



SONORA MUSIC LEARNING SERIES

TEACHING MUSIC CREATION with ChatGPT & SUNO

TEACHER GUIDE

Style, Lyrics & Musical Arrangement



Genre • BPM • Time Signature • Key

One Song + One Instrumental EP Demonstration

LESSON PLANS • TEACHING NOTES • ASSESSMENT

Teaching music creation with ChatGPT and Suno

Teacher guide to musical choices original lyrics and expressive arrangements

SONORA Music learning series

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Teacher edition | Terms checked 4 October 2026

Purpose and teaching approach

Teach students to make and explain musical decisions, use ChatGPT to write clear prompts, and evaluate Suno audio. The demonstration mini EP is City Lights and Open Skies, with the same song and instrumental as the student guide. All demonstration text is included here; this edition does not contain audio.

Assess the students' decisions and listening evidence. A polished AI output alone does not demonstrate musical understanding. Prompt directions are targets, and generated audio must be checked.

Learning outcomes

- Explain genre, BPM, time signature and key using an audible or physical example.
- Produce separate Style and Lyrics or structure prompts for one song and one instrumental.
- Describe instrument roles and section contrasts that make an arrangement richer.
- Translate an artist reference into broad musical features while avoiding copied expression and misleading identity claims.
- Explain why commercial permission differs from copyright protection and identify the applicable platform terms.

Navigation

Pages 2 to 6: preparation and teaching sequence. Pages 7 to 9: complete EP demonstration. Page 10: feedback and differentiation. Page 11: rights discussion. Page 12: assessment. Page 13: official sources and teacher follow-up.

Suggested audience: beginners aged 13 and above, subject to each service's age, guardian-consent and school requirements. For students without eligible or approved access, use a teacher-operated demonstration and paper planning. [1, 2]

1 Prepare and pace the workshop

Before class

- Use school-approved access. Check age eligibility and guardian permission; never share account credentials. [1, 2]
- Prepare a screen, speakers, headphones, metronome, keyboard or piano app, and student handouts.
- Test your Suno interface, model, Instrumental setting, available credits and download permissions.
- Generate permitted demonstration audio in advance if possible. Keep prompts, dates and plan evidence. Label practice tracks clearly.
- Plan classroom playback within the necessary permissions; do not assume education automatically clears use.
- Use fictional or general settings in prompts. Avoid student personal data, unauthorised recordings and unlicensed lyrics.

Minutes	Activity	Evidence to collect
0 to 10	Introduce the EP and diagnose knowledge	One plain-language description of a desired sound
10 to 25	Genre and tempo exercises	Genre features and correctly counted pulse
25 to 40	Metre and key demonstration	4/4 versus 6/8 grouping and a tonal home
40 to 55	Artist reference and arrangement	Broad features with a new story and section contrast
55 to 75	ChatGPT prompt writing	Separate Style and Lyrics or structure blocks
75 to 100	Suno generation and comparison	Notes on actual audio and one revision
100 to 110	Copyright and commercial use	Answers to rights scenarios
110 to 120	Share work and exit ticket	Musical explanation and release decision

If time or access is limited

Split the workshop into two 60-minute sessions: planning and musical vocabulary first, then generation, listening and rights. If credits or internet fail, use prepared permitted audio. Students can still write prompts, mark section changes and propose a revision without generating a track.

2 Teach genre and BPM

Teacher explanation

“Genre describes a family of musical features. BPM describes the speed of a specified beat. A genre name gives us a starting point, but we must say what instruments, rhythm and phrasing we want.”

Genre	Features to demonstrate	Prompt vocabulary
Pop	A memorable hook and clear form	Concise chorus, accessible melody
Soul and R&B	Expressive phrasing and rich chords	Warm lead, backing harmonies
Funk	Interlocking rhythmic accents	Syncopated bass, short guitar accents
Disco	A steady dance pulse	Four-on-the-floor kick, strings
Jazz	Swing or syncopation and interaction	Extended chords, melodic solo
Ambient	Texture and spacious development	Slow evolving pads, gentle piano

Activity and questioning

Play or perform two short permitted examples. Ask: “Which instruments can you identify? Where are the accents? What makes this description more useful than just ‘nice music’?” Accept overlapping genre descriptions when the student supports them with listening evidence.

