

Title _____

Composer _____

Date _____

Main Idea	
Overall Form	
Phrase Structure	
Melody	
Harmony	
Rhythm	
Dynamics	
Texture	
Timbre	

A 5-Step Compositional Process

1. **Think**—For the “Main Idea” section, fill in the box by answering questions like:
 - a. What is this piece about?
 - b. What style do you want it to be in?
 - c. Is it for somebody?
 - d. Does it tell a story?
 - e. How do you want it to feel?
 - f. What abstract details can you provide?

2. **Outline**—Decide what the overall form of your piece will be, based on step one. On the template, darken the lightly dotted vertical lines to separate sections. Examples of form:
 - a. ABA
 - b. Intro—AABA—Coda
 - c. ABACABA
 - d. Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Bridge, Chorus Chorus
 - e. Through Composed (ABCD)
 - f. 12-Bar Blues

Phrase Structure—(Optional) Phrases can be labeled with lower case letters (a, b, c, etc.). For those who prefer more planning, and less improvising.

3. **Research**—Write notes musical elements for each section. If needed, listen to pieces similar to your main idea. Experiment with sounds at the piano, based on the notes you take. Here’s a very brief definition of the elements:
 - a. Melody: The parts you can sing!
 - b. Harmony: Chord progressions and vertical relationships
 - c. Rhythm: The tempo, and the length of each note.
 - d. Dynamics: Volume!
 - e. Texture: Thickness, range, patterns
 - f. Timbre: Pedal usage, and what non-piano instruments are being imitated.

4. **Sketch**—Use your sounds and notes to improvise through the entire piece, without stopping, regardless of how many mistakes you hear. Keep in mind:
 - a. If you get bored of an idea, move past it.
 - b. If you miss the idea, bring it back.
 - c. Record yourself, so you don’t forget what you improvised.

5. **Shape**—This is where you turn a train wreck into a masterpiece! Examples of how:
 - a. Cut sections that feel excessive
 - b. Thicken the texture if it feel thin
 - c. Adjust harmonies slightly (to avoid changing texture)
 - d. Clearly define climactic points in the ranges of the melody
 - e. Practice! The more you play through, the more you will notice details.