

# SONGWRITING 101



**A Brief Introduction to Children Songs Composition**

# DO I NEED TO KNOW MUSIC THEORY IN ORDER TO WRITE A SONG?

- Foundation in music theory helps, but NOT A MUST to write a song.
- In an interview, Paul McCartney reveals that none of the Beatles read or wrote music.  
[https://twitter.com/60Minutes/status/1046561164581359616?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1046758301990436864&ref\\_url=http%3A%2F%2Fglobalnews.ca%2Fnews%2F4503916%2Fpaul-mccartney-cant-read-music%2F](https://twitter.com/60Minutes/status/1046561164581359616?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1046758301990436864&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fglobalnews.ca%2Fnews%2F4503916%2Fpaul-mccartney-cant-read-music%2F)
- ***“I don’t read music or write music. None of us did in the Beatles. We did some good stuff though. But none of it was written down by us. It’s basically notation. That’s the bit I can’t do. Because I don’t see music as dots on a page. It’s something in my head that goes on.”***
  - Paul McCartney

# THE BEATLES - WHO ARE THEY?



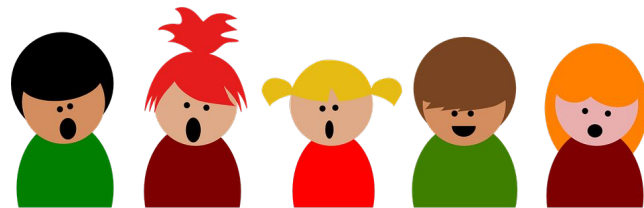
- One of the most influential bands of all time
- TIME magazine's the twentieth century's 100 most influential people
- **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** in 1988
- **1.7 billion streams** on Spotify in 2019
- **30%** of listeners in the **18-24 age group**
- **Record for most number-one hits on the Hot 100 chart with twenty.**
- Works include: *Hey Jude*, *Let It Be*, *Something*, *Here Comes the Sun*, *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, *She Loves You*, *Get Back*...

# WHAT SOUNDS GOOD?



- Whether a song is good or bad is subjective
- Several reasons to like a song. You could like a song because of:
  - 1) **Arrangement**
  - 2) **Melody**
  - 3) **Lyrics**
  - 4) **Singer**
  - 5) **Instrumentation of the song** Eg) guitar solo
  - 6) **External factors** Eg) your friends like it.
- There are several reasons to like a song. You might not even know why you like it, but you are just drawn into by it.
- Let's listen to Doraemon theme song:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScRCef7kXGg>
- Just arrangement: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izM\\_Cc6gdcc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izM_Cc6gdcc)

# WHAT'S A "CATCHY" SONG OR TUNE?



- We might not universally be able to distinguish whether a song is good or bad...
- BUT we can distinguish whether a song is "**catchy**" or not
- "**Catchy**" means a tune that is ***pleasing and easy to remember***
- **Objective:** after the first (or a few) listens of a song, you're already able to hum to it or even sing along.

# ARE THERE RULES OR 1-WAY TO WRITE A SONG?

- No one right way of writing a song.
- Start with **melody**
- Start with **lyrics**
- Start with **arrangement**
- Keep experimenting.

*“We never listened to any rules”*  
- Paul McCartney



The Beatles ✓  
@thebeatles

Follow

“If anyone now asks, ‘What is the the sign of a great songwriter?’ I say, ‘If the songs sound good.’ We never listened to any rules.”  
- Paul



8:02 AM - 6 Nov 2019

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36

642



3.5K

# SONG STRUCTURE



- how a song is organized using a combination of different section, such **verse, chorus, and bridge** in the following arrangement:

**ABABCB structure, the most common song structure used in pop songs today:**

***(Intro) – Verse 1 – (pre) Chorus 1 – Verse 2 – (pre) Chorus 2 – Bridge – (pre) Chorus 3 – (Outro)***

***\*() indicates optional***

\*Intro, Pre-chorus, and Outro are optional.

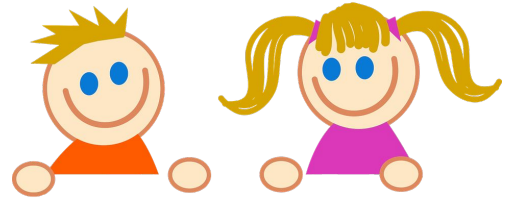
- In later examples, we'll soon see that even children songs have different song structures.

# KEY POINTS ABOUT SONG STRUCTURE

- **Great songs start with a great structure.**
- Each structure serves its own purpose, there is no one structure that's the "BEST"
- Great song structure is designed to keep giving your listener something *new*, but also provide them with enough familiarity to keep them engaged.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD CHILDREN SONGS?



