

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	Z		

SONGWRITING CHALLENGE - THE ALPHABETTER **BOOGIE**

MAKING CHORDS OR MELODY USING THE ALPHABET

The grid you can see above you is a great way of generating musical sequences with as many different 'variations' as you can think of for each word. Using the alphabet and this grid, you can generate melodies or chords (or both together if you want).

HOW IT WORKS

You can see the top row forms A to G. These are now musical notes.

These are your 'tonics' or 'root' of the chord, or melody.

(tonic/root basically means the foundation or base of the chord... so the tonic of G is G. The tonic of Am is A. The tonic of Bb7min#9 is Bb)

So now you simply input a word against the grid, using the letters aligned in the A to G columns to form chords or melody.

EXAMPLE NO1

I'm going to use a word to generate a chord sequence. I've decided I want to have 4 chords (at this point I haven't decided if it's a verse or a chorus yet) so I think of a 4 letter word.

WHAT?

Ok let's use that then.

Look at the grid and find W in a column. At the top of the column is a B. There's my first chord. H comes under A, then you have A itself, followed by T. T comes under F which gives me my 4th instruction.

So I have in front of me B A A F.

NOW WHAT?

So playing B A A F on a guitar (or keys or whatever) I could do a bar of each and that's my sequence.

Or I could play 2 bars of B, use A as both a bar of 2 and one bar of one, followed by a bar of F.

Or any other combination I can think of using bars or times signatures.

OR

You could play diatonically.

Diatonic is to write using chords all related to the same key.

If I look at the key chart (which is at the bottom of this) I see that if I played in the key of Bm, the chords would look more like this:

Bm, A, A, F#m.

So we still have those two As in the middle. What If I made one of them a minor or a sus4 or a 7th?

Bm, Asus4, A, F#m.

OR all majors but slightly more in key than that 'out of place' sounding F (of course you may like that dischordant sound in which case go with it...)

B, A, A, F#

OR play in flats with 7ths

Bb7, Ab7, Ab7, F7

OR at this point I might try the chords in a different order

A, F#, B, A

F#m, Bm, Asus4, A

So you can see that the possibilities are almost as endless as you want them to be.

EXAMPLE 2

The same method works with melody, although a longer word suits this one better and can throw up some nice ideas.

This time I'll choose THISTLE

It gives me F A B E F E E.

I'll turn the F's into sharps and I get

F#, A, B, E, F#, E, E

For the chords to go under it I'll try F#m, E, B and A

(F#m because the next note of "A" in the melody is the flattened 3rd note of the chord that makes the F# an F#m).

There's a slight discrepancy with the F#, E, E melody to my ears here so because there's no rules, I'm going to change it F#, F#, E.

So now I have the melody of

F# - A - B - E - F# - F# - E

Which fits nicely over my chords of F#m, E, B, A

EXERCISE

Now it's your turn. Choose a word. Try your name, or nickname, or dog's name. Make a melody out of your street name or even just a random word. Chords first may suggest a great melody to you.

Melody first may challenge you to fit a great chord sequence or riff around it. How you use it, is entirely up to you.

REMEMBER THE FIRST RULE OF SONGWRITING: THERE IS NO RULES.

If the word throws up a sequence you don't like, CHANGE the order, CHANGE the notes even if you hear a better one, CHANGE THE WORD! This, like EVERY songwriting exercise you will ever see, is designed purely to get you started.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Further the possibilities of trying out different rhythms as the chords will begin to take on their own character in different settings.
- Try out different bar lengths. D for a bar, B and E for half a bar, and F# for two bars etc.
- Keys. Sometimes you'll like the sequence enough that you won't need them. Maybe the discordant value merits a second run through in case it might spark a theme....Other times it can help to change "F's to F#" or "G's to Gm7".

The chart doesn't give you 7ths and sus4 chords etc, that's up to you, but it can guide you towards some progressions that you like enough to enhance with interesting chords thereafter. Try swapping your word between major and minor keys and hear the difference!

- Don't think in terms of verses or choruses. If you start with something really good, you might undo yourself trying to write a better chorus... you might already have it here, just make sure you're thinking then about repetition!

KEEP SCROLLING FOR THE KEY CHART!

KEY CHART

MAJOR	KEY						
R							
ROOT	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii
C	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	B°
D	D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C°
E	E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D°
F	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	E°
G	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F°
A	A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G°
Bb	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F	Gm	Ab°
MINOR	KEY						
ROOT	i	i°	III	iv	v	VI	VII
C	Cm	D°	Eb	Fm	Gm	Ab	Bb
D	Dm	Eb°	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C
E	Em	F#°	G	Am	Bm	C	D
F	Fm	G°	Ab	Bbm	Cm	Db	Eb
G	Gm	A°	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F

A	Am	B°	C	Dm	Em	F	G
B	Bm	C#°	D	Em	F#m	G	A