

1 LISTEN

RESIST THE URGE to start playing along. Take time to listen to the track a few times before you start working it out. Listening allows you to get familiar with the song. If you dive right in to learning the song or playing along, you won't take note of all that is going on and will find you never actually learn it well enough to play it.

2 LIST

NOW YOU'RE READY to listen to it again! This time, take note of the following things:

a. Structure

What is the structure of the song?

Introduction, verses, chorus, bridge, instrumentals, ending.

b. Instrumentation

For now just make note of what instruments you can hear and what each one is doing. Electric guitar riff, strumming acoustic, piano, drum loop, live kit, lead vocals, harmonies.

c. Parts

What is each instrument doing in each part of the song? i.e. a guitar riff in the intro and same again in the chorus. Identify the parts you will need to play.

d. Dynamics

How loud and soft things are being played.

e. Counts

Take note of the timing between sections. Is it four counts or eight counts? Knowing the timing can save you a lot of, well, time, at rehearsal when working with others on the team.

f. Key

Find out what key the recording is in. It helps to learn the song in the same key as the recording. Trying to transpose on the fly can slow you down and add unnecessary complication while you're still learning the song.

3 LOOK OUT

THERE ARE PATTERNS in many of the chord structures used in songs, and even the song structure and rhythm. If you identify these patterns, you can learn the song really quickly and not have to rely on a chart. For example, a chorus may be A, D and E, repeated four times or four a certain number of bars each time. A pre-chorus may always follow a verse. Breaking the chords into patterns is a huge time saver and much easier to remember. See examples on the next page.

4 LEVERAGE

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNT in the steps above and play along with the track or transpose it to the key you need it in.

Can you play along with the track without any hitches?

Can you play along on your own without the help of the track?

LEARNING SONGS /

A TRIED AND TESTED PROCESS FOR
LEARNING SONGS WELL ENOUGH TO
PLAY THEM.

Good G

intro G D Em C

Verse 1

G D
You spoke creation over darkness
Em
You said "Let there be light"
C
Nature burst into life

Verse 2

G D
You bring the sinner out of darkness
Em
Into glorious light
C
Into Your glorious life

Pre Chorus

Em D C
Your goodness is over all You've made

Chorus 1

G
You are good
D Em
With new mercy every morning
C G
And a love I could never outrun
D Em
You have been so faithful
C

Bridge

Em D C
Your goodness is over all You've made
Em D C
And my mouth Will be filled with Your praise

Structure

Intro x 2
Verse
Verse
Pre chorus
Chorus 1
Intro
Verse
Pre chorus
Chorus 1
Chorus 2
Bridge
Chorus 1
Chorus 2
Chorus 1
Chorus 2

In this example, the chords are G, D, Em and C repeated for the verse and chorus and Em, D and C for the prechorus and bridge. one page reduced to two lines to remember.

Tower

Verse

Am G Em D Am G
When the heat of the fire is rising

Em D
Flames are closing in

Am G Em D Am G
And the heat of the battle's climbing

Em D
And I want to give in

Pre chorus

Am G D
You're the Rock that's higher

C G D
Lead me to the Rock that's higher

Chorus

G

In this example, the verse is Am, G, Em D repeated 4 times. This is sometimes hard to see when given chords written above words.

The pre-chorus is Am G D x 2 with a major variation on the first minor chord.

Learn to reduce your music to patterns and variations to help you learn and recall easily.

There are many examples we could look at. Try spot them in the songs you use in your church.

Remember to also look at patterns in the song structure and rhythm to further simplify your learning.