

*Musician*  
- ON A MISSION -

# SONG STRUCTURE CHEAT SHEET



## BEFORE WE START...

Letters of the alphabet denote different and repeating sections, as well as the names for each section.

For example, **Verse - Chorus - Verse - Chorus - Bridge - Chorus** = ABABCB

# SONG STRUCTURES (TO EXPERIMENT WITH)

## **Verse – Chorus – Verse – Chorus – Bridge – Chorus**

- ABABCB
- This is the most common song structure in pop music.

## **Verse – Prechorus – Chorus – Verse – Prechorus – Chorus – Bridge – Chorus**

- ABCABCDC
- Very similar to the previous structure, but with a prechorus thrown in.

## **Verse/Refrain – Verse/Refrain – Bridge – Verse/Refrain**

- AABA
- An older song structure. Heard commonly in bluegrass, gospel, and country.

## **Verse – Chorus – Verse – Chorus**

- ABAB
- Good to use if a song feels like it's dragging on too long.

## **Verse – Chorus – Hook – Verse – Chorus – Hook – Bridge – Chorus – Hook**

- ABCABCDBC
- Becoming more popular in today's music. Great if you have a melody to highlight.

## **Chorus – Verse – Chorus – Music – Chorus – Bridge – Chorus**

- ABACABA
- A much older structure known as a "rondo" - used by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and other classical composers.

# SONG STRUCTURE VOCAB LIST

## **Intro**

- The short musical section that kicks off a song. Typically includes a musical hook (a.k.a. riff or repetitive, signature melody).

## **Verse**

- Designed to give the listeners information in the story. Typically includes some who, what, where, how, why type of information. Moves the story along. The meat of your song.

## **Prechorus**

- A section designed to link your verse with your chorus. Musically, a prechorus feels like you are “ramping up” to your next section.

## **Chorus**

- The sing-along-able, repetitive section of your song. Usually repeated around three or so times throughout. The chorus can contain your hook or lead to it. Lyrically, it's approached as the “summary” of your song.

## **Refrain**

- Typically found in AABA types of songs, a refrain is a line or two that repeats at the end of each verse. Think of it as the hook for your verses.

## **Hook**

- The line that “hooks a listener in.” This is the punchline, the line that brings everything else together. It typically appears at the end of a chorus, the beginning of a chorus, or in its own section after a chorus. It's usually the title of a song and is the essential heart of the song.

## **Drop**

- Drops are particular to EDM and pop music. It's a musical section that occurs with or after a hook, where the music takes the spotlight. A drop is built up to in an exaggerated fashion. Then it's dropped on the listener with a bouquet of sound and instrumentation. It's the release after the build.

## **Bridge**

- A bridge is a song's turning point. It is a new section that occurs after your second chorus. The function of a bridge is to add something new. That can be telling a new part of the story, offering new chords, a new melody, or new rhythmic structure.

## **Middle 8**

- Commonly used by Europeans to describe a bridge. It's usually eight bars long.

## **Breakdown**

- This is a musical moment where players can take a solo. It may be one instrument soloing, or players may take turns. The underlying chords are usually the same as something we've already heard in the song (verse chords or chorus chords).

## **Outro**

- A musical section at the very end of the song to lead out of it.

## **Topline**

- The melody and the lyric. Professional topline writers are often brought in to provide a compelling melody and lyrics for a track that's been written.

## **Stanza**

- A stanza is a section of lyrics that are grouped together based on a fixed rhyme scheme, meter, or length. A verse is a stanza. A chorus is a stanza. Sometimes verses are two stanzas long.