



SONORA MUSIC LEARNING SERIES

CREATING MUSIC PROMPTS WITH ChatGPT & SUNO

A Student Guide to Style, Lyrics & Musical Arrangement



Genre • BPM • Time Signature • Key

Includes a Song & Instrumental EP Demonstration

Creating music prompts with ChatGPT and Suno

A student guide to musical choices original lyrics and expressive arrangements

SONORA Music learning series

Prepared for David Ong

Student edition | Terms checked 4 October 2026

What you will create

Use ChatGPT to plan and write prompts, then use Suno to generate and evaluate music. The demonstration is a two-track mini EP called City Lights and Open Skies: one song and one instrumental. This guide supplies prompt drafts and a listening method; it does not include generated audio.

What you will learn

- Describe genre, tempo, metre and key in everyday language.
- Write a Suno Style prompt under 1,000 characters and a separate Lyrics or structure prompt.
- Build a rich arrangement through instrument roles, contrast and development.
- Learn from musicians through broad musical characteristics while creating your own expression.
- Distinguish copyright ownership from permission to use music commercially.

How to use this guide

Work through pages 2 to 6, paste the demonstration prompts from pages 7 to 9, then listen and revise using page 10. Read the rights guidance on page 11 before publishing. Complete the worksheet on page 12.

Suggested workshop: 120 minutes. Allow 25 minutes for music basics, 20 for reference analysis, 20 for prompt writing, 35 for generation and listening, and 20 for rights and reflection. Generation speed and credits may change the timing.

Bring your own permitted ChatGPT and Suno accounts, headphones, and a notebook. Check age eligibility and parental consent requirements if under 18. Free Suno is suitable for personal practice subject to its terms; public release is a separate decision. [1, 2]

1 Understand genre and tempo

Genre is a family of musical features

A genre groups music by shared conventions such as rhythm, instrumentation, harmony, vocal delivery and cultural context. Genre names guide the sound, but a single label rarely describes a complete arrangement.

Genre	Features to listen for	Useful prompt language
Pop	Memorable hooks and clear sections	Accessible melody, concise chorus
Soul and R&B	Expressive singing and rich harmony	Warm lead vocal, backing harmonies
Funk	Interlocking rhythmic parts	Syncopated bass, short guitar accents
Disco	Steady dance pulse and orchestration	Four-on-the-floor kick, sweeping strings
Jazz	Swing or syncopation and improvisation	Extended chords, melodic solo
Ambient and new age	Texture and spacious development	Slow evolving pads, gentle piano

Choose one main genre and one or two supporting influences. For our EP: soul-pop with disco-funk rhythm and orchestral colour. More genre labels can produce competing instructions.

BPM measures tempo

BPM means beats per minute. At 60 BPM, one beat occurs each second. At 120 BPM, two beats occur each second. Specify the beat unit when the pulse might be ambiguous, especially in 6/8.

Starting range	Typical impression	What can change the feeling
60 to 80 BPM	Unhurried	Busy subdivisions can still feel active
90 to 110 BPM	Comfortable groove	Syncopation adds forward motion
115 to 130 BPM	Energetic dance pulse	Sparse parts can keep it relaxed

These are teaching examples, not rules for genres. Loudness, accents, phrasing and half-time or double-time feel also affect perceived energy.

Try it

Set a metronome to 100 BPM, then 120 BPM. Clap once per click for 20 seconds each. Describe which pace suits a relaxed evening song. Our song requests 112 BPM; our instrumental requests 116 BPM.

2 Understand time signature and key

Time signature organises the beats

A bar is a repeating group of beats. The top number tells you how many notated units fit in a bar; the bottom number identifies the note value. The actual musical pulse depends on the metre.

Metre	How to count	Practical meaning
4/4	ONE two three four	Four quarter-note beats per bar; common in pop, funk and disco
3/4	ONE two three	Three quarter-note beats; a waltz-like cycle
6/8	ONE two three FOUR five six	Six eighth notes grouped into two main dotted-quarter beats

3/4 and 6/8 both contain six eighth notes per bar, but their grouping differs: three groups of two versus two groups of three. They can therefore feel different even at similar durations.

