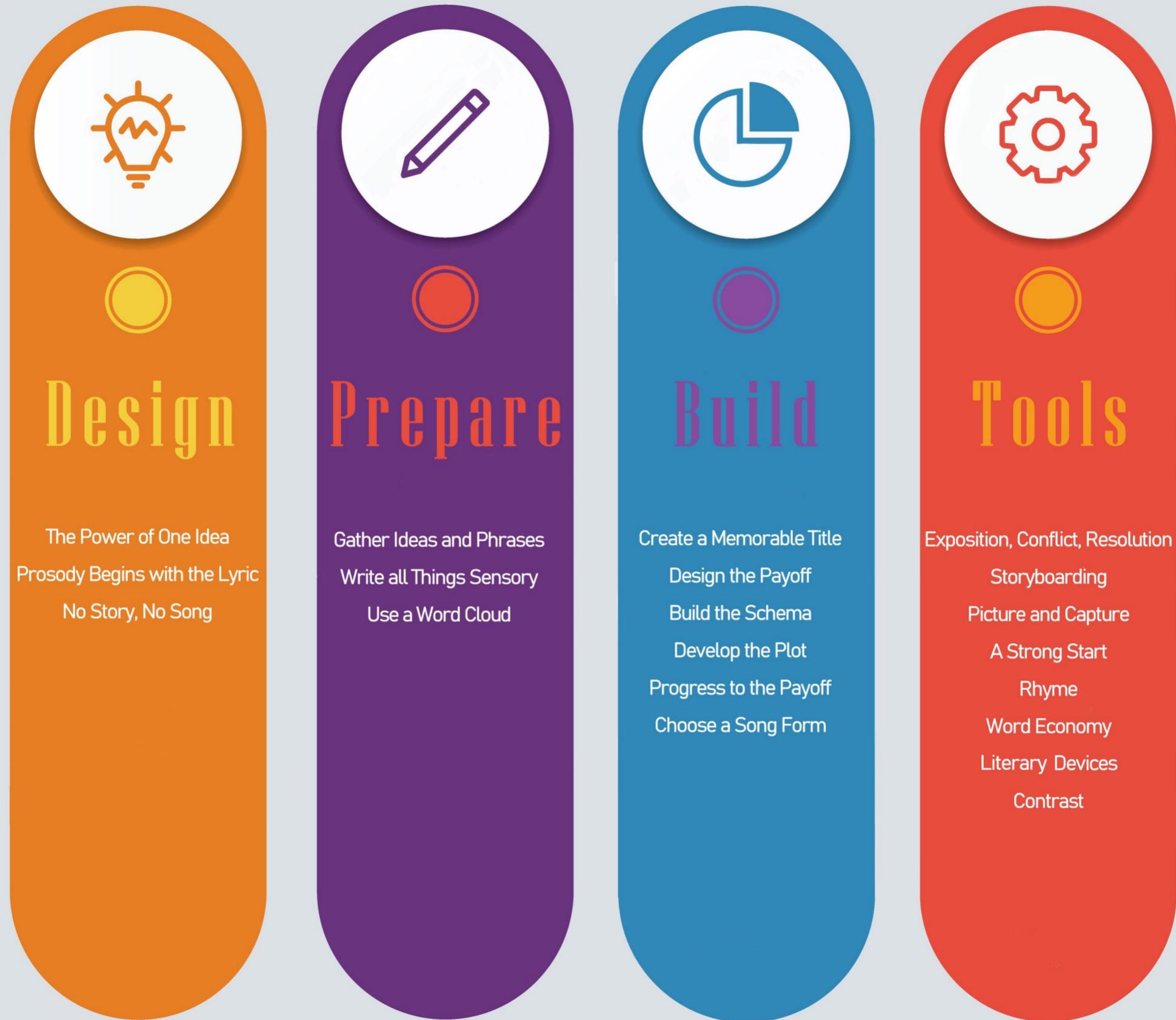


Proverbs 27.17 Lyric Formula



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The Proverbs 27.17 Lyric Formula

Why Should You Use this Formula?

How can you be sure the song you write is a strong one? How can you guarantee it will stick in the memory of your listener? How can you get the listener to concentrate on the idea you're laying down? The answer to all three questions: Realize the song is not about you, it's about your listener.

There is nothing more frustrating than having a great idea but not knowing how to hone it and get it in a form that communicates your story. You know your audience, so craft your stories for that audience. This formula will help you go after that unique lyric that defines commercial songs. Don't tell yourself that what you write isn't worthy. Just write and write and write. Remember that King David and the temple writers probably wrote 10,000 psalms but only landed 150 on their greatest hits.

Proverbs 27:17 says, "as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." You or your co-writers should purposely seek out critiques of your writing during this process. Invite others to help you make your songs better. Great writing is often a team sport.

Print this infographic and place it on the wall or keep in a songwriting binder along with these instructions.

DESIGN

The overall architecture of a great song has these key elements:

The Power of One Idea

Other lyrical ideas you have for the song should support the main idea of it. Every line of the lyric should support the central action of the One Idea. All supporting lines are thoughts surrounding the One Idea.

