



MELODY WRITING TIPS

10 simple ways to spark your next melody

A creative guide for music makers

VIGILANTIE MUSIC

Melody Writing Tips

10 creative ways to get started, build ideas, and make melodies your own.

1. Motif-Based Melody Creation

Start with a short musical idea of 3–7 notes. Repeat the idea while changing certain notes, intervals, or rhythms to develop a complete melody.

Example Create a four-note pattern, repeat it twice, then change the last two notes on the third repetition.

2. Chord Progression-Based Melody

Start with a chord progression and build a melody using notes from each chord. Add passing notes between chord tones for movement and interest.

Example Over C major (C–E–G), begin with E, move through F, and resolve to G.

3. Rhythm-First Melody Creation

Create an interesting rhythmic pattern using a single repeated pitch. Once the rhythm sounds good, assign different pitches to the notes.

Example Write a rhythm using quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, then move individual notes up or down the scale.

4. Question-and-Answer Melody

Create one musical phrase that sounds unfinished (the question), followed by another phrase that provides resolution (the answer).

Example End the first phrase on an unstable scale degree such as 2 or 7, then end the second phrase on the tonic.

5. Melodic Contour (Shape-Based Creation)

Design the overall direction of the melody before adding details. The melody might rise, fall, form an arch, or move in waves.

Example Start low, gradually climb toward a high note, reach a climax, and descend toward the ending.

6. Interval-Based Melody Creation

Begin with an interesting musical interval, such as a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh. Develop the melody around that interval.

Example Start on C, jump to G (a perfect fifth), then follow with smaller movements to connect the phrase.

7. Scale-Based Melody Creation

Select a musical scale and create melodies using its available notes. Experiment with different scales to produce different musical characteristics.

Example Generate a melody using C major, then create another using C harmonic minor to explore a different sound.

8. Melodic Sequence and Transformation

Create a short melodic pattern and repeat it at different pitches or transform its direction, rhythm, or note lengths.

Example Play C–D–E, repeat the same pattern starting on D (D–E–F), then reverse the direction.

9. Tension-and-Resolution Melody

Deliberately alternate between stable notes and unstable notes to create anticipation and emotional movement.

Example In C major, emphasize B (the leading tone) before resolving upward to C. Delay that resolution to increase suspense.

10. Melodic Phrasing and Space

Build a melody by varying when phrases begin and end. Use rests, offbeat entrances, sustained notes, and contrasting phrase lengths to create movement.

Example Start the first phrase on beat one, start the next phrase after beat one, and introduce another phrase before the next downbeat.

How These Methods Differ

Use this quick reference to choose a starting point for your next melody.

METHOD	PRIMARY STARTING POINT
Motif-Based	Small group of notes
Chord Progression-Based	Harmony
Rhythm-First	Note timing
Question-and-Answer	Musical conversation
Melodic Contour	Overall melodic shape
Interval-Based	Distance between notes
Scale-Based	Available pitches
Sequence and Transformation	Repeating and modifying patterns
Tension and Resolution	Stable and unstable notes
Phrasing and Space	Placement of notes and silence