

**10 WRITING EXERCISES  
FOR  
BETTER LYRICS**

**By Rocky Guloy**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Study The Themes Of Songs You Love	(1)
Pick A Title And Write Questions	(2)
Character Profiles	(3)
Write A Song Map	(4)
Eavesdrop	(5)
Find A Picture In A Magazine And Write About It	(6)
Grab A Dictionary	(7)
Word Combinations	(8)
Pick Up A Different Instrument	(9)
Freestyling	(10)

Themes are the foundation on which songs and the stories they tell are built on. Having a strong backbone gives the verses direction and allows the audience to respond stronger to the song. Most songs talk about love found or love lost. A lot of songs talk about facing adversity or overcoming it. A lot of rappers boast about how awesome they are. Some people enjoy talking about family. Or even sometimes their dog, or just plain being bored.

*What do you want to talk about?*

### **EXERCISE 1**

**Get 5 songs that you listen to all the time. Analyze what theme the songwriter is trying to express. See if you can find a commonality between the themes and study how the each songwriter is expressing them.**

A title of a song is ultimately what gives the song its direction. A good one will raise curiosity and have the audience asking questions, “What is this all about?” When you hear a title like “I Waited Too Long”, you’re gonna “well what happened?” “who or what did you wait too long for?” “what did you do it”

*What kind of questions do you want the audience to ask?*

## **EXERCISE 2**

**Pick A Title Of A Song You Like And Write Out Questions That It Raises. Now study the verses and the hook and analyze how it answers those questions.**

Sometimes it is good to step out of your own life and try telling the stories of others. It's not easy, but it definitely helps us unstuck ourselves from whatever rut we feel like we're in. And getting out of that rut and strengthening our ability to describe what we feel and see is the core of these exercises.

*Who were some of your favorite TV or movie characters growing up?*

### **EXERCISE 3**

**Make up a character, give them a name. Give them characteristics and be specific on things like, "What color are their eyes?" "What kind of food they eat?" etc.**

**Now do this for 2 other characters. Now here's the most important part. How would your characters relate to each other? How would they act in certain situations?**

One of our jobs as a songwriter is to guide the listener through a story. They wanna know what happened. So guide them.

One example of a song map from Robin Frederick's amazing book, *"Shortcuts To Hit Songwriting"*

Path #1 – Deal With A Problem

Verse 1: This Is The Problem

Chorus: Here's How I Feel About It

Verse 2: This Is What I Tried To Do About It

Chorus : Repeat Chorus

Bridge: Here's How I Hope To Find A Way Through This

Chorus: Repeat Chorus

#### **EXERCISE 4**

**Pick out 3 songs and analyze how the song develops. Pay close attention to what details and the order the songwriter decides to reveal them.**

Sometimes we find inspiration in the oddest places. A simple sentence can spark a million ideas. Sometimes we just need a push, or maybe we just need to pay more attention to what our surroundings are trying to tell us.

*Where are the places you like to hangout?*

### **EXERCISE 5**

**Sit down at a bar, bus station, mall food court or wherever there's A LOT of people talking. Just listen and absorb what they're talking about. Laugh (not out loud) and take notes on any phrases that intrigue you.**

Imagery is what really hooks the brain. If you feel like your lines a little bland, that just means visually they need a little work. If you want to really engage the listener, try being really descriptive in what you're seeing in the scene.

One example of a cliché line, "What an awesome day"

One example of adding images to help the verse is  
"There's fried chicken and orange juice on the table. What a great day!"

I really like fried chicken and orange juice as you can tell. And if there's some on the table, you better believe I'm having an awesome day!

*What is your favorite restaurant?*

## **EXERCISE 6**

**Find an ad in a magazine, and write about it. Same as Exercise 3 and Exercise 5, come up with a story of who, what, where, when and why.**

Sometimes our own judgmental minds can get in our own way. That frozen feeling of being able to move on is literally our worst enemy when it comes to writing anything. As all these exercises are showing, sometimes you just have to let go. Even if what you're making isn't any good, at least you're making something.

*How do you deal with people who tell you something can't be done?*

### **EXERCISE 7**

**Grab a dictionary, pick a random word, and start forming questions and verses around it.**

One of my favorite games when I was younger was Legend Of Zelda. I thought it was awesome how he had stuff like The Master Sword and the Red Shield. I would spend hours coming up with sick weapons and detailing them in my Meade notebook. Nowadays, I still use word combinations in the same way.  
Only I describe people.

*What games did you like to play when you were younger?*

### **EXERCISE 8**

**Make a whole list of nouns, verbs and adjectives. Now just start randomly making combinations of them.**

I grew up writing songs on the acoustic guitar. Most of the basic music theory knowledge I have is from learning it's notes and chords, and I've recently picked it up again. I remember buying a Macbook in hopes that I can be an amazing rap producer. Now I know I'm not amazing by any means, but I wish when we were younger, that learning how to make beats is a mandatory class in school. I looked at music so much more differently when I started realizing the patterns that's in every song. And I was still able to apply the same music theory knowledge I learned from playing the acoustic guitar.

*What was the first instrument you learned on?*

## **EXERCISE 9**

**Pick Up A Different Instrument. So if you're using to playing guitar, grab a laptop. Or vice-versa. Or grab a violin if you have access to one.**

The point of all these exercises is to get out of your own way. Most of the time you have to ask yourself why you're hesitant to create something. And the answer is that you care too much about what others and what you think. The point of being creative is to create something. And when we'

*What morning habits do you have to jumpstart your creativity?*

## **EXERCISE 10**

**Put on a rap instrumental and just freestyle.**

Brought to You

By

<http://howtoplayandwritegreatmusic.com>

copyright 2013

If you like what you've read, please share and come visit me on my blog!

-Rocky Guloy

Check out my music at <http://rakido.bandcamp.com>