

SongMecca Author's Guide

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for choosing SongMecca. The purpose of this author's guide is to provide some useful tips for checking over and improving your own songs prior to publication. Please read carefully through this guide and review your songs accordingly.

What does it mean to publish songs on SongMecca? On SongMecca, as with any other publisher, you release all control of your song. When you release it to SongMecca, it's done. No more changes or versions may be made. To do so creates confusion to the singer. Thus it is important to resolve all musical and lyrical problems in a song before releasing it to the public. Be aware that the quality of songs that you publish will impact your reputation as a songwriter.

Reviewing Your Lyrics

Since the lyrics are the longest-lasting part of a song, take extra care that they clearly convey the intended message. Here are some tips to help review your lyrics.

1. Core thought. In one short sentence, what is your song saying? Take a step back and review it from a distance, so to speak. Do the thoughts in the verses lead into the chorus? Or if there's no chorus, do they tie into the core thought?
2. Read your lyrics out loud. They may sound heavily accented, which is a good thing for lyrics, but as a whole they should work as a standalone poem.
3. Make sure the accents are in the proper places, especially when printed out on the staff. Whenever possible, accents should fall on the primary or secondary beat of the measure.

4. Make a meter count. Count the syllables in each line and write it down. Each line doesn't have to be identical, but ideally a meter count should be consistent throughout all the verses. Some common meters are: 8.8.8.8, 8.6.8.6, etc.
5. Be creative with rhymes and rhyme schemes. However, they should be easy to hear and sing.
6. Use proper grammar. Poetry has its own grammar rules. Use proper poetic grammar in lyrics.
7. Titles. While a title is a bit relative, it should, in a few descriptive words, reflect the main theme of the song. Often a title is the key phrase of the chorus. If there's no chorus, it may be the first line.

Reviewing Your Music

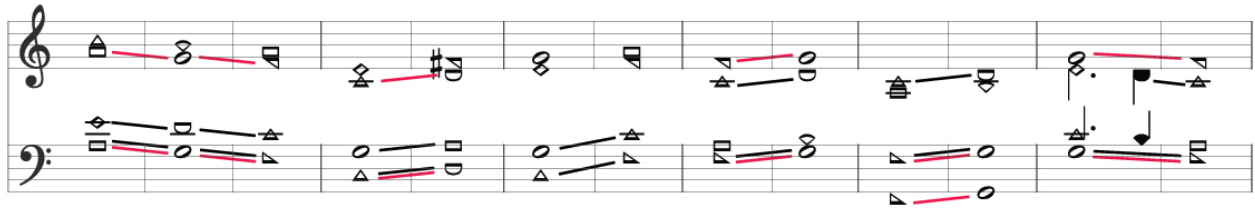
It can be difficult to identify areas of improvement in your own music. However, with some study and helpful tips, it gets easier the more you write. Here are some tips to help review your music.

1. Get some people together and sing your song. This is the best way to see if your song works or needs changes.
2. Make a measure count. When counting measures, omit the pickup measure but count each complete measure, including the last one. The resulting number should be divisible by at least 2; 4 or 8 is ideal. While this isn't the most critical part of music, an evenly measured song will tend to sing better.
3. Symmetry. The verses and chorus in a song will almost always be proportional in length to each other. Most often, they are both the same length. This helps keep the song balanced and easy to sing. Here are the most common verse to chorus proportions.
 - a. 1:1- Christian Hymnal #483, 209, 152
 - b. 2:1 (verse is double the chorus) Christian Hymnal #194, 81Sometimes the verse is $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the chorus and vice versa. Some examples are Christian Hymnal #119 & 482. On rare occasions the chorus is $\frac{1}{4}$ the length of the verse (#502).

4. Parallels. Parallel motion in music is when two voices at a specific interval move the same distance up or down. Some of this is good and some is not. Generally avoided intervals are the parallel octave and the perfect fifth. Some simple ways to avoid parallels are: move a voice or two before the others and/or use contrary motion.

Parallel Examples

— Parallel Octave — Parallel Fifth



Parallel Resolutions



Reviewing Typesetting

An important part of what makes a song easy to read and sing is good typesetting. This, along with a layout that is clear and easy to follow, will make your song look more accessible to more people.

Lyrics Typesetting

Not only do lyrics need to speak clearly, they should also be presented clearly. Here are a few points to review as you finalize your lyrics.

1. Capitalization. While this comes naturally, it is good to be sure your lyrics are properly capitalized. The first word of each poetic line should be capitalized, as well as names and proper nouns. Most words in a title are capitalized as well.
2. Punctuation. It is easy to omit punctuation when writing a first draft of lyrics. However, the technical structure of lyrics can be altered by improper punctuation. Be sure your lyrics are punctuated according to the rules as applied to poetry.
3. Hyphenation. This also comes naturally, but can surprise you occasionally. Double check your lyrics and make sure they are properly hyphenated. A dictionary is your best friend for this. There are also lyrics hyphenation tools online.

Music Typesetting

Clear musical typesetting is a critical part of making a song easy to read and sing. Here are some points to review as you finalize your music.

1. Dynamics. If your song requires dynamics (*p*, *m*, *f*, crescendo, etc.) place them in the proper location and above the top staff.
2. If your song needs a pickup measure, be sure it gets one. Otherwise the rhythm of the song will not be balanced.
3. Subtract the duration of the pickup measure from the last measure of the song. This ensures that the entire song uses complete measures.
4. Be sure your song has all ties and slurs in place, as necessary. Ties indicate a constant tone across multiple notes; slurs indicate movement, up or down, across multiple notes. On eighth notes and smaller, beams

connecting multiple notes can substitute for ties and slurs in certain situations.

5. Use a thickened measure bar to separate the verses from the chorus. If none is available on your music program, use another clear marking.
6. Don't let flags and beams overlap into words. This makes both words and notes hard to read.
7. Make sure the stems all go the right directions. On the top staff, they primarily go up. On the bottom staff, they primarily go down. If two voices in the same staff overlap (a step apart or unison) or are inverse (alto is above soprano), each voice should have its own stem that goes in the proper direction, indicating which note is for each voice.
8. Measure numbers are unnecessary.
9. If you have any special notes to add (*rit.*, *accel.*, singing emotion, etc.), be sure to place them where necessary.

If you have questions regarding editing, typesetting, or uploading to SongMecca, feel free to reach out to one of the contacts below.