- Is it catchy?
- Is it singable?
- Easy to remember?
- Are the lyrics and melody simple enough for a child to understand?
- Is it engaging enough for children with short attention span? What is the length of the song?
- Nowadays “visuals” (MV, YouTube video) are important too! Are the visuals engaging enough? Do the visuals go with the song?
- How does the song make you feel? Does it make you happy?

# REVISITING "CATCHINESS": TOOLS TO MAKE A SONG CATCHY



- There are several ways to make a song more “catchy”. Some tools we can use, include: **hooks, repetition, simplicity**

- 1) **Hook**
- 2) **Repetition**
- 3) **Simplicity**

# TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR: WHERE IS THE HOOK?

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are

Up above the world so high

Like a diamond in the sky

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are



- **Hook: combination of lyrics, melody and rhythm** in a particular section (or phrase) of the song that makes it so **appealing and memorable to listeners**
- Could be a lyrical, melodic, or rhythmic hook (pattern).

# TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR: WHERE IS THE REPETITION?

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are

Up above the world so high

Like a diamond in the sky

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are



- **Repetition:** repeating certain parts of the song several times within the song Eg) **“repeating” the “hook”** can be effective at making song memorable.
- “Twinkle” repeated twice, “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” hook is repeated again. As for the melody, the 6 notes go up and then go down on a scale in a **repetitive pitch pattern**.

# TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR: SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND?

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

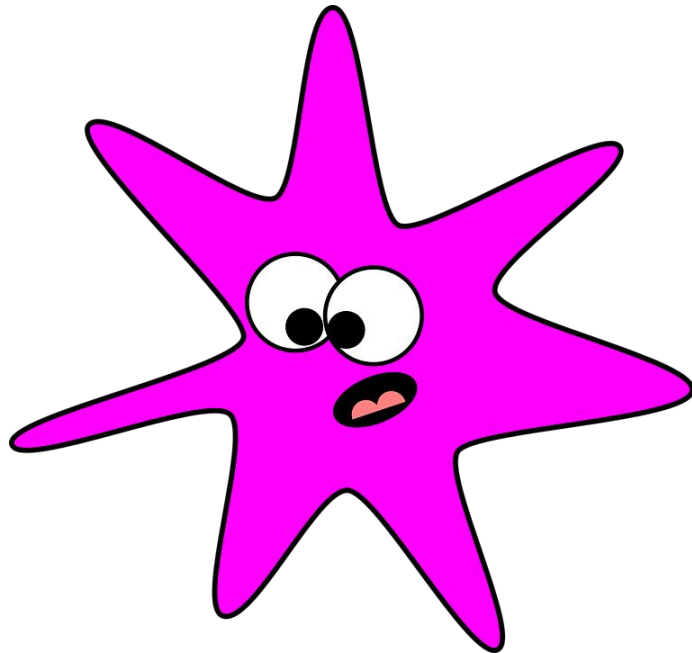
How I wonder what you are

Up above the world so high

Like a diamond in the sky

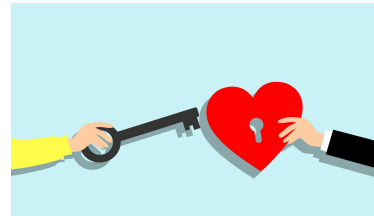
Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are



Eg) **Simpler ideas** are easier to understand and remember! The **lyrics, the melody, and idea** of the song are simple enough for children to understand. Length of song is **short**.

# COMMON ELEMENTS IN CHILDREN'S SONGS



- Most use the **major scale** to express a **happy or positive tone** Eg) “**Twinkle Twinkle Little Stars**” (Chords: **Cmaj, Fmaj, Gmaj**)
- Length of the songs are relatively **short**, children’s attention span is short.
- **BPM is relatively more upbeat**, unless your intention is to write a **bedtime song/lullaby** for kids to sleep (then in that case, it should have a slower BPM)
- Should be **less than 9 pitches**, (do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do, re), prefer less than 6 pitches (twinkle twinkle little stars)
- **not too much chord variations**. (Children grasp simple tunes faster than complicated ones.)

# COMMON ELEMENTS IN CHILDREN'S SONGS CONT'D...



- **Singable** and **easy to pronounce**.
- **“Breathing/Rest-space”** - children need enough time to breathe when singing
- **Lyrical simplicity** - easier for kids to understand
- **Arrangement** - can be **magical, feeling of positivity, takes you to another place entirely**

NOW LET'S ANALYZE SOME CLASSIC CHILDREN SONGS!





# TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

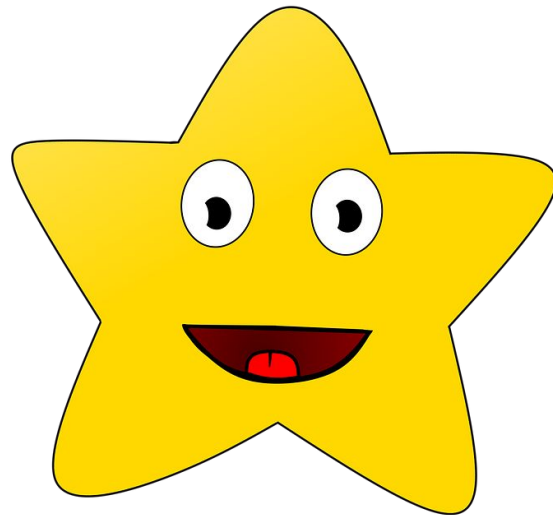
How I wonder what you are

Up above the world so high

Like a diamond in the sky

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

How I wonder what you are



# BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!

One for the master,

And one for the dame,

One for the little boy

Who lives down the lane

Baa, baa, black sheep,

Have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir,

Three bags full...



# THE ALPHABET SONG (A,B,C'S)

A - B - C - D - E - F - G

H - I - J - K - L - M - N - O - P

Q - R - S - T - U - V,

W - X - Y and Z

Now I know my ABC's

Next time won't you sing with me.



WHAT DO THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON?



# TRUTH REVEALED!



- The answer is a shocker: **THEY ALL FOLLOW THE SAME TUNE!**
- The melody of all three songs are completely identical, and yet all three of these songs are all popular among children.

# CHILDREN SONG REFERENCES: "DORAEMON NO UTA"



"Doraemon no Uta" - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wyQarRZ\\_sE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wyQarRZ_sE) (cantonese version)

- Original version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5cZMdBDYU8>
- Written in 1979
- 2:54 length of song Japanese original version
- Major scale Chords used: Dmaj, Amaj, Em, Gmaj...
- 123 BPM
- Verse 1 - Verse 2 - Chorus - Music Break x 3 Repeat (**AABC x 3**)
- Catchy because lots of **repetition**, no change in melody in the second half, just a slight variation in the lyrics in the second half, **no bridge**, 2 music breaks
- Singer's voice very friendly and sweet
- Arrangement feeling: playful, magical, cheerful

# "BABY SHARK DANCE"



"Baby Shark Dance" 2015 Kid's Song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqZsoesa55w>

- 3.81 Billion views
- Major scale Chords used: Cmaj, Eminor, Gmaj, Cmaj, Dmaj
- 1:36 length of song
- 115 BPM
- Chorus-Chorus-Chorus-Chorus
- If all chorus', then how to make song more dynamic?
  - Arrangement changes:
    - **1:18** tempo changes moves faster
    - **1:27** tempo slows down, beats are taken away, just bass and clap
    - **1:35** drums come back for large impactful build-up to the last chorus + layer of voices (children and dad) to make last chorus bigger
- Note: because song is very simple and repetitive, in order to keep it interesting and create contrast, the voices change in each chorus (mommy sings, then daddy sings, and so forth...)
- Lyrics are very simple which makes it very catchy, u can almost guess the next line, baby shark, mommy shark, daddy shark, etc.

# "BABY SHARK DANCE" LYRICS

Baby shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Baby shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Baby shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Baby shark!

Mommy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Mommy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Mommy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Mommy shark!

Daddy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Daddy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Daddy shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Daddy shark!

Grandma shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandma shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandma shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandma shark!

Grandpa shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandpa shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandpa shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Grandpa shark!

Let's go hunt, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Let's go hunt, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Let's go hunt, doo doo doo doo doo doo  
Let's go hunt!



# COMPARISON?



	DORAEMON	BABY SHARK
<b>Date</b>	1979	2015
<b>Scale</b>	Maj	Maj
<b>Length</b>	2:54	1:36
<b>BPM</b>	123	115
<b>Structure</b>	AABC x3	Chorus-Chorus-Chorus-Chorus
<b>Lyrics</b>	Simple	Simple

# CONCLUSION:

- **Cannot say which song was better**, because each song was written from different times and era.
- Both are different types of song ~ “Baby Shark Dance” a children’s dance beat song, “Doraemon No Uta” a cartoon singalong theme song
- So to write a good children’s song, you also have to make sure what the **purpose for writing** this song is?
- Is it for a children’s dance recital, is it for bedtime? A TV theme song for cartoon? Do you want something more melodic or more dance beat? **Up to you, depending on your purpose!**

# LAST THOUGHTS:



- **Relationship first**, it doesn't matter if the lyrics or music comes first
- Together they should **form a relationship** (a connection): the words should speak to the melody, and vice versa.
- And **phonetically** how the words sound with the melody is very important.  
Eg) Baby shark, doo doo doo doo doo doo vs Baby shark, knock, knock, knock, knock, which one sounds better to the ear and for singing purposes?
- **\*Always sing the melody and lyrics out loud, you will then know what works and what doesn't.**

THANK YOU!

