink, I wish it was cooling me," is attention-grabbing and a very good, solid first line which sets the scene.

"To me", and "I wish" are inner rhymes after the ending words "nervously" and "drink", but inner rhymes are not used in the 2nd verse at all. Definitely lack of focus.

In the next line, "But so far has not been good, It's been shitty, And I feel awkward as I should," the word "shitty" violates the theory that words should be sung exactly as they're pronounced and not forced. But in this case, it works! This is a good example of today's songwriting straying from the norm as long as something feels and sounds good!

Also, "Since I thought you and me" what? Also a lack of focus. The line looks lazy and pasted-on.

The rest of the first verse sounds very cool as it catapults into the 1st chorus with explosiveness. Notice the chord change and the underlying guitar riff in the last two lines right before the chorus.

The line, "Since I thought you and me" is very confusing and left suspended without any explanation or clear thought. It could mean the singer started a thought then quickly changed the subject.

In the second verse the story does move forward with a different rhyme scheme and the words appear to be "free writing" lyrics and probably could have been stronger with a little more rewriting.

The verses do work but they probably could've been much stronger by changing a word here or there, such as substituting 'cause for "but" in the line "But so far has not been good", in order to maintain clarity.

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The slight lack of focus makes the verses in this song very forgettable but the chorus is highly polished and phenomenal!

Imagine how awesome this song could have been with a little verse polishing!

### **5. The Bridge**

N/A

### **6. Point of View**

The point of view used by Finger Eleven in this song, 1st person narrative, appears to be the best one.

If we used 2nd person the chorus would be:  
Well, you're not paralyzed  
But you seem to be struck by her

In the 3rd person narrative it might be:  
Well, he's not paralyzed  
But he seems to be struck by her (or "you")

### **7. Rewrite**

Most publishers would demand a verse rewrite if this song were submitted by a staff songwriter.

Self-contained artists, however, have a little more freedom to experiment and it's easier for a publisher to accept a song as the artists' expression as long as it sounds and feels acceptable. This song obviously did!

## Step 3 - Example of Tips and Tricks Learned From Just One Song

Here are some techniques and cool tips we've learned from this song to improve our songwriting:

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1. Use a title which describes the effect a person has caused on another person, place, or thing (Paralyzer)
2. Start a song with an instrumental part and chime in with a percussion or drum part unexpectedly. i.e., If you're using just a guitar, strum a chord, and then use percussive guitar techniques before breaking into your chord structure.
3. Use an underlying motif or riff from the choruses in the intro to add strength and excitement to the intro.
4. No matter how good a hook/chorus is, work on your verses just as hard to make them memorable. The first and last lines of your verses are the ones listeners remember most.
5. Create contrast between the verse and chorus by using a different motif or riff with any instrument(s).
6. Use a consistent rhyming scheme throughout the song to make the song more memorable and interesting to the listener, but occasionally stray from the norm to loosen your lyrics up a little bit if the song calls for it!
7. Use an interesting instrumental motif or riff during the last line or two of each verse under the vocals to make the chorus even more powerful.
8. It's important to let your thoughts run free and create imagery with your lyrics, but make sure you rewrite and polish your song so it progresses logically, so it makes sense and is understood all the way through, and so it's cohesive, natural-sounding, and not rigid.

## **Step 4- Apply Tips and Tricks Learned and Hear Your Songwriting Talent Flourish!**

With practice, analyzing a song shouldn't take much time at all once you've got the basics of this exercise down.

**Here are some helpful guidelines:**

1. To make the process easier, print the checklist for your reference.
2. Remember to analyze favorite songs and use the same principles in constructively analyzing yours so you can create the best possible songs.
3. Write each song in a form where you can see the rhyme scheme and structure of the song as you conduct this exercise.
3. Many of the principles used in this guide are songwriting basics but the method used here is definitely innovative. This is a new process, so be patient and give it some time and a little bit of practice. Before long it will become another part of your routine when you want to generate fresh song techniques.



***Songwriter Advisor is dedicated to being your innovative, complete songwriting resource providing pro tips and techniques to give beginner to advanced songwriters the necessary tools to have the best chance at being successful in the music industry.***

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