

Bay Phoenix Studios

Songwriting Tips: Top 40 Song Structures

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Don't write another song before reading these tips! Learn the elements of a song to maximize your songwriting potential!

SONG STRUCTURE:

These are the most popular song structures since the 1960's. The Billboard Top 40's will almost always contain a variation of these song structures. You can use these song structures as a framework to write with. Part of this analysis was incorporating some of [Dean Oliver](#)'s research on the 2018 Billboard Top 40's. You can find more information on [Dean Oliver](#)'s article at [this](#) link. For further information on the [elements of a song](#). Follow [this](#) link to my previous blog to further maximize your potential.

Terms To Know:

Intro:

Intros are one of the most important elements of your song. As most people listen to the first 5-10 seconds of a song to see if they'll like it before they decide to change it.

Abbreviated as "I".

Verse:

This is where the story is told. This is where the body of details lies.

They typically contain AABB or ABAB rhyme scheme formats.

Abbreviated as “V”.

Example of AABB:

“Girls” - The Beastie Boys

A - I like the way that they walk

B - And it's chilly to hear them talk

A - And I can always make them smile

B- From White Castle to the Nile

Example of ABAB:

“She Will Be Loved” - Maroon 5

A - Beauty queen of only eighteen she

B - Had some trouble with herself

A - He was always there to help her, she

B- Always belonged to someone else

Transitional Bridge/Bridge:

A Bridge is a body in the song that is typically only 4 to 8 bars in length. This section is generally different lyrically and melodically from the rest of the song. A well-constructed Bridge will incorporate both elements.

You will find the Transitional Bridge/Bridge to be abbreviated as “T/B”.

Pre-Chorus:

This section of the song is meant to ensconce the connection between the Verse and Chorus/Hook elements. This can also be referred to as a “Channel”, or “Set-Up”.

Pre-Choruses are generally only 4 to 8 bars long.

You will find the Chorus/Hook abbreviated as “P”

Chorus/Hook:

The Chorus or Hook is the most memorable part of the song. The lyrics are generally repetitive

A Chorus/Hook is generally 8 or 16 bars. You will find the Chorus/Hook abbreviated as "C".

Refrain:

Refrain is generally an interchangeable term with Chorus.

However this also refers to as a repetition of a Chorus. This is how you might find the second Chorus referred to as. You may also see "R".

Post-Chorus:

Post-Choruses/Hooks are additional hooks that can also be referred as "B Choruses".

You will find the Chorus/Hook abbreviated as "PC"

Outro:

This part of the song is meant to signal the end of the song.

You will find the Outro abbreviated as "O".

SONG STRUCTURES:

Here are some of the most successful song structures that can be found in the Top 40's since the 1960's:

Verse—Chorus—Verse—Chorus

Verse—Chorus—Verse—Chorus—Bridge—Chorus

Verse—Chorus—Verse—Chorus—Verse—Chorus

Verse—Verse—Bridge—Verse

Additionally here are some analysis **Dean Oliver** did on 2018's Billboard Top 40's

Song Structures:

"God's Plan" - Drake

Form: I – V – C – P – V2 – C2 – PC – O

Key: A

Weeks At Number 1: 11

Weeks On Top 5: 23

"Girls Like You" - Maroon 5 & Cardi B

Form: I – V – C – P – V – C – P2 – B – C – V2 – C – P – O

Key: C

Weeks At Number 1: 7

Weeks On Top 5: 24

"Thank You, Next" - Ariana Grande

Form: I – V – P – C – V – P – C2 – V – P – C3 – O

Key: Db

Weeks At Number 1: 6

Weeks On Top 5: 7

"Perfect" - Ed Sheeran & Beyonce

Form: V – P – C – I – V – P2 – C – I2 – C – O

Key: Ab

Weeks At Number 1: 4

Weeks On Top 5: 15

"This Is America" - Childish Gambino

Form: I – I2 – C – V – P – C – V – T – P2 – O

Key: F

Weeks At Number 1: 2

Weeks On Top 5: 4

"Psycho" - Post Malone & Ty Dolla \$ign

Form: I – C – V – C – V2 – C – O

Key: Eb

Weeks At Number 1: 1

Weeks On Top 5: 17

"I Like It" - Cardi B, Bad Bunny & J Balvin

Form: I – V – C – V2 – P – C – V3 – P2 – C – O

Key: F

Weeks At Number 1: 1

Weeks On Top 5: 15

"Havana" - Camila Cabello & Young Thug

Form: I(4) – C(8) – V(8) – P(8) – C(8) – V2(16) – C(8) – B(16) – C(8) – O(8)

Key: G

Weeks At Number 1: 1

Weeks On Top 5: 11

"Sicko Mode" - Travis Scott & Drake

Form: I – V / I – V – C – V – C2 – T(2.5) / I – B – V – B2 – V – O

Key: Bb

Weeks At Number 1: 1

Weeks On Top 5: 10

"Sad!" - XXXTentacion

Form: I – C – V – C – B – C – O

Key: C

Weeks At Number 1: 1

Weeks On Top 5: 2

What's Next?

Now that you're on your way to writing your next hit, it's time to start thinking about Recording, Production, and Post-Production. At Bayphoenixstudios.com we work with the Artist to accurately help make your vision become a reality. Please visit [this](#) page for more information. Or Email inquiries at: Bayphoenixstudios.com

For More Information Regarding Song Structure, Click [Here!](#)

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