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R O Y A L  
C O L L E G E  
O F M U S I C  
*London*

# Lyric Writing

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.  
To find out more and get involved visit [www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks)

In this section you will find handy tips for writing the lyrics to your song.

## Finding a theme

The first thing you need to decide is what you want your song to be about! What's your theme? Here are some ideas for the subject of your song:

**Spring** – Think of how the world changes as spring approaches!

**Lockdown** - Having to stay at home/missing friends and family and what you hope will happen when things open up again..

**Friendship/love** – Think about the people who mean a lot to you – can you put into words how it feels when you think about them?

**Something you feel needs to change** – This could be a protest song about things that you think should be different.

OR, you can choose **any theme you like** for your song.



## Listen

Have a listen to these songs - they are all about subjects that are a bit unusual! You can write your lyrics about anything!:

**Octopus's Garden by The Beatles** (Click the link).

**Starman by David Bowie** (Click the link).

**Big Yellow Taxi by Joni Mitchell** (Click the link).

## Tell a story

When you are writing a song, think about telling a story. Think about if you were telling a story, or a joke to your friends – you wouldn't put all the information at the beginning – you would tell the details as you go along.

A good tip is to tell the details of the story in the verses and for the chorus to contain the main idea or message of your song.

My chosen theme is 'spring', because at the moment the days are getting longer and the weather is warming up – it's making me feel cheerful!

In the next few slides I am going to give examples for some lyrics for a song about spring. This is to show you some ideas for how to approach your song, and what kind of lyrics make a good verse, chorus and pre-chorus.

## How to write a Verse:

In the verse you are introducing your idea, maybe giving lots of detail and descriptions.

A good length for a verse is four lines long.

Try to keep the lines short and interesting.

In my example verse I have put in lots of details about spring, and what happens in spring-time:

### Verse:

Snowdrops are peeking at the sun  
The earth gets warmer, day by day  
Lost frost runs down the window pane  
New beginnings start again



## How to write a Pre-chorus

**You can decide on the RCM Song-writing Track-maker whether or not to choose a structure with pre-chorus sections.**

The pre-chorus comes in between the verse and the chorus.

It acts like a link between them and builds excitement for the chorus.

The Pre-chorus lyrics can be the same each time, or they can change.

Our Pre-chorus sections are only two lines long.

In this example you can see that the Pre-Chorus is short and exciting, and will lead into the Chorus:

### Pre-Chorus:

That happy feeling in the air,  
The Earth comes back to life!



**Short and exciting lyrics which lead into the Chorus**

## How to write a Chorus

In the Chorus you can use the main theme as your key words. My theme is spring, so I have used the word 'spring' twice.

Then I have used general ideas about spring. Notice that there is not much detail – it's more like slogans that you might write on a banner.

### Chorus:

Spring is here! It's time to shine!  
Wake up and enjoy this special time  
Spring is here, and everyone should  
This is the time to grow!

← Main theme or idea

← Not much detail – more like slogans about your theme



## How to write a Bridge

**You have the option to add a Bridge to your song if you are using the RCM Song-Writing Track Maker.**

You have the option to add a Bridge to your song if you are using the RCM Song-Writing Track Maker.

You can choose to make up lyrics or just it as an instrumental section.

The Bridge usually has a slightly different feeling to the rest of the track. If you are writing lyrics, you can look at your theme from a different perspective.

Here is an example of a bridge for my song about spring. I have chosen a different angle here and am focusing on the contrast with winter:

### Bridge:

Christmas seems so long ago, warming by the fireside,  
Scarves and wellies for a walk in the park.  
January made us shiver – the sun was out of sight,  
Now we're moving to the light out of the dark!

← Different time period  
– writing about Winter  
instead of Spring

← Last line links back into  
the main theme again

Here is a great example of a song that has detail in the verse and then bursts out with its message (he's HAPPY!) in the chorus:



## Listen

Happy by Pharrell Williams (Click the link)

### Verse:

It might seem crazy what I am 'bout to say  
Sunshine she's here, you can take a break  
I'm a hot air balloon that could go to space  
With the air, like I don't care, baby by the way

### Chorus:

Huh (Because I'm happy!)  
Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof (Because I'm happy!)  
Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth (Because I'm happy!)  
Clap along if you know what happiness is to you (Because I'm happy!)  
Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do

## Metaphors/similes

**Metaphors and similes are really fun ways to create interesting images in your song. Song-writers do it a lot.**

A simile is when you say something is *like* something else. For example, in my spring song, I could say that the flowers are *like* faces pointing at the sun.

When you use metaphors you are saying that something is something else. For example, I could say that the flowers *are* faces pointing at the sun, the trees *are* arms stretching after a long sleep...

It helps to make the song interesting if we can create images like this in the listener's mind. In a song about spring, it creates a nice image to show that the earth is waking up again by saying that the trees stretch out their arms, and the flowers look up at the sun.

## Writing interesting lyrics:

Writing lyrics is really fun! You might feel really inspired and have loads of brilliant ideas!