Set a metronome to 60 BPM, then 120 BPM. Students clap one beat per click. Explain that 60 means one beat per second; 120 means two. Repeat at 100 BPM and add claps between clicks to demonstrate subdivisions.

Expected answers and common misconception

A faster subdivision does not necessarily change the underlying BPM. More drums or a louder mix do not automatically mean a faster tempo. Half-time and double-time feel can change perceived energy without changing the measured underlying pulse.

Use ranges as starting points rather than rules: 60 to 80 BPM can feel unhurried, 90 to 110 can groove comfortably, and 115 to 130 can support energetic dance music. The arrangement can alter each impression.

Check for understanding

Ask each pair to specify one main genre, one supporting influence and a BPM with beat unit. Model answer: “Soul-pop with disco-funk rhythm, 112 BPM, quarter-note pulse.” Ask what else must be added before this becomes a complete Style prompt.

3 Teach metre and musical key

Time signature demonstration

Explain that a bar groups the rhythm into a repeating cycle. The top number counts notated units; the bottom identifies their note value. The audible main pulse depends on the metre.

Metre	Count and accent	Expected student observation
4/4	ONE two three four	Four quarter-note beats in a bar
3/4	ONE two three	Three quarter-note beats in a bar
6/8	ONE two three FOUR five six	Six eighth notes grouped into two main dotted-quarter beats

Clap 3/4 with three main beats, each divided in two. Clap 6/8 with two main beats, each divided in three. Both bars contain six eighth notes; their accent grouping differs. Do not present all 6/8 subdivisions as six equal main beats.

Model a precise request: “6/8, dotted-quarter pulse 76 BPM, two main beats per bar, each subdivided into three.” Ask students why naming the beat unit helps.

Key and harmony demonstration

Play C D E F G A B C and finish on C. Explain that C is the tonal home. Then play the natural A minor scale A B C D E F G A, ending on A. The basic notes are shared but their tonal centre differs; minor harmony may also alter notes.

Major can feel bright and minor reflective, but neither dictates emotion. Transpose a short original melody from C major to D major to show that key changes its pitch level. A singer’s comfortable range still needs attention; a key alone does not specify melody extremes.

Play C E G, then C E G B. Explain that the second chord is Cmaj7. Add D for Cmaj9. Chords combine notes; a key is the larger tonal framework. Extensions need suitable spacing and voice leading, not merely more notes.

Teacher checks

Ask: “Is key the same as tempo?” Expected answer: no, tonal home versus beat speed. “Does a swaying result prove 6/8?” No; count the grouping. “Does the prompt prove the recording is in D major?” No; verify the actual audio with listening, a keyboard or analysis tools.

4 Teach inspiration and richer arrangement

Translate the reference into musical language

Ask students to choose a musician they admire and name three features they hear. Artists vary across recordings, so avoid treating an artist name as a complete recipe. Use permitted listening materials without uploading them into AI services unless the necessary rights allow it.

Listening reference	Broad classroom features	Independent direction
Earth Wind and Fire	Soul-funk and disco ensemble energy	Syncopated bass, brass answers, layered harmonies
Colbie Caillat	Acoustic pop and relaxed phrasing	Conversational lead, guitar, light percussion
YOASOBI	J-pop and electropop momentum	Rhythmic piano, bright synths, evolving sections

These are teaching shorthand, not descriptions of every work or endorsements. The final prompt should describe broad features and a new story rather than request an exact voice, melody, lyric, hook or recording.

