



# Sounds Like A Song!

**Martin Sutton reveals 7 ways to stop waiting for inspiration  
and start finding it!**

How often have you sat staring at a blank page, waiting for a smash hit song to fall out of the sky and onto the paper? Or started to jam only to have everything end up sounding like yet another 12 bar blues? Frustrating, isn't it? Fortunately, there's a way you can instantly eliminate writer's block by planning out your song before you ever write a single word or note.

## **Tools not rules**

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to song writing. Whatever you think a song "should" have or be, there's always a great song out there which completely goes against that idea.

But there are a few established tools you can use to help you write the amazing song you've been thinking about and it all starts with your lyrical theme.

There are a number of different ways for you to start generating lyrical ideas. Get into the mindset of watching out for what 'sounds like a song' and you'll discover that song ideas are everywhere!



## **1. Movies/TV shows**

Get into the habit of paying careful attention to every movie or TV show you watch. Keep an ear open for those killer lines that make you go “Aaaaahhhh!” Did a character say something which stands out to you? Does the line express a particular emotion or resonate with your own personal experience?

Keep a notebook handy whenever you’re watching a film or show and get into the habit of jotting down any lines which grab your attention. Before you know it, you’ll have pages and pages of lines to base your song around.

## **2. Personal experience**

Everyone has a story to tell. We’ve all had our own moments of love, loss, joy, celebration, tears, laughter, the full spectrum of human emotion. Look back over your life and think about any standout experiences you could write about. What were the events that have left an imprint on you, for good or bad?

## **3. Conversations**

Just as with movies and TV, conversations are a great source of inspiration. Most of time, when we’re listening to someone, we’re not really hearing them. We’re figuring out what we’re going to say in response. Start actively listening and worry about what your response will be later. Make a note of anything which stands out. I warn you though - your friends and family will hate you because whenever they say something interesting, you won’t be able to help replying “sounds like a song!”



#### **4. Book titles**

Go to a bookstore (or if you're feeling lazy, browse Amazon) and pay attention to the book titles. Some titles are so compelling they make you want to buy the book based on the title alone – that's some serious power right there in those words. Write down any which are particularly striking or – you guessed it – “sound like a song!”

#### **5. Newspapers**

Start reading the papers and carefully examine the wordplay. Tabloids are particularly good at using puns or twisting language to make people sit up and listen. Just as with book titles, a strong headline can be enough to make someone buy a paper, so learn what works from looking at how journalists report their stories and how they add drama through their use of language.

#### **6. Collaboration**

Working with other songwriters is a fantastic way of coming up with new ideas. Before any of you even think about picking up an instrument or start singing, take some time to talk about life, the universe and everything. Be genuinely interested in your collaborators and what's going on in their lives. When you come from a place of authenticity, that's where you find common ground. And when you find what brings you together, that's what makes for a song which your listeners can connect to as well.



## 7. Free writing

Free writing is one of my favourite exercises and it's something I do every day to eliminate writer's block. After all, how can you access what's going on in someone else's mind if you don't know what's going on in yours?

This simple tool only takes three minutes a day, but it's incredibly powerful. All you need is a pen and paper. (Yes, you're actually going to *handwrite* this so step away from the phone or laptop!)

Go somewhere you won't be disturbed or distracted. Then simply write for three minutes, letting the words flow, whatever they may be.

Don't worry about punctuation or grammar. They're not important right now. Likewise, don't self-censor or try to write lyrics. You want to access the subconscious part of your brain rather than trying to actively think – that's where you'll find the good stuff.

You might like to use a journal prompt to guide your thoughts. I like to use something like "What matters to me." If you can't think of what to write, write "I can't think of what to write" and keep writing it over and over until the words start flowing again. The more you do this, the easier it'll be, until you find yourself looking forward to your free writing time because you get to express yourself without limitations.

So there you have it. Seven ways to find inspiration for the lyrical theme of your song. Just one of these will give you plenty of ideas to write about, so imagine how many songs you could come up with if you started working with all of them? Bye-bye writer's block!



## Assignment

Make a commitment to yourself to start doing 3 minutes of free writing every day. A lot of people like to start the day with this exercise. Doing it at the same time every day will help you establish the habit of free writing and really help get your creative juices going. Free free to report back to the community and let us know how you're getting on.