### Here are some tips to get you started:

1. Write down some of the words from your original idea.

Here are some words about **spring**:

- Spring      growth      new      sunshine      chicks  
rabbits      fresh      earth water      alive

2. Then write down two/three words to do with each of these original words. Don't think too much about it – write down all your ideas without trying to make a judgment whether they are 'good' or 'bad':

- jump      summer      Easter      tall      stretch      pull      baby  
clean      sparkly      warm      shade      hot
- feathers      fluffy      yellow      hopping      ears      feet      bunny  
fragrant      breeze      soil      mud      roots      shower      drink  
lake      breathing      awake      living      birth

A Thesaurus helps you find words that mean the same thing: [www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com)

This rhyming website helps you find words that rhyme!: [www.rhymezone.com](http://www.rhymezone.com)

The next step would be to choose some of these words and make a rhyme for them. Keep making your list and write your rhyming words below:

Original words:	Associated words:	Rhyming words:
Spring growth new sunshine chicks rabbits fresh earth water alive	jump            hopping summer        ears Easter          feet green           bunny tall             fragrant stretch        breeze pull             soil baby            mud clean            roots sparkly         shower  drink lake warm            breathing shade heat            awake feathers        living fluffy            birth yellow	fling            bopping blue            beat flew           funny mine           honey habits         bees daughter      knees shorter        sneeze hive            toil bump          boil ball            roots beat            power wool            flower made           sink not             heaving scruffy         wake mellow         worth

So now you will have lots of words to make up ideas for lines for your song! Try putting some of them together into short sentences. For example:

Sparkly lake in the fragarant breeze  
 Fluffy yellow feathers  
 Warm air breathing down on the earth

## It's definitely fun to make up rhymes at the end of the lines of your song:

Sparkly lake in the fragrant breeze,  
Hives are bursting with the buzz of bees,  
Warm air breathing down on the earth,  
All the signs of new birth

You could also try internal rhymes, where you put the rhyme inside the line:

Heating, beating away the winter,  
**Heaving and breathing** the earth to life,  
The **breeze heaves** with a buzz of **bees**,  
It's **easy** in spring to feel alive

Can you see all the opportunities there are to rhyme inside the lines, and even into the next line – like the words breeze, heaves, bees and easy?

**Life and alive** (the ends of lines 2 and 4) are not a perfect rhyme – it's what we call a 'half rhyme'. A half rhyme is a nice way to give the feel of a rhyme without it sounding too obvious.

## Top Tips for Lyric Writing

Cut out the unnecessary words – try to think like a poet rather than a novelist!

Tell a story with your song – take your listener on a journey – what's your message or main idea?

Use repetition – don't be afraid to repeat words and ideas.

Think about different perspectives and angles to speak from. Speak from your point of view but also think about the other people, places or things in your theme. Try writing about your idea from their point of view too.

Write down all your ideas as a plan...but don't be afraid to change them! The best writers are always searching for the very best words for their lyrics.

# Structure

## Which structure do you want to use for your song?

Fill in your lyrics using the guides on one of the three next slides, depending on which structure you would like to use for your song.

If you are using the RCM Song-Writing Track Maker, you might want to make your backing track first before doing this.

### Here are your options:

Structures without a Bridge:

<b>Verse 1</b>	<b>Verse 1</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Pre-Chorus</b>
<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>Chorus</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Verse 2</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Pre-Chorus</b>
	<b>Chorus</b>
	<b>Chorus</b>

You can also add a bridge to these. Bridges can have lyrics or not.



Structures with a Bridge:

<b>Verse 1</b>	<b>Verse 1</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Pre-Chorus</b>
<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>Chorus</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Verse 2</b>
<b>Bridge</b>	<b>Pre-Chorus</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>
<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Bridge</b>
	<b>Chorus</b>
	<b>Chorus</b>

If you are using this structure...



**Verse 1**  
**Chorus**  
**Verse 2**  
**Chorus**  
**Chorus**

...then fill in this lyric sheet



Verse 1:

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Chorus (always the same):

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Verse 2 (could be different or the same as Verse 1):

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Remember, if you choose 'Rock and Roll' then you will need two extra lines for Verse and Chorus (six lines each).

Verse 1:

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Pre-chorus (usually the same both times):

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---

Chorus (always the same):

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Verse 2 (could be different or the same as Verse 1):

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---

If you are using this structure...

...then fill in this lyric sheet

**Verse 1**  
**Pre-Chorus**  
**Chorus**  
**Verse 2**  
**Pre-Chorus**  
**Chorus**  
**Chorus**

Remember, if you choose 'Rock and Roll' then you will need two extra lines for Verse and Chorus (six lines each).

Verse 1:

---

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Chorus (always the same):

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Verse 2 (could be different or the same as Verse 1):

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Bridge

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If you are using this structure...

...then fill in this lyric sheet

**Verse 1**  
**Chorus**  
**Verse 2**  
**Chorus**  
**Bridge**  
**Chorus**  
**Chorus**

Remember, if you choose 'Rock and Roll' then you will need two extra lines for Verse and Chorus (six lines each).

Verse 1:

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Pre-chorus (usually the same both times):

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Chorus (always the same):

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Verse 2 (could be different or the same as Verse 1):

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Bridge:

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If you are using this structure...



Remember, if you choose 'Rock and Roll' then you will need two extra lines for Verse and Chorus (six lines each).