

SONGWRITING CHECKLIST

A checklist to help you make the most of your songwriting.

Musical Foundation

The emotion and storytelling of your music

Start with the core idea before worrying about sound design or mixing.

- ☐ Who is this track for? Club, festival, radio, streaming, or a combination?
- ☐ Does the track have a clear musical idea, concept, or emotion?
- ☐ Are the chords, melodies, and ideas interesting and emotionally engaging?
- ☐ Is there at least one memorable hook or motif?
- ☐ Does the melody/vocal complement the chords and bassline?
- ☐ Does every musical element have a purpose?
- ☐ Have you tested an alternative melody, hook, or chord progression?

Groove & Rhythm

Dancefloor Foundation: The groove, catchiness, and energy.

This can come from drums, basslines, melodies, or vocals.

- ☐ Does the track groove? Does it make you want to dance?
- ☐ Are the rhythmic elements working together, or competing for attention?
- ☐ Is the track too busy? Too empty?
- ☐ Do the drums, bass, and synths support the energy & style of the track?
- ☐ Is there enough rhythmic variation to keep things interesting?
- ☐ Have you experimented with groove, swing, or timing adjustments?
- ☐ Do any tonal drums or percussion fit the key of the track, where appropriate?
- ☐ Have you compared your track to reference tracks?
- ☐ Have you tested different rhythms to see if they fit the track better?

Interest & Progression

Keep the track engaging and give listeners a reason to keep listening.

- ☐ Do repetitive sections evolve through automation, modulation, variation, or added detail?
- ☐ Does each major section introduce something new?
- ☐ Is there enough variation throughout the track?
- ☐ Are there any moments that feel overly repetitive, predictable, or boring?
- ☐ Does the track build tension and release?
- ☐ Is there at least one unique/memorable sound, moment, or idea in the track?
- ☐ Does the track build toward a climax, if appropriate for the genre?
- ☐ Are transitions smooth and purposeful?
- ☐ Does your breakdown add value to the track or is it just 'filler'?

Final Songwriting & Arrangement Check

- ☐ Does the arrangement work for its intended audience (club, streaming etc.)?
- ☐ Would someone remember this track after hearing it once?
- ☐ Does every section deserve to be in the song? If not, have you removed it?
- ☐ Have you compared your arrangement to a few reference tracks?
- ☐ Listen from beginning to end without stopping or looking at your DAW.
- ☐ Write down three things you'd improve, save a new version, and try to fix them.

Before You Call It Finished

- ☐ Ask a trusted producer for feedback on the arrangement and songwriting.
- ☐ Leave the track for a few days and come back with fresh ears.
- ☐ Test on 2-3 other sound systems (phone, car, headphones, earbuds)
- ☐ Make one final front-to-back pass looking only for small improvements, not perfection.