Build the arrangement in stages

Assign five roles: rhythm foundation, harmony, main melody, colour and transitions. For our EP, drums and bass form the foundation; Rhodes and guitar supply harmony; voice or saxophone leads; strings and brass add colour; fills signal transitions.

Model a sparse verse and a wider chorus. Add strings above the main melody and short brass answers in its gaps. Reduce the bridge to Rhodes and bass, then bring the band back with a fresh countermelody. Explain that “lavish” means planned development and rich detail with a clear lead.

Teacher questions

- “Which instrument carries the idea, and which part might cover it?”
- “What changes when the chorus arrives?”
- “What can we remove to make the return stronger?”
- “Which elements are broad conventions, and which could identify a particular song?”

Copyright protects expression rather than abstract ideas. Genre descriptions are not an automatic infringement shield; the output can still resemble protected expression. Changing a key, tempo or a few words does not guarantee independence. Do not promise “copyright-free” results. [6]

5 Model the ChatGPT conversation

Explain the two inputs

“ChatGPT helps us write and refine the brief. Suno makes the audio. Style describes the overall sound. Lyrics contains singable words plus short bracketed section cues. An instrumental needs a structure plan, not invented sung words.”

Copyable teacher demonstration prompt

Act as a music tutor and arranger for beginner students. Create an original two-track mini EP called City Lights and Open Skies. Track 1 is an English soul-pop song with disco-funk rhythm about friends reconnecting in Singapore at night: 112 BPM quarter-note pulse, 4/4, D major. Track 2 is an orchestral funk instrumental imagining morning over the bay: 116 BPM quarter-note pulse, 4/4, G major. Both use Rhodes, electric bass, rhythm guitar, drums, strings and brass. The song has a warm expressive female lead; the instrumental has a tenor saxophone main theme. Target about 3 to 4 minutes each.

Explain the musical choices and instrument roles. For each track, return a Suno Style prompt under 1,000 characters including spaces. Then return separate complete English lyrics for the song, with instructions in square brackets and sung words outside brackets, and an all-bracketed instrumental arrangement plan. Use clear section contrasts and positive musical descriptions in Style. Create independent expression rather than copying a specific song or identifiable voice. Do not guarantee copyright clearance or commercial rights. List contradictions and suggest listening checks.

Think aloud while reviewing

Ask students to identify the main genre, pulse, metre, tonal home, lead and section development. Remove competing directions. Verify the character count rather than trusting ChatGPT’s claim. Our 1,000-character ceiling is a workshop convention; follow the actual limit displayed by the chosen Suno model.

A follow-up before generation

Review these two prompt blocks for teaching use. Identify unclear instrument roles, inconsistent tempo or metre instructions, and lyrics that may be hard to sing. Suggest specific edits with reasons. Keep each Style prompt under 1,000 characters. Keep the lyrics and instrumental plan separate. Mark assumptions and technical targets that need checking in the audio.

[Paste the draft blocks here.]

Bracketed cues are a prompting convention, not a guaranteed control language. Students should copy only the appropriate Style and Lyrics blocks into Suno, rather than the entire explanation.

6 Demonstration song brief and Style

Meet Me Under the City Lights

Choice	Teaching rationale
Soul-pop with disco-funk rhythm	A singable story with a strong rhythmic foundation
112 BPM quarter-note pulse and 4/4	Clear dance pulse for counting and comparison
D major and warm female lead	Requested tonal home and general vocal qualities
Rhodes bass guitar and drums	An uncluttered verse foundation
Strings brass and backing harmonies	Chorus lift with answers between sung lines
Reduced bridge and wider final chorus	Contrast makes the return feel earned

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.

Verified length: 808 characters including spaces. Complete Lyrics prompt is on the next page.

Live demonstration cues

- Enter the title, Style and Lyrics in Custom mode; keep Instrumental off. [5]
- Read the first verse aloud naturally before generating. Ask students where breaths belong.
- Invite a student to replace a scene detail with their own wording.
- After generation, note when the voice enters and whether brass leaves space for the words.
- Explain that a new generation may alter melody and form as well as the requested feature.

