Song Structures

Not all songs follow an exact pattern or formula, however, there are a few key elements that a few genres share. Below are a few ways you can arrange your song writing and structure.

**THE BLUES:** Blues is a music genre and musical form originated by African Americans in the Deep South of the United States around the end of the 19th century. The genre developed from roots in African musical traditions, African-American work songs, and spirituals.[1] Blues incorporated spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts, chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads.[2] The blues form, ubiquitous in jazz, rhythm and blues and rock and roll, is characterized by the call-and-response pattern, the blues scale and specific chord progressions, of which the twelve-bar blues is the most common. Blue notes (or "worried notes"), usually thirds or fifths flattened in pitch, are also an essential part of the sound. Blues shuffles or walking bass reinforce the trance-like rhythm and form a repetitive effect known as the groove.

Writing Blues Lyrics Handout

1. Choose a topic that reflects the mood of the blues.
2. Follow the formula below for the four lines of each verse of a blues song:

   1\text{st} \text{Line}: \quad \text{State the problem.}
   
   2\text{nd} \text{Line}: \quad \text{Repeat 1\text{st} line.}
   
   3\text{rd} \text{Line}: \quad \text{State half of the solution (or consequence).}
   
   4\text{th} \text{Line}: \quad \text{State the second half of the solution (or consequence).}

   **Example:**

   The Homework Blues

   I've got the homework blues âcause my teacher always gives us a ton.
   I've got the homework blues âcause my teacher always gives us a ton.
   And if I don't do my homework,
   My parents won't let me have fun.

   Notice that the 1\text{st} line has 16 syllables. The 3\text{rd} and 4\text{th} line should add up to 16 as well. As a rule of thumb, however many syllables there are in the 1\text{st} line should be the same (or very nearly the same) as the 3\text{rd} and 4\text{th} line combined. Also, note that the last word of the 1\text{st} line rhymes with the last word of the 4\text{th} line.
While not all blues songs follow this exact formula, it is a way to get started. Listen to as many blues songs as you can and see if they follow the same formula. If they don’t, what do they do differently?

**POP SONGS:** Pop music is a genre of popular music that originated in its modern form in the United States and United Kingdom during the mid-1950s.\[4\] The terms "popular music" and "pop music" are often used interchangeably, although the former describes all music that is popular and includes many different styles. "Pop" and "rock" were roughly synonymous terms until the late 1960s, when they became increasingly differentiated from each other. Although much of the music that appears on record charts is seen as pop music, the genre is distinguished from chart music. Pop music is eclectic, and often borrows elements from other styles such as urban, dance, rock, Latin, and country; nonetheless, there are core elements that define pop music. Identifying factors include generally short to medium-length songs written in a basic format (often the verse-chorus structure), as well as common use of repeated choruses, melodic tunes, and hooks.

Tips to creating a pop song.

1) Dynamics and arrangement: Make your chorus sound bigger by making the verse sound smaller.
2) Pitch: have the singer sing higher in the chorus in comparison to the verses to add dynamics
3) Lyrics: keep verses lyricaly more complex with a simpler melody, and choruses lyrically more simple with a more complex melody.
4) A line has to have a certain number of syllables and the next line has to be its mirrored image
5) Make the chorus comes in at the first 50 seconds of a song
6) Keep it simple with no more than 3 to 4 melodic parts per song and only introduce them one at a time
7) Recycle melodic parts in a song creating “Mirror exposure effect”, where people are attracted to something because they are familiar with it.
8) Create balance. Follow a rhythmic section with a less rhythmic one. If a sections starts on the up beat, then have the next section start on the down beat.
9) Use repetition of phrases, and the title on the song as much as possible.

**Common pop song structure**

- Intro 4 bars
- Verse 16 bars
- Pre-Chorus 4 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
- Verse 8 bars
- Pre 4 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
- Bridge 8 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
LINKS
Video on pop-song formula: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcmrgTNE9Cs

Video on repetition:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzzmqUoQobc&index=5&list=PLJ8cMiYb3G5fyqfIwGjiH2fYC5fFLfdwW4

COUNTRY MUSIC: is a genre of popular music that originated in the southern United States in the early 1920s. It takes its roots from genres such as folk music (especially Appalachian folk and Western music) and blues. Country music often consists of ballads and dance tunes with generally simple forms, folk lyrics, and harmonies accompanied by mostly string instruments such as banjos, electric and acoustic guitars, steel guitars (such as pedal steels and dobros), and fiddles as well as harmonicas. Blues modes have been used extensively throughout its recorded history. African-American influences in Country Music can be documented at least as far back as the 1920s. Harmonica ace, DeFord Bailey, appeared on the Grand Ole Opry stage in 1926. Whites and blacks in rural communities in the South played in stringbands.

Formation of Country music
Country songs deal with themes like loss, heartbreak, betrayal, family, and faith. More often than not, they also tell a story. Decide what classic country themes you want to engage with and how you want to tell a story about those themes. They can take on several different forms but the one below can be a good place to start.

Common pop song structure
- Intro 4 bars
- Verse 16 bars
- Pre-Chorus 4 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
- Verse 8 bars
- Pre 4 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
- Bridge 8 bars
- Chorus 8 bars
Planning Your AABA Song

The goal is to effectively showcase the hook/title. To achieve that the hook should appear in the same place in each A Section. This is usually be either the first line or the last line of the section. All other lyrics should relate to and clarify the core message or concept that the hook/title captures.

It is a good idea to have a clear outline that can be used to develop your idea clearly and help you to convey it concisely. Plan what the purpose of each A section is, and what you want it to convey. The bridge section is a great place to make a point to make relating to the hook. The fact that the B section contrasts melodically and rhythmically from the A sections helps the point to stand out and be set apart from the rest of the song.

The natural flow and uninterrupted development of the AABA Song Form lends itself beautifully to one of the following formulas:
**Basic**

Verse 1 - Introduce an idea
Verse 2 - Develop the idea
Bridge - Offer a different perspective, omitting the title
Verse 3 - Conclusion

**Problem-Solution**

Verse 1 - Identify the problem
Verse 2 - Elaborate on the problem -- what caused it?
Bridge - Discuss the solution to the problem
Verse 3 - Talk about where we go from here. In a sad song, this is where we offer hope.

**Vignette**

Use "word pictures" to suggest visual images to imagination of the listener. Keep them interested in and focused on the hook.

A common vignette development is to use a time-line:

Verse 1 - Set in the past
Verse 2 - Set in the present
Bridge
Verse 3 - Set in the future

or

Verse 1 - Set in the present
Verse 2 - Flashback to the past
Bridge
Verse 3 - Back in the present

Vignettes can use unrelated verses, except in the way they come to or develop the hook.

Yet again the B Section is the place to draw focus back to the core song concept.