Clear 6/8 instruction: “6/8, dotted-quarter pulse 76 BPM, two main beats per bar, each subdivided into three.” Avoid writing “76 BPM” alone if the intended pulse matters.

Key is the tonal home

A key names a central note and a major or minor tonal framework. C major uses C D E F G A B as its basic scale. A minor uses A B C D E F G in its natural-minor form. They share these notes but have different tonal centres; minor music can also alter notes for harmonic purposes.

Major often feels bright and minor often feels reflective, but neither guarantees an emotion. Rhythm, harmony, register and lyrics matter too. Changing from C major to D major mainly transposes the pitch level; it does not automatically make the piece happier.

Keys and chords are different

A key is the home framework. Chords are combinations of notes heard together. In C major, Cmaj7 adds B to a C major triad; Cmaj9 also adds D. These extensions can sound richer, but thoughtful voicing and spacing make them useful.

For a singer, choose a comfortable melody range as well as a key. A key name alone does not specify the highest and lowest notes. A digital instrument can play in any key; acoustic instruments and human performers may favour certain registers and fingerings.

Prompt targets need listening checks

Suno may not follow a requested BPM, metre, key or bar count exactly. Treat these as targets. Tap the pulse, count the grouping and use a keyboard or music software to verify important details. Exact specifications may require editing or a musician’s input.

3 Build a polished arrangement

Composition is the melody, harmony, rhythm and form. Arrangement decides which instruments play those ideas and when. Production shapes the recorded sound. A lavish arrangement needs purposeful development and space for its main idea.

Role	EP choice	What it contributes
Foundation	Drums and electric bass	Stable pulse and an interlocking groove
Harmony	Rhodes and rhythm guitar	Warm chords and rhythmic texture
Main idea	Lead vocal or saxophone	A melody the listener can remember
Colour	Strings and brass	Sustained lift and short answers
Transitions	Drum fills and rising strings	Signals that a new section is arriving

Give every section a job

- Intro: introduce the groove or main motif quickly.
- Verse or theme A: leave space for the story or melody.
- Pre-chorus or transition: build tension and movement.
- Chorus or theme B: widen the arrangement and deliver the main hook.
- Bridge or breakdown: change texture so the return feels earned.
- Final chorus or reprise: bring back the hook with a fresh counterline.
- Outro: resolve the piece clearly.

Replace vague luxury with audible instructions

Vague: “Make it expensive and epic.”

Useful: “Keep the verse intimate with Rhodes, bass and guitar. Add upper strings and three-part backing harmonies in the chorus. Use short brass answers between vocal lines. Reduce to drums and bass before the final chorus.”

Countermelody means a secondary melody heard alongside the main one. Call and response means one phrase is answered by another. Syncopation accents weaker beats or spaces between beats. A motif is a short idea that returns and develops.

A clean mix

Ask for clear lead placement, controlled bass, distinct instrument separation and restrained reverb. Reverb creates a sense of space. Too much can blur words and rhythmic detail. Loudness alone does not create polish; neither does listing every instrument.

Mini exercise

Choose three instruments for a verse and two additions for a chorus. Explain why each enters. Then remove one instrument and decide whether the hook becomes clearer.

4 Learn from musicians responsibly

Use a musician as a listening reference, then translate what you hear into broad musical characteristics. Artists work across genres and eras, so focus on the characteristics you actually want rather than treating a name as a complete specification.

Reference example	Broad features to study	Independent prompt direction
Earth Wind and Fire	Soul-funk and disco; bright ensemble energy	Syncopated bass, brass answers, layered harmonies
Colbie Caillat	Acoustic pop; relaxed vocal phrasing	Warm conversational lead, acoustic guitar, light percussion
YOASOBI	J-pop and electropop; narrative momentum	Rhythmic piano, bright synths, precise phrasing, evolving sections

These examples are classroom listening shorthand, not descriptions of every recording. None of the named artists is involved in this EP.

Ask ChatGPT to translate your observations

I admire [musician] for [features I heard]. Help me describe these as broad genre, groove, instrumentation, harmony, vocal delivery and production choices. Keep the final Suno prompt free of artist names. Build a new melody, lyric concept and arrangement for [my story]. Avoid copying a particular song, signature hook, lyric, sample or identifiable voice. If you cannot verify a feature, label it as a suggestion.

