

Should've Treated U Better Songwriters Blueprint

1. Basics of the song lyrics. Answer these:

Relatable Premise:

We all lose someone we love and realize too late that we should have shown up more, called more, and been more present while we had the chance - before that person is lost to us forever.

Emotion:

Regret, grief, love, reflection, quiet guilt, and acceptance.

Central Point/Core Idea (What's song about?)

The song is about losing a close friend and coming to terms with the painful realization that even without any conflict, distance and life got in the way of our relationship. And now that they've died, there's no chance to fix it.

What is the key emotion evoked?

Deep emotional regret mixed with love and longing - missing someone while wishing you could go back and do better.

Unique because of:

It's not about a broken relationship or a fight. It's about a good relationship that simply faded due to the reality of getting older, moving farther apart and life, which makes the regret more subtle, real, and relatable.

Singer style/mood/attitude:

Raw, conversational, reflective, sincere - like talking directly to a lost friend. Emotional but controlled, not overly dramatic.

Backing vocals:

Soft, airy harmonies in the chorus and "oohs" that feel like echoes or memories - almost like voices from the past or heaven.

What's the juicy part that everybody can relate to?

“Called you more, just to say hey / Not let life get in the way” → Everyone has someone they wish they checked in on more.

2. Point of view. Answer these:

Who is talking?

A man reflecting on the loss of his best friend.

What is their character avatar?

A loyal but busy adult who let life unintentionally create distance.

What pronoun?

I

Who are they talking to?

His late best friend (Dimitri), but also indirectly to the listener and anyone they've also lost.

Their character avatar:

A grounded, kind-hearted friend who lived life fully but is now gone too soon.

What pronoun?

You

Why are they talking to them?

To express regret, love, and unresolved emotions - to say what he never said enough out loud and directly to him while they were both alive.

3. What is the musical/lyric hook that encapsulates the relatable premise? Write the lyric and sing the melody. The only part of the song you want to write out of pure inspiration is this step.

What is the Hook?

Should've treated U better

What is the Melody?

Simple, emotional melody lingering on "better" to emphasize regret. Slight pause before the phrase to let it land heavier each time.

4a. Where will the hook be in the chorus? Beginning? Middle? End?

End of the chorus (as the emotional payoff and final realization)

Main Idea:

Nothing feels right without him, and the regret finally lands: I should've done more.

Details (imagery/senses):

Talking to the sky, silence where conversations used to be, absence felt in everyday life.

Sensory/metaphor:

"Like a song that's lost its chord" → life feels incomplete, unresolved, off-key.

4b. What will comprise the remainder of the chorus?

The chorus expresses:

- Confusion and emotional emptiness without him
- Missing him in everyday moments
- Regret for not staying more connected
- Recognition of his strength and calm, now carried forward

It builds emotionally until landing on the hook.

5. What will I say in the 1st verse that will set up my chorus? (Only one main thought idea per section so you don't confuse listener with too much). You need to know the What and Why and When And How and Where and Who. Tell the Story in the verses. Use human senses - what can the character and listener see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Use details in verses - what is the central character wearing? Who else is in the song? What are other characters doing, wearing, saying, etc.?

Main Idea:

Life got busy and complicated, and distance naturally grew, and neither of us fought it.

Details (imagery/senses):

Storm imagery, feeling stuck, trying to push through life while losing touch
The sense of being pulled by responsibilities, time slipping away unnoticed

Sensory/metaphor:

“Lost in the storm / We looked for light” → Life's chaos representing distraction and distance. “Their grip was tight” → life's obligations and others holding you back

6. What will I say in the pre-chorus (if there is one) that will set up my chorus?**Main Idea:**

He's gone too soon, and now all that's left is a memory and conversation with the sky.

Details (imagery/senses):

Looking up at the sky, speaking into silence, imagining him somewhere beyond.
Funeral or loss moment implied but not explicitly described.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Sailed through heaven's port” → peaceful passing, spiritual journey. “Talk to the sky”
→ longing for connection

7. What will I say in the 2nd verse that will further the story and set up and keep moving the chorus along? It has to be different than verse 1 – don't say the same thing or idea again. (Only one main thought idea per section so you don't confuse listener with too much).**Main Idea:**

Reflecting on who he was = his character, strength, and how he handled life.

Details (imagery/senses):

He turned the other cheek, carried emotional weight of others quietly. Always looked to help everyone else first. His presence brought calm and stability.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Your story’s drawn but your legacy carries on” → Life ended, but impact continues.
“Carried weight that made you weak” → emotional burden

8. If the bridge has lyrics, what will be said there? Must fit into relatable premise but offer a different twist/perspective but still make sense. The most emotional lyrics tend to come in the bridge where the story is being resolved, or where you’re adding an extra twist in the tale to heighten the emotion. There are three things a bridge can do:

- 1) Change time
- 2 Change perspective
- 3) Go universal/philosophical

Main Idea:

Raw, unfiltered truth. This sucks, and I wish I could be more like you.

Details (imagery/senses):

Stripped-down language, almost like talking out loud or confessing. Feels like sitting alone, thinking about him directly.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Your story burned, but ended too soon” → A bright life cut short. Simple, conversational tone replaces poetic structure for impact.

9. If there is a 3rd verse or ending, what will be said there? Is it really needed?

Main Idea:

Acceptance and hope. Recognizing his qualities and believing they’ll meet again.

Details (imagery/senses):

His smile, steady presence, warmth. Looking forward to reunion someday.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Fire” → passion and life. “Easy smile” → warmth and comfort. “We’ll meet again one day” → closure and peace

10. Ending / Final Chorus

Main Idea:

Full emotional release - accepting regret while honoring him.

Details (imagery/senses):

More personal language (“bud,” “brother”). Repeating the hook with deeper weight. Carrying his calm forward.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Carry your calm in my chest” → He lives on inside you emotionally. Also with his children and grandchildren.

11. Final Checklist – answer these questions:

DID YOU TELL THE WHOLE STORY?

Yes. Loss, reflection, regret, memory, and acceptance are all present.

DID YOU INVITE THE LISTENER IN?

Yes. The everyday regret (“should’ve called more”) makes it universally relatable.

DID YOU FULFILL EXPECTATIONS?

Yes, the emotional setup leads to a clear and satisfying payoff in the chorus and final resolution.

DID YOU SAY WHAT YOU MEANT TO SAY?

Yes - the message is honest, direct, and emotionally clear.

DOES THE SONG FEEL COMPLETE?

Yes, with a full emotional arc from confusion → regret → reflection → acceptance.