Do not describe the example as a proven audio result. These are prompt drafts. A teacher must generate and inspect the recording before using it as evidence of successful arrangement or technical compliance.

7 Complete demonstration Lyrics prompt

Instrumental mode off. Instructions in brackets; singable words outside brackets. Students should revise at least four lines and explain their contribution. Read the left column first, then the right.

[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

Open Skies Over the Bay

Orchestral funk instrumental, 116 BPM quarter-note pulse, 4/4, G major, target 3 to 4 minutes. A tenor saxophone carries the main theme. Shared instruments connect the two tracks; this is a companion composition, not an exact backing track of the song.

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.

Verified length: 840 characters including spaces.

All bracketed 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 demonstrate it

Turn Instrumental on. Use Style as the main input. If the interface permits structure text alongside this setting, test the all-bracketed plan. If Lyrics is hidden or disabled, retain the plan as a listening map; the Style already describes the development. Do not switch Instrumental off merely to expose Lyrics. [5]

Ask students to hum the recurring theme and identify the contrast in the Rhodes section. Count the breakdown if possible. The 100-bar plan would last about 3 minutes 27 seconds at 116 BPM in 4/4 if followed exactly; the generated form can differ.

If the output contains unwanted vocals, check the Instrumental setting and simplify the melodic-role instructions. If the saxophone theme wanders, request a recurring motif and clear final reprise.

9 Facilitate listening and revision

Compare using evidence

Play versions A and B at similar volume. Students first write independently, then compare in pairs. Ask for a time, section or audible feature to support every judgement. “Better” needs an explanation.

Listening focus	Teacher question
Opening	When do the groove and lead arrive?
Melodic identity	Which phrase can you recall after listening?
Development	Which parts enter or leave at section boundaries?
Clarity	Which words or notes are masked?
Technical targets	What pulse and grouping can you actually count?
Independent expression	Is there a recognisable similarity that needs investigation?

Copyable revision prompt

My listening notes: the intro is about 25 seconds, brass masks chorus words, and the final chorus repeats the same texture. Keep genre, BPM, metre, key and lyrics. Revise only the Style prompt under 1,000 characters. Request early vocal entry after a short groove intro, brass answers between lines, and a fresh string countermelody in the final chorus. Explain each change. Do not claim to have heard audio unless I supplied audio you could analyse.

[Paste current Style prompt here.]

Change one or two priorities at a time for a useful comparison. Do not keep generating indefinitely. If a target remains wrong, decide whether to regenerate, edit with appropriate tools, or document the limitation.

Differentiate the task

- Support: provide a word bank and a partially completed prompt; allow an oral explanation or visual section map.
- Develop: ask students to shorten a crowded lyric line and compare verse and chorus instrument roles.
- Extend: test 6/8 with a specified beat unit, vary chord voicings, or create a human-written melodic motif.
- Access alternative: use permitted teacher-prepared audio and paper prompt revisions; do not penalise lack of a paid account.

Praise a specific decision rather than the generated sound alone. Example: “You moved brass into the gaps, and the chorus words became clearer.”

10 Teach copyright and commercial use

Copyright concerns legal control over qualifying expression. Commercial permission concerns authorised business use. A licence grants defined uses; an assignment transfers rights that exist. Lyrics, composition and recording can involve distinct rights. [6, 7]

Accurate reminder to read to students

“Free ChatGPT does not impose a blanket ban on commercial use of its text output. Its terms assign OpenAI’s rights, if any, subject to law. This does not clear third-party rights or grant rights to Suno audio. Paying for ChatGPT does not upgrade Suno rights.” [1]

“Free Suno outputs are for lawful personal, non-commercial use. For qualifying Pro or Premier output, current commercial use requires an approved download and compliance with Suno’s terms. Default Suno Remix outputs remain non-commercial even on paid plans. An upgrade does not automatically license older free tracks.” [2, 3, 4]

