

GCSE Song Writing Guide

Brief:

- *Compose a song for **voice, piano, bass guitar, drum kit** and **melody instrument** of your choice. Follow the steps below.
- *Set **existing lyrics** and use **some or all** of the following sections: **Intro, Verse 1, Verse 2, Pre-chorus, Chorus, Verse 3, Pre-chorus, Chorus, Middle 8/Instrumental, Chorus, Outro.**
- *Give each **new section** its own: a) **contrasting chord progression**, b) **new accompaniment style**, c) **contrasting melody**
- *Give each **returning section** the **same (or similar)** chord progression and melody as before.
- *Develop returning sections with subtle changes: new fills/licks between phrases, new drum/bass rhythmic patterns.

1. Chord Progression

Choose one of the following chord progressions. You may modify or extend it.

The chord progression should remain 4 or 8 bars in length: be careful, 8 bar progressions can be more difficult to use.

The following table lists the chord progressions shown in the image, organized by row and column. Each progression is presented as a sequence of chords and Roman numerals.

Progression	Chords	Roman Numerals
1	C G Am F	I V vi IV
2	Bb Cm Dm Eb	I ii iii IV
3	F Gm Dm Bb	I ii vi IV
4	G Am Em D	I ii vi V
5	C Em Dm F	I iii ii IV
6	D F#m G Bm A	I iii IV vi V
7	G Bm Em C	I iii vi IV
8	F Bb Gm C	I IV ii V
9	Bb Eb Dm F	I IV iii V
10	C F G A	I IV V (Vofvi)
11	F Bb Dm Csus4	I IV vi V
12	D Gm Bm A	I iv vi V
13	C Am Dm F	I vi ii IV
14	F Dm Am Bb	I vi iii IV
15	G Em C D	I vi IV V
16	Bb Gm F Cm	I vi V ii
17	Am C Dm Esus4	i III iv V
18	Dm F A Bb	i III V IV
19	Em G C B	i III VI V
20	Dm F/C Bb Asus4	i IIIc VI Vsus4
21	Bm Em D F#	i iv III V
22	Gm Cm D Eb	i iv V VI
23	Am Dm F E	i iv VI V
24	Em B Am C	i V iv VI
25	Dm A Bb F A	i V VI III V
26	Bm G D F#	i VI III V
27	Gm Eb Bb F	i VI III (VofIII)
28	Am F Dm E	i VI iv V
29	Cm F Bb F/A Bb	ii V I Vb I
30	C G D Em	IV I V vi
31	Bb C F Dm	IV V I vi
32	Gm Bb Cm Eb	vi I ii IV
33	Am Em F C E/B	vi iii IV I (V7cofvi)
34	Em C G D	vi IV I V
35	Bm A/C# D Em F#	vi Vb I ii (Vofvi)
36	C Em7/B Edim/Bb F/A Fm6/Ab C/G D7/F# Ddim7/G G7	I iii7c (vii7cofIV) IVb iidimc Ic (V7bofV) iidim7/V V7
37	G D Em Bm C G C D	I V vi iii IV I IV V
38	Am E/G# C/G D/F# Ddim/F C/E D#dim E	i Vb IIIc IVb IIIb IIIb (vii7ofV) V
39	Em D/F# G E7/G# Am G/B C B7	vi Vb I (V7bofi) ii Ib IV (V7ofvi)

2. Accompaniment Style

Choose one of the following accompaniment styles. You may adapt or vary it.

The image displays sixteen different piano accompaniment styles, each presented in a two-staff musical notation (treble and bass clef). The styles are labeled as follows:

- Accompaniment Style 1: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 2: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 3: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 4: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 5: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 6: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 7: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 8: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 9: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 10: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 11: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 12: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 13: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 14: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 15: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.
- Accompaniment Style 16: Treble clef, 4/4 time, chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand.

3. Compose your piano accompaniment by writing your chosen chord progression in your chosen accompaniment style. Use the correct key signature.

In the **left hand** the piano should play mainly the **bass note** (lowest note) of the chord. It is occasionally joined by the 5th.

In the **right hand** the piano should play **all** (or **most**) notes of the chord.

Within each chord, each hand should stretch **no more than one octave**.

Between each chord the right hand should **move as little as possible**: choose notes which are near to each other.

4. Choose, adapt or compose a set of lyrics.

The most effective lyrics are usually borrowed from an existing poem or song.

The text should be **metrical**: it follows a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

The text should be **rhyming**: lines end with a pattern of similar sounding words e.g. ABCB, ABAB, AABB.

You are encouraged to use one of the poems below.

Rhythmically say (i.e. rap) the lyrics and underline the syllables that have most emphasis (they are the 'strong' syllables and must go on the beat).