Style inspiration and protected expression

Copyright protects expression rather than an abstract idea. Broad genre conventions are different from a particular melody, lyric or recording. A generated piece can still reproduce protected expression even when its prompt contains only genre terms. [6]

Write a new story and musical identity. Do not upload commercial recordings, reproduce lyrics, request a recognisable hook or recreate a singer’s identity without the necessary permissions. Vocal likeness can raise rights and impersonation issues beyond copyright; use general voice qualities and accurate credits. [2]

Changing the tempo, key or a few words does not automatically make a copied song independent. “Inspired by” and “no copyright intended” do not grant permission. Listen critically and investigate recognisable similarities before release.

For this EP

Our working palette is warm soul-pop, disco-funk rhythm, brass punctuation and orchestral strings. The story is friendship during an evening in Singapore. We use an independent title, original lyric draft and a general vocal description.

5 Ask ChatGPT for two separate outputs

ChatGPT writes the musical brief and text. Suno generates the audio. Keep the Style field focused on the overall sound. Use the Lyrics field for singable words and concise section cues. Bracketed instructions are a prompting convention, not a guarantee that Suno will follow them.

Copyable EP planning prompt

Act as a music tutor and arranger. Help me create an original two-track mini EP called City Lights and Open Skies for a beginner workshop. Track 1 is a soul-pop song with disco-funk rhythm about friends reconnecting in Singapore at night. Track 2 is an orchestral funk instrumental suggesting the same city opening into morning. Use Rhodes, electric bass, rhythm guitar, drums, strings and brass as the shared palette.

For each track, provide the title, genre, BPM with beat unit, time signature, key, target duration, instrument roles and section plan. Explain each musical choice simply. Then provide a Suno Style prompt under 1,000 characters including spaces. For the song, supply complete English lyrics with section instructions inside square brackets and sung words outside brackets. For the instrumental, supply an all-bracketed arrangement plan and explain how to use Instrumental mode.

Use positive musical descriptions in the Style prompts. Create independent lyrics and melodies rather than imitating a specific song or singer. Do not promise copyright clearance or commercial rights. Identify conflicting instructions and describe how students can check the generated audio.

A reusable single track template

Create a [song/instrumental] about [story or setting] for [audience and purpose]. Main genre: [genre]. Supporting influence: [influence]. Tempo: [BPM and beat unit]. Metre: [time signature]. Key: [key]. Lead: [voice qualities or instrument]. Core instruments: [list with roles]. Structure: [sections]. Emotional journey: [start, development, ending]. Production: [clear sound choices].

Return a short explanation, a Style prompt under 1,000 characters including spaces, and a separate Lyrics or structure prompt. Keep directions in square brackets and sung words outside them. Give me specific section contrasts. Check the Style prompt length and any contradictory requests.

Before pasting into Suno

Read the output, revise vague or crowded instructions, and check its character count yourself. The 1,000-character ceiling is our workshop rule, not a claim that every Suno model has the same limit. Use the field limit shown in your account.

Do not paste the entire ChatGPT conversation into Suno. Copy only the relevant Style block and Lyrics block. Keep your planning notes outside the generation fields.

6 Demonstration song brief and Style prompt

Track 1 Meet Me Under the City Lights

Parameter	Target
Format and theme	English song about friendship and an evening in Singapore
Genre	Soul-pop with disco-funk rhythm and orchestral colour
Tempo and metre	112 BPM, quarter-note pulse, 4/4
Key and duration	D major; approximately 3 to 4 minutes
Lead	Warm expressive female vocal with clear diction
Shared EP sound	Rhodes, electric bass, guitar, drums, strings and brass

Paste into the Suno Style field

Original English soul-pop song with disco-funk groove and elegant orchestral colour. 112 BPM, quarter-note pulse, 4/4, D major. Warm expressive female lead, clear diction and relaxed rhythmic phrasing. Tight drums, four-on-the-floor kick, syncopated electric bass, clean rhythm guitar and warm Rhodes. Start with a short bass-and-guitar hook; bring the vocal in early. Intimate verses, rising pre-choruses, memorable open chorus with three-part backing harmonies. Add sweeping upper strings and short brass answers between vocal phrases. Bridge reduces to Rhodes and bass, then rebuilds into a wider final chorus with a string countermelody. Clear lead placement, controlled low end, distinct instrument separation, restrained room reverb, polished studio sound. Target 3 to 4 minutes with a resolved ending.

