

## WHAT IS SONG STRUCTURE?

Song structure refers to how a song is organized, using a combination of different sections. A typical song structure includes a verse, chorus, and bridge in the following arrangement: intro, verse — chorus — verse — chorus — bridge — chorus — outro. This is known as an ABABCB structure, where A is the verse, B is the chorus and C is the bridge.

Hit songs and pop songs tend to follow the standard structure while jam bands and experimental musicians might diverge from the formula. If a song sounds familiar to us when we hear it for the first time, it's because our ears have been trained to recognize the most commonly used song structures. But that's not to say there

isn't value in variation as well.

## WHAT MAKES A SONG?

There are six primary parts to a song:

- **Intro.** Like the beginning of a film or novel, a song introduction should catch the listener's attention. However, it should do this without overwhelming them. For this reason, song intros are typically slower and more low-key. The goal is to establish the rhythm, tempo, and melody of the song, and introduce the singer or singers' voices.
- **Verse.** The verse of a song is a chance to tell a story. Lyrically speaking, this is where the story actually develops and advances. In most songs, the chorus and pre-chorus generally use the same lyrics each time, so the verse is your chance to get your message across. It might be helpful to split the story you want to tell in two and think about how the second verse can build on the first. Some songwriters use the second verse as an opportunity to change or subvert the meaning of the chorus, or even the entire song with different lyrics. It's a chance to be creative and explore the different emotions you're trying to bring out in your listener.
- **Pre-chorus.** Although optional, a pre-chorus helps to heighten the impact of the chorus. A pre-chorus usually contains a chord progression from either the verse or the chorus, building upon that familiarity. It's another chance to experiment—a pre-chorus can utilize different harmonies, for example, or break the pattern of the song.
- **Chorus.** The chorus is the culmination of all the big ideas in your song. This is often why the title of the song also appears in the chorus. It's a summary of what the entire song is about. The chorus typically also contains the hook—the catchiest part of the song. Choruses should serve as the climax to the song. The verses and pre-chorus both serve to build up to this one moment; therefore the chorus should reflect that release of tension.
- **Bridge.** The bridge typically happens only once towards the end of a song, usually between the second and third chorus. It's a change of pace in the song—it stands out both lyrically and musically. The point is to jolt the listener out of her reverie and remind her that there's more to this song than just repetition. This can be achieved through something like switching to a relative key in the same key signature (for example, from A-Minor to C-Major) or through something like a guitar solo.
- **Outro.** This is the end of the song. An outro should signal clearly to the listener that the song is coming to an end. This can be done in a number of ways, but typically is achieved by doing the reverse of the intro—in other words, slowing down. More often than not, the outro is usually a repeat of the chorus with a slow fade-out.

Adapted from <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/songwriting-101-learn-common-song-structures>