

The First 100 Songwriter's Blueprint

1. Basics of the song lyrics. Answer these:

Relatable Premise:

Life is hard, grief changes you & the wisdom our parents leave behind becomes the voice that helps us keep going.

Emotion:

Nostalgia, love, grief, gratitude, comfort and bittersweet hope.

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

The song is about a son remembering his father's life advice: "The first 100 years are the hardest." It turns a wise dad's saying into a deeper message about living fully, working hard, loving people while they are here, and not losing yourself chasing things that will not matter in the end.

What is the key emotion evoked?

The key emotion is bittersweet remembrance. The singer misses his dad, but he also feels comfort because his dad's voice, humor, and wisdom still guide him today.

Unique because of:

The title and hook are unique because "the first 100 years are the hardest" sounds humorous at first, but it becomes more emotional and profound when tied to grief, family, faith, aging, and the passing down of wisdom. It is both a dad joke and a real solid life philosophy.

Singer style/mood/attitude:

Heartfelt singer-songwriter with a warm country/folksy storytelling feel. The vocal should feel honest, conversational, and emotional without becoming overly dramatic. It should sound like someone speaking directly from the heart, with a little smile through the tears.

Backing vocals:

Soft, warm harmonies in the choruses to make the message feel universal and comforting. Light “mmm” or “yeah” background vocals in the bridge can create a prayer-like, reflective pause. Final chorus backing vocals can lift slightly to create a feeling of release and acceptance.

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

Everybody eventually loses someone they love, and when that happens, the little things they used to say become priceless. The juicy emotional part is that a simple phrase from a father can become a lifelong compass after he is gone.

2. Point of view. Answer these:

Who is talking?

A son who is remembering his father and reflecting on the life lessons his dad left behind.

What is their character avatar?

A grown man who has lived enough life to understand what his father meant. He is someone who has chased success, faced loss, and now values love, family, faith, humor, and simple wisdom more than worldly achievement.

What pronoun?

I

Who are they talking to?

He is talking to himself, to his dad’s memory, and to the listener.

Their character avatar:

Anyone who misses a parent, grandparent, mentor, or loved one. Also anyone who is rushing through life and needs to be reminded to slow down and focus on what really matters.

What pronoun?

You

Why are they talking to them?

He wants to honor his dad, pass along his father's wisdom, and remind the listener (and his kids) that life is hard but love, laughter, faith, and family are what remain when everything else fades.

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.

"The first 100 years they're tough, but it gets easier after that"

What is the Melody?

The melody should feel like a simple, memorable phrase that rises emotionally on "first 100 years" and gently resolves on "easier after that." It should sound like something a father might say with a smile, but the singer delivers it with love and loss underneath. The melody should be easy to sing, slightly conversational, and emotionally satisfying at the end of the chorus.

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

End of the chorus.

Main Idea:

The chorus gives the father's life advice: live fully, work hard, laugh often, love deeply, and remember that life is tough but it's still worth living.

Details (imagery/senses):

The listener can feel the sun going down, hear the dad's voice, sense time passing, and feel the warmth of family love at the end of a long day.

Sensory/metaphor:

"When the sun goes down love's all you'll have" works as the central emotional image. The sunset represents the end of life, the end of a day, and the moment when everything material fades except love.

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

The rest of the chorus is a list of simple, timeless wisdom: live your life, make every moment last, never look back, work hard, and don't forget to laugh. These lines support the hook by showing how to survive the “first 100 years.” The chorus should feel like advice passed from father to son, and then from the singer to the listener.

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:

Verse 1 sets up the contrast between chasing the world and being raised with simpler values. The singer remembers how people spend their lives rushing after bigger dreams, but his father taught him to work hard, give hope to others, believe in simple things, and not lose himself and stay grounded and humble.

Details (imagery/senses):

The listener can see someone running through life chasing the stars, always reaching for something just out of reach. In contrast, the singer remembers a more grounded upbringing: hard work, humility, hope and all the little moments that matter. The father's presence is not fully described visually yet, but his values are already shaping the story.

Sensory/metaphor:

“Chasing the stars” represents chasing success, status, fame, or impossible goals. “Simpler dreams” represents the grounded wisdom of family, humility and everyday love.

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

Main Idea:

The pre-chorus brings the father directly into the song. The singer still hears his dad's voice warning him not to let the world make him lose his way.

Details (imagery/senses):

The emotional image is the sound of the father's voice. The singer hears it clearly, almost like his dad is still standing beside him. This creates intimacy and makes the chorus feel like the father's advice is being passed down in real time.

Sensory/metaphor:

"I still hear his voice like it was yesterday" is the emotional bridge between memory and present life. The father's voice becomes a compass.

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:

Verse 2 moves from life advice to grief and family legacy. The father has passed on, but the singer still feels his presence. The mother is still alive and carries her own wisdom, reminding him that hope cannot be found by looking down in despair.

Details (imagery/senses):

The listener can see the father's smile in the sky and feel the mother's presence like a summer breeze. The mom is still alive. The verse has a gentle spiritual quality, with heaven, grace, sky, breeze and rainbows creating a visual and emotional lift.

Sensory/metaphor:

"Smile in the sky" represents the father's continued presence after death. "Mama's still here like a summer breeze" represents comfort, gentleness, and her living love that remains. "You won't find rainbows lookin' down at your feet" means hope requires lifting your eyes, and keeping your chin up, even during hardship and grief.

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:

The bridge is a short emotional pause instead of a long lyrical explanation. It gives the listener space to feel the loss, the love, and the father's wisdom before the final choruses return.

Details (imagery/senses):

The "Mmmm," "Yeah," and "Live your life" feel like the singer taking a breath, looking upward, and accepting the message. It could feel like standing alone after the funeral, sitting quietly with old memories, or hearing the father's advice echo in silence.

Sensory/metaphor:

The bridge works like a prayer, a sigh, or a quiet conversation with someone who is no longer physically there.

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

None

10. Ending / Final Chorus

Main Idea:

The ending repeats and deepens the message. By the final chorus, the listener understands that this is not just a clever saying. It is a father's wisdom, a son's grief, and a universal reminder to live with love before time runs out.

Details (imagery/senses):

The final chorus should feel bigger and more emotional than the earlier choruses. The listener should feel the sun setting, the dad's voice echoing and the singer finally understanding and smiling through the sadness.

Sensory/metaphor:

"It gets much easier" gives the ending a gentle lift. It suggests peace after struggle, heaven after hardship and an emotional release after grief.

11. Final Checklist – answer these questions:

DID YOU TELL THE WHOLE STORY?

Yes. The song tells the story of a father's wisdom, a son's memory, the pain of losing him, the comfort of a mother still present, and the decision to live life with love, work, laughter, and perspective.

DID YOU INVITE THE LISTENER IN?

Yes. The listener is invited in because the song uses universal emotions: missing a parent, remembering advice, aging, grieving, working hard, laughing through pain, and realizing that love is what matters most.

DID YOU FULFILL EXPECTATIONS?

Yes. The intro introduces the father and the saying immediately. The verses explain why that saying matters. The chorus delivers the emotional lesson. The second verse deepens it with grief and family. The final chorus completes the emotional promise.

DID YOU SAY WHAT YOU MEANT TO SAY?

Yes. The song clearly says that life is difficult, but we should live fully, work hard, laugh, love, and hold on to the wisdom of those who raised us. It honors the father without making the song only about sadness.

DOES THE SONG FEEL COMPLETE?

Yes. The song feels complete because it moves from memory to advice, from advice to grief, and from grief to acceptance. It ends with emotional resolution and a memorable hook that listeners can carry with them.