Style prompt length: 808 characters including spaces. Lyrics are on the next page.

Why these choices work together

The steady kick supports dancing while bass and guitar add syncopation. Rhodes keeps the verses warm. Strings and backing harmonies widen the chorus; brass fills the gaps between lines. The reduced bridge creates room for the final lift.

D major is a requested tonal home, not a guarantee of vocal comfort. If the generated melody sounds strained, revise its range or transpose the recording with suitable tools. A new Suno generation may change more than the key.

Student task

Underline the rhythm instructions, circle the main melodic role, and identify two instructions that describe section contrast. Predict what may become crowded in the chorus and what you would remove first.

7 Demonstration song Lyrics prompt

Paste this complete draft into the Lyrics field. Instrumental mode should be off. Instructions belong in brackets; the words outside brackets are intended to be sung. Revise at least four lines to contribute your own story before generating.

[Intro - short bass and guitar hook]

[Verse 1 - intimate lead with Rhodes and tight groove]

The rain has left a shine along the street

I hear your laughter underneath the beat

You wave beside the corner coffee stand

Two paper cups, a whole new evening planned

[Pre-Chorus - rising strings]

We let the crowded hours roll away

There is a little room for us today

[Chorus - open melody with backing harmonies]

Meet me under the city lights

Bring your tired heart into the night

We can take the long way home

Let the rhythm tell us we belong

Side by side where the windows glow

One more step and the worries go

Meet me under the city lights

We have time for each other tonight

[Verse 2 - add soft guitar answers]

The river holds the colours of the quay

You talk about the things you hope to be

I say the dreams I kept upon a shelf

And hear them sound a little like myself

[Pre-Chorus - rising strings]

We let the crowded hours roll away

There is a little room for us today

[Chorus - open melody with backing harmonies]

Meet me under the city lights

Bring your tired heart into the night

We can take the long way home

Let the rhythm tell us we belong

Side by side where the windows glow

One more step and the worries go

Meet me under the city lights

We have time for each other tonight

[Bridge - reduce to Rhodes and bass then rebuild]

If tomorrow asks us where we have been

Say we found a place to start again

In a simple conversation by the road

We made a little space to share the load

[Final Chorus - wider strings and brass answers]

Meet me under the city lights

Bring your tired heart into the night

We can take the long way home

Let the rhythm tell us we belong

Side by side where the windows glow

One more step and the worries go

Meet me under the city lights

We have time for each other tonight

[Outro - gentle vocal over resolving band]

We have time for each other tonight

[End]

8 Demonstration instrumental prompts

Track 2 Open Skies Over the Bay

Original orchestral funk instrumental. Target: 116 BPM, quarter-note pulse, 4/4, G major, approximately 3 to 4 minutes. The shared band makes the EP coherent; a tenor saxophone replaces the singer as the melodic centre. A new generation is a companion piece, not an exact instrumental version of Track 1.

Paste into the Suno Style field

Original orchestral funk instrumental with soulful disco warmth. 116 BPM, quarter-note pulse, 4/4, G major. Tenor saxophone carries an original memorable theme over syncopated electric bass, tight drums, clean rhythm guitar and warm Rhodes. Short opening with bass and guitar, followed by a clear saxophone theme. Develop the theme with answering brass phrases and flowing upper strings. Contrasting middle section features lyrical Rhodes over a lighter groove. An eight-bar bass-and-drum breakdown rebuilds into the main theme with a fresh string countermelody and wider brass voicings. Purposeful melodic development, smooth transitions, varied dynamics and space around the lead. Clean studio sound, controlled bass, distinct instrument separation, restrained room reverb. Target 3 to 4 minutes and finish with a resolved ensemble chord.

Style prompt length: 840 characters including spaces.