5. In the voice part, at one pitch, write a rhythm which matches the rhythm of your lyrics.

There must be at least one note per syllable.

The strong (emphasised) syllables should fall **on the beat**, especially **beats 1 and 3** of each bar.

The other (weak) syllables should generally fall **off the beat** or on **beats 2 and 4** of each bar.

The voice part should begin in bar 5, after a four bar intro.

6. Using the lyrics tool (shortcut Ctrl L), add lyrics to your rhythm, matching each syllable to the correct note.

7. Using the arrow keys, move the notes of the vocal line up or down to create a melody:

a) Use a note from the chord on beat 1 and beat 3 of each bar,

b) Move mainly by step,

c) Jump occasionally between notes of the chord.

8. Develop the instrumental accompaniment

a) The **bass guitar** should play one note at a time, mainly the bass note (lowest note) of the chord, the same as the piano left hand. Use very simple repeating patterns, with repeated notes. Use a new pattern for each new section of the piece.

b) The **drum kit** should copy existing drum patterns (copying drum notation found online):

Use an 'upper voice' (shortcut 'U') for hi-hat, ride and crash, use a 'lower voice' (shortcut 'L') for snare, bass and toms.

Use a new pattern for each new section of the piece.

c) The **melody instrument e.g. saxophone, electric guitar, violin, trumpet** should play one note at a time.

It should play the instrumental solo, which might be based on one of the existing vocal melodies.

It might play fills/licks (short motifs) between the vocal phrases.

It might play countermelodies (complementary melodies) in parallel 3rds or 6ths with the voice.

The electric guitar can play some simultaneous notes, but chords should be copied from existing notation (copying guitar chord notation found online).

Recommended Lyrics

Select lyrics from a metrical, rhyming poem such as one of the poems below.

Lyrics Set 1

Intro, Verse 1: The wild grass will whisper, Lights of passing cars, Will streak across your dreams, And fumble at the stars; Life will tap the window, Only too soon again, Life will have her answer, Do not ask her when.

Pre-chorus: Put off your twenty-odd encumbered years and creep, Into the only heaven, The robbers' cave of sleep.

Chorus: Sleep, my darling, sleep; The pity of it all, Is all that we now compass, If we watch disaster fall. Sleep and there forget, The watchers on the wall, Awake all night who know, The pity of it all.

Verse 2: When the winsome bubble shivers, when the bough, Breaks will be the moment, But never here nor now. Life will tap the window, Only too soon again, Life will have her answer, Do not ask her when.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

Louis MacNiece 1907-1964 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 2

Intro, Verse 1: Once we had a country, And we thought it fair, Look in the atlas, And you'll find it there, Yet there's no place for us my dear, Yet there's no place for us.

Verse 2: In the village churchyard there grows an old yew, Every spring It blossoms anew, Old passports can't do that my dear, Old passports can't do that.

Pre-chorus: The consul banged the table, And then they said; 'If you've got no passport You're officially dead', But we are still alive my dear, But we are still alive.

Chorus: Say this city Has ten million souls, Some live in mansions and Some live in holes, Yet there's no place for us my dear, Yet there's no place for us

Verse 3: Went to a committee, I was offered a chair; Asked me politely To return next year, But where shall we go today my dear, But where shall we go today.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

W. H. Auden 1907-1973 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 3

Intro, Verse 1: The fountains mingle with the river, And the rivers with the ocean, The winds of heaven mix forever, With a sweet emotion.

Verse 2: Nothing in the world is single, All things by a law divine, In one spirit Mix and mingle, Why not I with mine?

Pre-chorus: Rose leaves when the rose is dead, Are heaped for my beloveds bed, And so your thoughts when you are gone, Love itself will slumber on.

Chorus: Music when soft voices die, Lives on in the memory, Sweet scents when sweet violets sicken, Live within your sense and quicken, Love itself will slumber on.

Verse 3: See the mountains kiss high heaven, And the waves clasp one another, No sister-flower would be forgiven, If it disdained its brother.

Verse 4: And the sunlight clasps the earth, And the moonbeams kiss the sea, What are all these kissings worth, If you will not kiss me?

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792-1822 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 4

Intro, Verse 1: Stop all the clocks, Cut of the telephone, Prevent the dog from barking, With a juicy bone, Silence the pianos, And with muffled drum, Bring out the coffin, Let the mourners come.

Pre-chorus: The stars are not wanted now: Put out every one; Pack up the moon, And dismantle the sun; Pour away the ocean, And sweep up the wood, For nothing now can ever, Come to any good.

Chorus: (S)he was my North, my South, My East and West, My working week, And my Sunday rest, My noon, my midnight, My talk, my song; I thought that love would last forever; I was wrong.

