

# Songwriting series

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*Part 1 (of 4)*

*Introduction to  
songwriting &  
structure*




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music

# What is a song?

- Lyrics – verses & chorus
- Music – instruments and vocals
- Rhythm – time signature & the beat
- Genre – style & mood
- *Human connection (the magic!)*

*Pause now and write down the titles of a couple of songs that, for you, have that element of magic.*

- *What memories do they bring back?*
- *Who do they make you think about?*
- *How do they make you feel?*



## Elements of a song - definitions

**Intro:** gets our attention, introduces the mood and style of the song, builds up to the start of the story.

**Verse:** tells us what the song is about, defines the tense of the story (past/present/future) and whose story it is (I/you/they)

**Pre-chorus:** optional but this builds the listener up to the chorus. It might get louder, or higher in pitch.

**Chorus:** contains the main hook line, the point to the story, the big notes, the energy, the memorable moment.

**Bridge:** often a different pace or style or key; with less instruments or more; can be either a broken-down, quieter section that adds to the storyline, or a power moment with added energy.

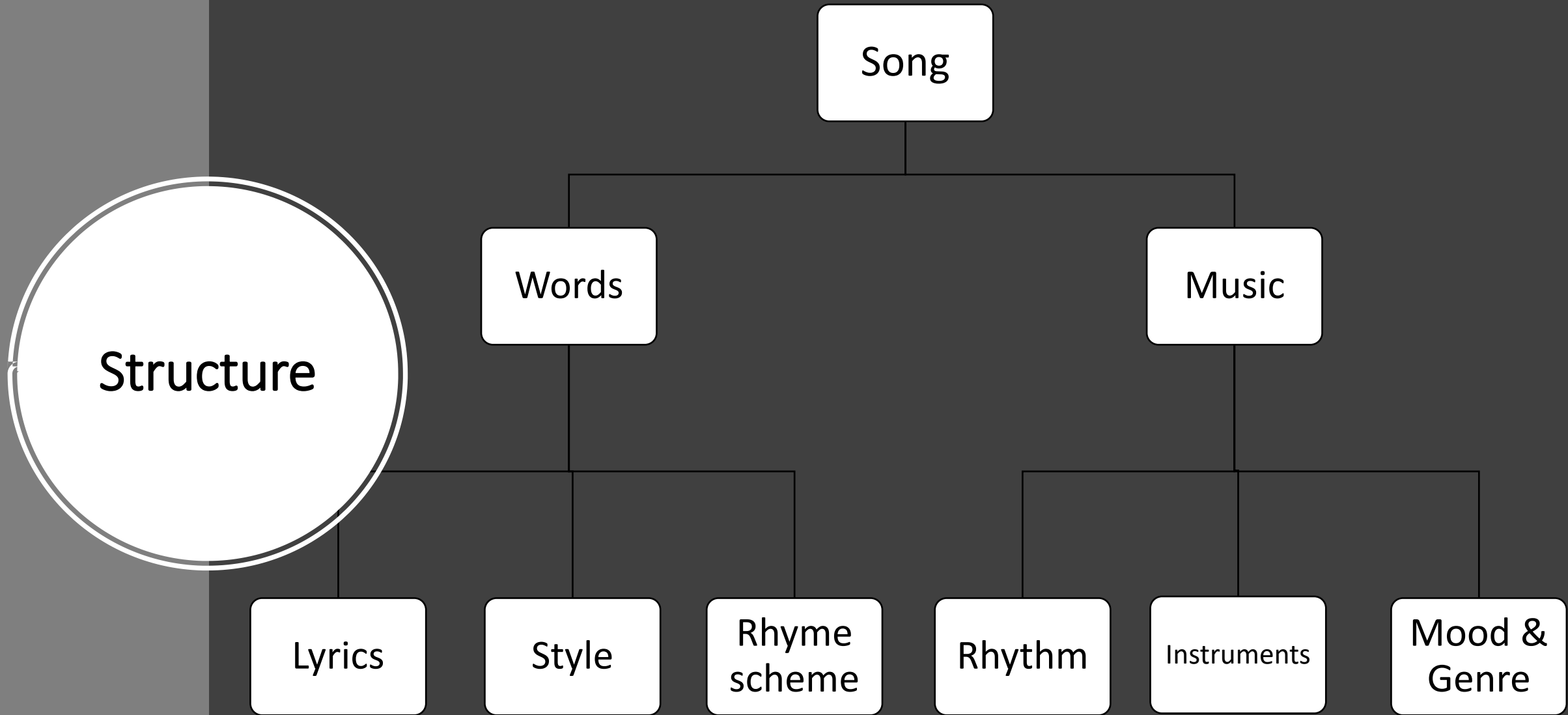
**Instrumental:** a separate music-only section, usually a different melody to the rest of the song. May feature a lead guitar riff or a solo orchestral instrument.

**Outro:** indicates the song is finishing, often slows down or fades out.

# Elements of a song

A few things to think about:

- Will your lyrics be sung or spoken?
  - Will they rhyme? If they do it's likely they'll follow a common pattern – the last word of every other line for example, or the last two lines of the chorus – we'll talk more about rhyme schemes in Parts 2 & 3.
  - How many verses will you have?
  - Will the rhythm be created by the drums keeping the beat, or if you don't use percussion, how will you make sure the song keeps moving forward?
  - Which instruments will you use? - a simple piano and vocal track, a full rock band set up with guitars, bass and drums. Think about the addition of a violin in folk music, a pedal steel in country, a saxophone in jazz, why is that important to the overall style?
  - The key the music is in, whether it's a happy song or a sad song, or somewhere in between, the speed at which it plays, all helps to define it as a certain type of music that we recognise.
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- *Do you have a favourite genre of music? What do you notice about that music?*
  - *Is the style instantly recognisable, and if so, how? What instruments can you usually hear?*
  - *Are they all happy songs or sad songs and if the mood of the songs are different how can you still tell it fits into that genre of music?*



## Examples

### Verse-Chorus family

#### Bruce Springsteen – ‘Hungry Heart’

Verse 1 starts: “Got a wife and kids in Baltimore Jack”

Chorus starts: “Everybody’s got a hungry heart”

Verse 2

Chorus – followed by Instrumental

Ends with Chorus again



#### Joni Mitchell – ‘Big Yellow Taxi’

Very similar structure, but listen out for the addition of a **Bridge** and how it sounds different to the rest of the song:

“Late last night I heard the screen door slam, and a big yellow taxi took away my old man”



## Examples

### Chorus First

Some songs start with the chorus, such as:

The Foundations – 'Build Me Up Buttercup'

Bill Medley & Jennifer Warnes – '(I've Had) The Time of my Life'



### No chorus

The Marcellas – 'Blue Moon'

The Beatles – 'All My Loving' - listen out for the Bridge section that begins "All my lovin' I will send to you".

*Make a note of a few of your favourite songs to look up, then, with this information to hand, listen to them and think about what you can hear.*

## Find inspiration

*Have a go and to have fun with it.*

- Note down some memories, experiences or even a story you've been told, that you'd like to try writing a song about.
- What are the feelings and thoughts that are related to it?
  - Use a favourite song as inspiration.
  - Try free-writing: set a timer for 5 minutes and simply write, unedited about that topic.
  - Call a friend and ask what they love listening to.

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**Next time: Storytelling through Song**



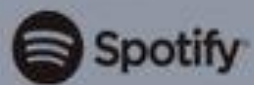




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