

The Essential Secrets of Songwriting

STUDY GUIDE

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The eBooks:

1. The Essential Secrets of Songwriting, 4th edition
2. Essential Chord Progressions, 2nd edition
3. More Essential Chord Progressions, 2nd edition
4. How to Harmonize a Melody
5. Chord Progression Formulas
6. The Essential Secrets of Songwriting 9-Lesson Course
7. From Amateur to Ace: Writing Songs Like a Pro
8. Fix Your Songwriting Problems - NOW!
9. Hooks and Riffs: How They Grab Attention, Make Songs Memorable, and Build Your Fan Base
10. Writing a Song From a Chord Progression

If you haven't purchased the bundle yet, [visit the Online Store](#) to read more. The entire bundle of ten eBooks comes with an 11th free eBook.

Some General Information and Advice

The set of eBooks I've written known collectively as "The 10-eBook Bundle" covers practically every aspect of songwriting you're likely to encounter in your daily writing routines. I'm often asked in what order the eBooks should be read. My initial suggestion used to be to read them in the order they were written. That's because each book was added to the bundle package as need arose, and so it made sense to tackle the materials more or less in that order.

More recently, however, I've found that reading a bit from each one might be more effective. Everyone learns in their own way, so there is no wrong way to work your way through the materials. If you always found adding chords to melodies to be your Achilles' heel, for example, you might want to start with "How to Harmonize a Melody."

But since I'm asked for my thoughts on the best way forward, I offer the following suggested Study Guide. It has the advantage of building on concepts as you learn them. By following this guide, you *should* be able to avoid situations where one eBook is speaking of a musical notion you haven't encountered before.

Whether you choose to use this guide or not, I do have some suggestions that will likely apply to everyone:

1. **Take your time.** You may feel the need to reread paragraphs or even chapters, especially if the topic is new to you.
2. **Keep writing songs while reading.** There is no need to stop writing just because you're trying to learn concepts that might be new to you. Writing keeps everything relevant. Writing songs while learning means that you'll slowly apply the ideas you're learning, and your songs will improve over time.
3. **Make notes.** At the end of each chapter or section of each manual, write down what you think you learned, and specifically how you think the ideas might apply to your own songwriting.
4. **Remember that songwriting is an art, not a science.** For every concept you read about in *any* songwriting manual, you could create a list of songs that support and display that concept, but also a list of songs that demonstrate an opposing view. That's music for you. It's why I look not just at new songs being written today; I also include examples of the many songs from the long history of pop music when describing the principles of songwriting. It's important to get a strong overview.

Begin at the top of the chart and work your way downward

"The Essential Secrets of Songwriting", Preface and Chapters 1-4	Complete any suggested activities. Description: This gives you a quick overview of what we're trying to achieve when we write songs; how songs captivate listeners, why form and song energy are such crucial components, and some basics on how chords work.
"Essential Chord Progressions", pp. 1-36	Description: This gives a few more details on the workings of chord progressions, some standard terminology, and a number of examples of good major-key chord progressions.
"How To Harmonize a Melody", pp. 1-15	Description: This describes what we mean by harmonizing, offer some thoughts on the differences between melody-first and chords-first songwriting, and discuss the contour of good melodies.
"The Essential Secrets of Songwriting", Chapters 5-6	Description: A good look at how melody and lyric operate as important partners in the songwriting process. Also, a description of what we call "the hook," and how to write an effective one.
"From Amateur to Ace", Chapters 6, 8 and 10	Description: A different take on how to compose a good song melody.
"Essential Chord Progressions", pp. 37-47	Description: This turns its attention to minor chord progressions, and then some ideas for how to change key within a progression.
"How To Harmonize a Melody", pp. 11-20	Description: You'll learn more about the nuts and bolts of adding chords to a melody. You'll learn about harmonic rhythm, root movement, and the specifics of adding chords.
"From Amateur to Ace", Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 4	Description: You'll learn about the "killer chord progression", how to choose keys for your songs, and how to create and use chord inversions.
"Essential Chord Progressions", pp. 48-51	Description: This shows you a few interesting miscellaneous progressions, including jazz, blues, and other types of useful progressions.
"How to Harmonize a Melody", pp. 21-24	Description: You'll learn more complex progressions, and learn a bit about pedal point, modal mixtures, etc.
"Chord Progression Formulas"	Description: Read the whole document – it shouldn't take long. It offers a concise view of how good progressions work, with formulas that allow you to create your own within seconds.
"From Amateur to Ace", Chapters 5, 7, and 9	Description: A look at dealing with a lack of inspiration, writing backing vocals, and how to create a good intro for your songs.
"From Amateur	Description: A look at the reasons we often get stuck after writing

to Ace”, Chapter 3 the first few bars of music, and how to overcome those difficulties.

“Writing a Song From a Chord Progression” This eBook will help you if you prefer the chords-first songwriting process. At this point in the Study Guide, you should have the understanding of how chords work to make this eBook effective.

“Hooks and Riffs: How They Grab Attention, Make Songs Memorable, and Build Your Fan Base” In pop music, the hook is a powerful concept. It can almost singlehandedly bring listeners back to your songs and help build your fan base.

“The Essential Secrets of Songwriting”, Chapters 7, 8 Description: More about inspiration, and the role it plays in the creative process. Also the legalities of songwriting, including information about copyright, royalties, publishing, etc.

“From Amateur to Ace”, Chapters 11-12 Description: How to protect your music, and how to market it effectively.

“More Essential Chord Progressions” This is a reference manual that will expand your chord vocabulary and offer you new and interesting ways to harmonize melodies.

“The Essential Secrets of Songwriting – 9-Lesson Course” You should feel confident now to begin working on the simple lessons outlined in this manual. Be sure to complete all activities.

There are a few add-ons to the bundle that are offered from time to time, and you can read those in any way you find helpful:

“Use Your Words! Developing a Lyrics-First Songwriting Process”

“Creative Chord Progressions”

Some Final Thoughts

Remember that this guide is only a suggestion, designed to keep you moving from topic to topic so that you don't get stuck in any one area for too long. Some people don't like working this way. They'd rather get started in one text and read it through to its completion. There is certainly nothing wrong with that, and in fact it is my own preferred way of working. But hopefully, for those of you who like the security that a bit of guidance can offer, this guide will allow you to absorb the information in a systematic way. How you'll know that it's working for you is that you will approach your own songwriting with a greater sense of confidence and excitement.

The Essential Secrets of Songwriting bundles are meant to improve your songwriting skills. The eBooks are being used now by literally thousands of songwriters, and, when coupled with daily and disciplined practice, can ensure that you're always at the top of your songwriting game. When you know what you're doing, songwriting is fun, and can even be profitable. Take your time, read carefully, and most importantly, take the advice within the bundle as guidance, not rules. Creativity is a strange beast, and very hard to define. That's what makes musical composition so exciting. Just when you think you've got it all figured out, you'll find your approach changing, and a new way of creating music emerges from within your artistic brain.

All the best with your songwriting projects!

Gary Ewer