Instrumental arrangement plan

[Instrumental]

[Intro - 4 bars of bass and guitar hook with tight drums]

[Theme A - 16 bars of original tenor saxophone melody over full groove]

[Theme A variation - 16 bars with short brass answers and upper strings]

[Theme B - 16 bars of lyrical Rhodes melody over a lighter groove]

[Development - 16 bars of saxophone phrases with changing string answers]

[Breakdown - 8 bars of bass and drums with gradual ensemble return]

[Final Theme A - 16 bars with string countermelody and wider brass]

[Outro - 8 bars resolving to a sustained ensemble chord]

[End]

How to use this plan

Turn Instrumental mode on. Use the Style prompt as the main input. If your interface allows structure text alongside Instrumental mode, you can test this all-bracketed plan. If it hides or disables Lyrics, keep the plan as your listening map; the Style prompt already describes the arc. Do not switch Instrumental mode off simply to force a structure field. [5]

Bar counts and section tags are targets. At 116 BPM in 4/4, these 100 requested bars would last about 3 minutes 27 seconds if followed exactly. Suno may produce a different form or duration. Check the audio rather than assuming the plan was obeyed.

9 Generate listen and revise

A practical Suno workflow

- Open Create and select Custom mode or its equivalent in your interface. [5]
- For Track 1, enter the title, Style and Lyrics; keep Instrumental off.
- For Track 2, enter the title and Style; turn Instrumental on.
- Generate only as many versions as your credits allow. Label them A and B.
- Listen at the same playback volume. Record actual strengths and weaknesses.
- Revise one or two priorities, then compare again. Keep the best version and the reason for choosing it.

Listen for evidence

Question	What to note
Does the opening establish the piece?	Time when groove, voice or main theme first appears
Is the main idea memorable?	One phrase you can recall after listening
Does the arrangement develop?	Which parts enter, leave or change at each section
Is the lead clear?	Words or notes masked by other instruments
Are technical targets close?	Estimated tempo, counted metre and checked tonal centre
Does it sound independent?	Any recognisable lyric, hook or recording similarity to investigate

Copyable revision prompt

I generated this track from the prompts below. My listening notes are: the intro lasts about 25 seconds, the brass covers the words in the chorus, and the final section feels the same as the first chorus. Keep the genre, BPM, metre, key and lyrics. Revise only the Style prompt under 1,000 characters. Request a short groove intro with early vocal entry, brass answers between lines, and a new string countermelody in the final chorus. Explain the three changes. Do not claim you listened unless I supplied playable audio you could analyse.

[Paste current Style prompt and relevant notes here.]

For awkward lyrics, name the exact line and ask for shorter singable alternatives that preserve its meaning. For an instrumental that wanders, ask for a recurring main motif and a clear reprise. To judge metre, tap and count; a smooth “sway” alone does not prove 6/8.

If a version is technically wrong but musically appealing, decide which matters for the assignment. Editing sections, recording parts or mixing stems may improve control where your plan supports those features.

10 Copyright and commercial use

Copyright asks who controls protected expression. Commercial use asks whether you may use material for business or financial benefit. Permission can be granted by contract even when statutory copyright protection is uncertain. A licence grants specified uses; an assignment transfers rights that exist. [6, 7]

Concept	Meaning	Music example
Copyright	Legal rights over qualifying expression	Lyrics, composition and recording can involve distinct rights
Commercial use permission	Permission for a stated business use	Using licensed music in a paid advertisement
Ownership versus licence	A licence need not transfer ownership	A client may use a track while its creator retains rights

Free and paid tools have different rules

ChatGPT Free: OpenAI's individual terms assign its rights, if any, in output to you to the extent permitted by law. They do not impose a blanket non-commercial restriction on free output. This does not clear third-party rights or guarantee copyright, uniqueness or ownership of music generated elsewhere. Paying for ChatGPT does not upgrade Suno rights. [1]

Suno Free or Basic: outputs are limited to lawful personal, non-commercial use. Sharing a Suno link can support practice; an available download does not itself authorise commercial use. [2, 3]

Suno Pro or Premier: qualifying paid outputs receive Suno's rights, if any. Current commercial permission requires an approved download and compliance with its terms. Rights for qualifying downloads survive cancellation. Suno Remix outputs remain non-commercial under the current default terms, even on paid plans. Do not record or rip streams to bypass download rules. [2]

Upgrading later does not automatically give commercial rights to tracks generated while free. Check the creation date, plan and any specific written grant; do not assume an extension or remix fixes an older track's status. [4]