Prosody Begins with the Lyric

Remember, prosody defines the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech. It implies that the main idea of the creative work is best communicated when there's a lyrical synergy among all parts. That synergy between all parts begins with the construction of the lyric and melody around the One Idea.

A Story (No Story, No Song)

No matter what type of song, it's always about a story. Or a part of a story. It might not be a story song, but there's a story that shaped—or is shaping—the main idea kernel.

PREPARE

Prepare by gathering the building blocks for your lyric.

Have either individual or collaborative sessions to mine the most important words and phrases associated with the One Idea. Gather ideas and phrases from:

- The Bible
- Your walk with Jesus
- Your experiences
- Sermons, blogs, word cloud, etc.
- Your inspiration library (public and private)
- Object writing sessions.
 - A term used by Pat Pattison in his book *Writing Better Lyrics*
 - An exercise on how to express an experience with our seven senses.
 - Taste, feel, touch, hear, see, organic, and kinesthetic.
 - Organic senses are those that come from our body, such as heartbeat and breathing.
 - Kinesthetic senses are your feelings in comparison with the world around us, such as dizziness and the wind in my face, etc.
 - Example: a tree. Describe everything about it in a two-minute session.
 - Use the resources above and write all things sensory on the topic. How does it make you feel? Can you describe any other emotions that come from the One Idea? Are there any smells or tastes involved? Are there any elements of touch? Or sounds? Or color? Or feelings?
- Word cloud (writing and connecting related words and phrases on a single page)
- Explore and connect associated thoughts, words, and emotions.

BUILD

Build the framework with your blocks by developing these essential elements:

Create a Memorable Title

The title is the product. It conveys the central thought and is the nerve center of your story. It advertises the central idea and emotion.

Design the Payoff

The payoff is described as the line or a phrase in the song that gives the listener ultimate clarity for your message. It stems from your One Idea, your main idea. It offers satisfaction from the tension you build. The form this takes depends on the crafting idea found in TOOLS below.

Build the Schema

The schema is setting the logical order of the story for a lyric. The listener needs this order so they don't pause and ultimately stop listening; they just follow your lead. It is giving them a heads up about the five W's (who, what, when, where, and why) so you can lay the rest of the lyric on this framework. How you form this depends on the crafting idea found in TOOLS below.

Develop the Plot

Develop how you'll tell the story. Plan and build the tension. This design depends on the crafting idea found in TOOLS below. This goes hand in hand with ...

Progress to the Payoff

Continue to build listener expectations in the plot development toward the payoff. Reward the listener for their patience. This progress depends on the crafting idea found in TOOLS below.

Choose a Song Form

Sometimes done consciously, sometimes a secondary concern. More important than the form is developing the One Idea through a story. But keeping lyric form in mind can be a great tool/template to develop your schema and plot to tell your story.

There are many different song forms to consider, such as the ones you'll find at Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_structure. But my suggestion today is to choose a song form that is popular in your genre. For example: If you are writing a modern congregational song, choose to mimic the structure of one of the popular songs. Also, learn and mimic the structure of a hymn.

For a deeper dive on the types of song forms out there, check out the songwriting courses at <https://worship-songwriting-academy.com>. Also, let Google be your friend on the topic. There is much to learn about the history and usage of song form if you are interested.

TOOLS

Craft your song for the benefit of your listener using tools such as:

Exposition, Conflict, and Resolution

This tool is a nice and neat template to build your story or song parts around. Using the template, you will expose the scene or your singer's point of view or surroundings and tell of the singer's problem or situation. Then you resolve the situation or problem by moving the scene forward with action.

Storyboarding

This method allows you to develop the plot of your story by writing each line of the lyric, or basic story idea, on a 3x5 card. Note on the card what is happening with your song character, any of the seven senses involved, or description of the scene. Lay the cards out on the table or floor in order of your story.

Picture and Caption

To develop visuals and sensory perception for the listener, create snapshot images of the scene from the perspective of the singer. Ask yourself: How is the story developing? What is going on with their perception? How can the singer best relate the story to the listener? Now write the scene.

A Strong Start

It is good to give the listener a strong word picture or message about the main idea within the first line or two. But more than that, tell the listener about the schema; lay out the storyline or framework.

Rhyme

Using rhyme in writing helps us to remember stories. But the fact is, writing rhyme for the sake of rhyme only works for limericks. Not songwriting (unless that is your thing). Rhyming is a memory tool, not a tool to look cute. It is such a powerful tool because it can tempt you to write trite rhymes that stray from the central idea of the song.

Word Economy

Christian artist and songwriter Morgan Cryar calls word economy “word PSI (word pressure per square inch).”² Give more meaning in fewer words. Pack a punch with as few words as possible. Read his book [Strong Songwriting](#).

Literary Devices

Literary devices help the listener analyze and understand your words. Avoid those that draw attention to themselves, there are many from which to choose. These distract the listener and detract from the main idea of the song. Here is a solid resource: <https://literarydevices.net/>

Contrast

Use contrast to keep the listener’s interest in your song. Contrast is a tool for both lyrics and music. For example, if your verse uses short words and phrases, use longer phrases in the chorus. There are many possibilities to consider. Take a look at this resource: <https://lyricworkroom.com/song-anatomy-101/how-contrast-makes-any-song-more-compelling/>