“Commercial permission does not prove enforceable copyright. Suno does not guarantee copyright. US guidance says prompts alone do not establish authorship under its current analysis, while protectable human contributions may exist. That US guidance does not decide a Singapore student’s rights.” [2, 8]

Discuss these scenarios

Scenario	Expected answer
Free ChatGPT writes a lyric draft; free Suno generates audio for a café advertisement	ChatGPT’s plan does not remove Suno’s non-commercial restriction
A student upgrades after making a free track	No automatic retroactive commercial permission
A student substantially writes original lyrics and uses paid Suno	Lyrics and audio may have different rights; verify each layer and permitted use
A free download is available	Download availability alone is not commercial permission
A copied hook is posted without earning money	Non-commercial use does not automatically excuse infringement
A paid Suno track is accepted by a distributor	Acceptance alone does not establish copyright or clear other rights

Business advertisements, monetised videos, sales and client work can be commercial even when listeners pay nothing. Educational use is not a universal exemption. Avoid claims of guaranteed clearance; investigate recognisable similarities and seek appropriate advice for a real release. This section is general education.

11 Assess decisions and understanding

Submission requirements

Collect two Style prompts under 1,000 characters each, full song lyrics, an instrumental plan, at least four explained lyric changes, a section map, listening notes, one reasoned revision, and a short intended-use statement. If generation was unavailable, accept a proposed comparison and revision based on prepared audio.

Teacher scored rubric

Criterion	4 Strong	2 Developing	0 Missing
Music vocabulary	Accurate choices and clear explanations	Partly accurate; needs clarification	No usable explanation
Prompt construction	Separate coherent blocks; limits checked	Usable but unclear or crowded	No usable prompt blocks
Arrangement	Purposeful roles and audible or planned contrast	Roles listed; limited development	No roles or contrast
Human contribution and revision	Personal changes explained with listening evidence	Changes made with weak reasons	No documented contribution
Rights understanding	Distinguishes ownership permission and platform rules	Understands some but confuses others	No rights explanation

Score each criterion from 0 to 4; use 1 or 3 for intermediate performance. Total: 20. Do not award higher marks simply for owning a paid plan, generating more versions, or receiving a more polished random result.

Exit ticket and answer key

1. What does 112 BPM measure? Beats per minute; specify the quarter-note unit for our example.
2. What are the two main beats in 6/8? Dotted-quarter beats, each divided into three eighth notes.
3. Does D major guarantee a happy song? No; other musical choices affect emotion.
4. Can paying for ChatGPT commercially license a free Suno track? No.
5. Does commercial permission prove copyright ownership? No.
6. How can an artist reference be useful? Translate broad features into an independent brief without copying protected expression or identity.

Reflection prompt

"Name one decision you made, one thing the audio did differently from your request, and one revision you would make. State whether this is a practice track or a proposed release, and what permission still needs checking."

12 Sources and teacher follow up

Terms checked 4 October 2026. Recheck official terms before teaching a new cohort or publishing. The current terms govern; help articles may summarise fewer conditions. This guide is educational and does not guarantee legal clearance.

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>

Teacher records and next lesson

Keep prompts, student revisions, generation dates, plan details, permissions and listening notes under school storage policies. Next lesson: compare the EP's shared palette, independent melodies, contrasting energy and endings.



From musical ideas to confident teaching

Help students turn musical ideas into clear prompts, original lyrics and expressive arrangements using ChatGPT and Suno.

This teacher guide uses a two-track EP — one song and one instrumental — to connect musical understanding with practical creative decisions.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Genre, BPM, time signature and key
- Copyable Style and Lyrics prompts
- Richer arrangements and artist influences
- Listening, comparison and revision
- Copyright and commercial-use distinctions
- Lesson plans, assessment and answer keys

Teach the choices. Listen to the results.

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