Verse 2: Let aeroplanes circle, Moaning overhead, Scribbling on the sky the message

(S)he is dead, Put crepe bows round the necks, Of the public doves, Let the traffic policemen, Wear black cotton gloves.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

W. H. Auden 1907-1973 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 5

Intro, Verse 1: I wander thro' each charter'd street, Near where the charter'd Thames does flow. And mark in every face I meet, Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Pre-chorus: But most thro' midnight streets I hear, How the youthful Harlots curse, Blasts the new-born Infants tear, And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Chorus: In every cry of every Man, In every Infants cry of fear, In every voice: in every ban, The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

Verse 2: How the Chimney-sweepers cry, Every black'ning Church appalls, And the hapless Soldiers sigh, Runs in blood down Palace walls.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

William Blake 1757-1827 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 6

Intro, Verse 1: Let us go then, you and I, When the evening is spread out against the sky, Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets, The muttering retreats, Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels, And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells.

Pre-chorus: There will be time to meet the faces that you meet; There will be time to murder and create, And time for all the works and days of hands, That drop the question on your plate.

Chorus: Time for you and time for me, And time yet for a hundred indecisions, And for a hundred visions and revisions, Time for you and time for me. In the room the women come and go, Talking of Michelangelo.

Verse 2: And indeed there will be time To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?", Time to turn back and descend the stair. Do I dare disturb the universe? In a minute there is time, For decisions and revisions which a minute win reverse.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus

(Verse 3: For I have known them all already, Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, have measured out my life with coffee spoons; I know the voices dying with a dying fall, Beneath the music from a farther room.

(Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

T.S. Eliot 1888-1965 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 7

Intro, Verse 1: Take this kiss upon the brow! And, in parting from you now, You are not wrong, you who deem, That my days have been a dream;

Pre-chorus: Yet if hope has flown away, In a night, or in a day, In a vision, or in none, Is it therefore the less gone?

Chorus: I stand amid the roar, Of a surf-tormented shore, All that we see or seem, Is but a dream within a dream.

Verse 2: And I hold within my hand, Grains of the golden sand-- How few! yet how they creep, Through my fingers to the deep.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus

(Middle 8: O God! can I not grasp, them with a tighter clasp? O God! can I not save, one from the pitiless wave? Is all that we see or seem, But a dream within a dream?

(Repeat chorus), Outro

Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 8

Intro, Verse 1: It was many and many a year ago, In a kingdom by the sea, That a maiden there lived whom you may know, By the name of Annabel Lee; And this maiden she lived with no other thought, Than to love and be loved by me.

Pre-chorus: I was young and she was young, In this kingdom by the sea; But we loved with a love that was more than love-- I and my Annabel Lee;

Chorus: With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven, Coveted her and me. And this was the reason that, long ago, In this kingdom by the sea.

Verse 2: A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling My beautiful Annabel Lee; So that her highborn kinsman came, And bore her away from me, To shut her up in a sepulchre, In this kingdom by the sea.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus

(Middle 8: Of those who were older than we- Of many far wiser than we- And neither the angels in heaven above, Nor the demons down under the sea, Can ever dissever my soul from the soul, Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

(Chorus) Outro

Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849 (adapted)

Lyrics Set 9

Intro, Verse 1: I wandered lonely as a cloud, That floats on high o'er vales and hills, When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Pre-chorus: Continuous as the stars that shine, And twinkle on the milky way, They stretched in never-ending line, Along the margin of a bay: Ten thousand saw I at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Chorus: For oft, when on my couch I lie, In vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye, Which is the bliss of solitude; And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils.

Verse 2: The waves beside them danced, but they, Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee; A poet could not be but gay, In such a jocund company! I gazed—and gazed—but little thought, What wealth the show to me had brought:

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus), Outro

Lyrics Set 10

Intro, Verse 1: My father worked with a horse-plough, His shoulders globed like a full sail strung, Between the shafts and the furrow. The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

Verse 2: An expert. He would set the wing, And fit the bright steel-pointed sock. The sod rolled over without breaking. At the head rig, with a single pluck of reins.

Pre-chorus: I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake, Fell sometimes on the polished sod; Sometimes he rode me on his back, Dipping and rising to his plod.

Chorus: I wanted to grow up and plough, To close one eye, stiffen my arm. All I ever did was follow, In his broad shadow round the farm.

Verse 3: With pluck of reins, the sweating team turned round, And back into the land. His eye, Narrowed and angled at the ground, Mapping the furrow exactly.

Repeat pre-chorus, Repeat chorus, (Middle 8/Instrumental), (Repeat chorus)

Verse 4: I was a nuisance, tripping, falling, Yapping always. But today, It is my father who keeps stumbling, Behind me, and will not go away. **Outro**