Permission does not guarantee copyright

Suno does not guarantee copyright in generated output. The US Copyright Office says prompts alone do not establish authorship under its analysis of current technology; protectable human contributions can include expressive writing or creative modifications. This is US guidance, not a ruling on your Singapore work. Keep your own drafts and editing records, and check local law for the rights you intend to claim. [2, 8]

Commercial uses can include selling downloads, monetised videos, client work and business advertising even when the music itself is given away. Non-commercial copying can still infringe copyright; classroom or educational use is not a universal exemption. Platform acceptance and venue licensing are separate questions. General education, not individual legal advice.

11 Student worksheet and knowledge check

Plan your own two track EP

EP title: _____

Audience and purpose: _____

Setting and story: _____

Shared instruments and production palette: _____

Choice	Song	Instrumental
Title	_____	_____
Main genre and influence	_____	_____
BPM and beat unit	_____	_____
Time signature and key	_____	_____
Lead voice or instrument	_____	_____
Section contrast	_____	_____

Submission checklist

- Two Style prompts, each under 1,000 characters including spaces.
- Complete song lyrics with bracketed instructions, plus an instrumental arrangement plan.
- At least four personal lyric changes and an explanation of your arrangement choices.
- Two listening comparisons if credits allow; otherwise evaluate one version and propose a revision.
- A record of creation date, account plan, model or version shown, prompts and permitted downloads if applicable.
- A statement of intended use and the permissions still needed before release.

Five questions

1. What does 112 BPM measure?
2. How does 6/8 usually group its six eighth notes?
3. Does a major key guarantee happy music?
4. Does a paid ChatGPT plan make free Suno tracks commercially usable?
5. Does commercial permission prove that you hold enforceable copyright?

Answer key

1. Beats per minute; our example specifies quarter-note beats.
2. Two groups of three, with two main dotted-quarter beats.
3. No; emotion depends on other musical choices too.
4. No; Suno’s own terms govern its output.
5. No; contract permission and statutory copyright protection are separate.

12 Sources and release records

Terms and guidance checked on 4 October 2026. Recheck before each commercial release. Numbered references throughout the guide point to these official sources. Where a help article is less specific than current terms, consult the terms and obtain clarification for your intended use.

1 OpenAI Terms of Use

Content ownership, input responsibility and age eligibility.

<https://openai.com/policies/terms-of-use/>

2 Suno Terms of Service

Effective 3 September 2026. Intellectual Property Rights; approved downloads, free and paid output, remixes and commercial use.

<https://suno.com/terms>

3 Suno Free Plan Rights

Personal non-commercial use and link sharing.

<https://help.suno.com/en/articles/9601601>

4 Suno Rights Before Subscribing

Upgrading does not automatically grant retroactive commercial permission.

<https://help.suno.com/en/articles/2425729>

5 Suno Custom Mode Guide

Separate lyrics and Styles, plus Instrumental toggle; labels can vary across devices.

<https://help.suno.com/en/articles/3726721>

6 IPOS Introduction to Copyright

Singapore overview of protected expression and copyright rights.

<https://www.ipos.gov.sg/about-ip/copyright/introduction-copyright/>

7 IPOS Ownership and Commercialisation

Ownership, exclusive rights and commercialisation.

<https://www.ipos.gov.sg/about-ip/copyright/ownership-and-commercialisation/>

8 US Copyright Office AI Copyrightability Report

January 2025 report; prompts and human contributions, especially printed pages 18 and 27. US-specific guidance.

<https://www.copyright.gov/ai/Copyright-and-Artificial-Intelligence-Part-2-Copyrightability-Report.pdf>

Keep a release record

Save the final prompts and your own contributions, track identifiers, generation dates, plan evidence, approved download records, permissions for all inputs, and intended uses. Credit AI assistance accurately. These records support review; they do not create copyright or resolve infringement by themselves.

Turn your ideas into music

Learn to describe the sound you imagine, write clearer prompts and shape expressive musical arrangements.

Explore genre, BPM, time signature and key through a practical EP with one song and one instrumental.

Use artist references thoughtfully, refine your results by listening and understand copyright and commercial use.

Imagine • Describe • Create • Listen • Refine

