

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm.

SONGWRITING

1. DO NOT SHORT CHANGE THE MELODY.

The strength of your song rests almost entirely upon your melody. Create phrases of notes that easily sit atop your progressions and instrumentation, and make them memorable and interesting.

2. CREATE A STRONG MELODIC HOOK.

Your song needs a melody line that keeps reappearing in a very purposeful way. That specific melody line(s) will help create and drive home the theme and feel of your song.

3. THE MELODY MUST PROGRESS.

As themes and melodic phrases are revisited later in your song, variations of those melodies should begin to surface. Add some higher melodic jumps to certain lines in your ending chorus for example.

4. YOU NEED STRUCTURE.

Every section of your song is introduced for the benefit of the song as a whole (intro, verse, chorus, bridge, etc.) Each layer helps to build the structure of your song. Your song needs to a clear road map to help communicate the message effectively.

5. BE CONSISTENT!

Your structure, melody choice, and lyric choice need to make sense together. If your first verse sounds completely different from your pre-chorus, or your lyrics look like they could be a completely different song, something isn't working. The song needs to tell the same story lyrically and melodically from start to finish.

6. CREATE A STRONG LYRICAL HOOK.

Your lyrics continue to speak into your central theme or idea. Just as a melodic hook appears throughout your song, a series of lyrics should do the same thing. Quite often your lyrical hooks and melodic hooks will appear at the same time, honing in on a key theme or message that drives the song (most often accomplished in the chorus).

7 DO NOT FORSAKE RHYMING.

Master poetic language and make your lyrics work harder for you! Each line should purposefully illustrate rhyme scheme, or an irregular rhyming pattern of some sort (Ex. AB AB Pattern: or, AA BB, etc.) This helps stimulate stronger visual and emotional responses.

8. CHORD PROGRESSIONS ARE GOOD.

Some people think it is cool to avoid a common chord progression, and believe they are unique writers for doing so. That's like saying you shouldn't tune your guitar because everybody does it. Chord progressions are the foundation upon which your melody can find a comfortable niche. It is crucial to establish a solid progression that compliments your melody and is consistent with the style of your song.

9. GET TO THE POINT.

Don't drag out your introduction. Try to keep your song moving, smoothly transitioning from section to section. A beautifully written song can easily become mediocre if the arrangement is poor, and/or certain sections of the song drag on or are repeated too much.

10. PRESENT A CHRISTIAN MESSAGE.

And why wouldn't you want to? Your song should be pointing to the most important aspect of your life, what Jesus has done for you. This doesn't mean you have to write a worship song, or even a stereotypical Christian genre tune. Write a song that at least grazes the nature of God in its content. This can take millions of forms.