Unlock the Song Inside: Beginning Songwriting Workshop with Eli Conley
Trans Voices Festival 2018

Image Generator

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Rhyme Schemes

Rhyming words are words that sound the same at the ends, like cat /hat or rhyming/climbing.

When a song has rhyming words at the end of lines, these are called end rhymes. Here is an example of end rhyme:

My cat is nice
My cat likes nice

A slant rhyme is when the words sound similar, but don’t exactly rhyme, like park /start or deep / creek.

A rhyme scheme is a way of describing the pattern of end rhymes in a song. Each new sound at the end of a line is given a letter, starting with “A,” then “B,” and so on. If the end of a line rhymes with an earlier line, it gets the same letter as the earlier line.

Here are three slightly different lyrics, each with a different rhyme scheme. The first is AABB, the second is ABAB, the third is ABCB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My dog is nice</th>
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<td>My dog likes rice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>My dog is fun</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>My dog is fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>My dog is fun</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>My dog likes rice</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>My dog is cute</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>She loves the sun</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>She loves the sun</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>She loves the sun</td>
<td>B</td>
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Exercise: For each song excerpt, identify the rhyme scheme and write it next to the lyrics.

Try Again at Everything by Rae Spoon

I will wear your grandmother’s ring
And try again at everything
And I do not trust the ground
but I float above it when you’re around

The Rain by Star Amerasu

I want the rain to fall
To take away my pain
I want the cleansing waters
To clear out my brain
Let it pour
I can ignore
The feelings inside are getting dark
I think it’s time for us to part

Thorn In Your Side by Namoli Brennet

I’m not the thorn in your side
I’m not the break in your heart
I’m not the speck in your eye
I’m not the falling apart
I’m not the floor
I’m not the ceiling
I’m not the fear
I’m not the feeling

Dead Key by Geo Wyeth

I ain’t dead I’m just on a vacation
I got a car it stumbles through the station
Underneath your bed
And the murders in your street
Underneath the Algonquin dirt
I went in deep
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Setting Words to Melody
To write a strong melody for a chorus or refrain, sing it so it mirrors the meaning of the words!

A great example:
I try to say goodbye and I choke / try to walk away and I stumble / though I try to hide it, it’s clear/ My world crumbles when you are not near – Macy Gray

Techniques
• Pick the most important word. Make that note the highest or the longest held note in the line.
  o She wore a raspberry beret – Prince
  o I can’t make you love me if you don’t – Bonnie Raitt
  o Oh, won’t you stay with me? / Cause you’re all I need / This ain’t love, it’s clear to see /But, darling, stay with me – Sam Smith

• Speak the line and see where the natural stresses fall. Mirror how you’d speak the line.
  o Give me one reason to stay here and I’ll turn right back around – Tracy Chapman
  o How do I live without you, I want to know / How do I breathe without you, if you ever go / How do I ever, ever survive / How do I, how do I / Oh, how do I live – By Dianne Warren, recorded by LeAnn Rimes

• If the line has directional words or words that involve movement, match the melodic line to that.
  o Don’t leave me high, don’t leave me dry – Radiohead
  o I would teach my feet to fly – Joni Mitchell
  o I keep on falling in and out of love with you – Alicia Keys
  o Stop! In the name of love – by Holland Dozier Holland, recorded by The Supremes

• Do the opposite!
  o I went down down down in the ring of fire – Johnny Cash
  o And she’s climbing a stairway to heaven – Led Zeppelin

• Ironic – If you have sad or mad words, use happy music or vice versa.
  o You told me once dear, you really loved me / And no one else could come between / But now you’ve left me and you love another / You have shattered all my dreams – You Are My Sunshine, Folk Song
  o Tried to make me go to rehab but I said no no no - Amy Winehouse

• Repeat the most important line.
  o Say my name, Say my name / When no one is around you / Say baby I love you / if you ain’t running game – Destiny’s Child
  o Cry me a river / Cry me a river – Justin Timberlake