

Lyrics Guidelines

Lyrics must be accurate, and match the audio verbatim. This includes everything that is an integral part of the song. These will primarily be vocals, but could include other elements, such as spoken phrases or sampled content.

General Formatting

The structure of a song should dictate a lyric's format or structure. Lyrics should reflect the lyrical construction and progression of the song as well as the natural cadence of the lyrical framework.

Line breaks vs Section breaks

When transcribing lyrics, it is important to separate the lyrical sections and changes within a song with line and section breaks. All lyric lines should be single spaced, and a double space should separate each stanza.

When unsure when to input a line or section break, some common identifiers are:

- Changes in the beat/rhythm
- Changes in the song tempo
- The artist changes the method of lyric delivery (Singing to Rapping)
- A defined chorus or hook

Capitalization

We follow traditional English grammar rules with regard to capitalization in our lyrics. Proper nouns must be capitalized. Additionally, all lyric lines must begin with a capital letter. Lastly, yelling, screaming, or any indicator of significant rise in volume of an artist's voice in a song should be capitalized, but used sparingly.

Must be capitalized:

- Divinity and religious intricacies ("God, You, Him, Your" in religious songs)
- Acronyms
- Geographical location (East Coast, Southside, etc.)
- Title casing
- The first letter of the first word contained in parentheses

Punctuation

Keep punctuation minimal, although it is most important to follow traditional English grammar rules. However, there should be no periods or commas at the end of any lyric line. Exclamation points, question marks, and quotation marks should be the only end-line punctuation, and should be included as needed. Punctuation, such as commas, may be used mid-line as needed.

Note: No matter how the artist is presenting, do not repeat punctuation to convey emphasis. (For example, "!!!" or "??")

Additional examples of acceptable punctuation:

- Hyphens: dropped words, spelled out words, and acronyms. (L-Y-R-I-C-S)
- Parentheses: background vocals (see section labeled "Background Vocals")
- Apostrophe: for certain slang and contractual modifications ('Rari for Ferrari)
- Periods: representing acronyms commonly delimited with periods (F.B.I.)

Repeated lines

When words repeat to the end and fade out of a song, ellipses may be used to represent this fadeout. This is the only acceptable use of ellipses in transcriptions.

Correct:

Until you respect me and my dogs
I'll keep barking up the wrong tree
I'll keep barking up the wrong tree
I'll keep barking up the wrong tree
I'll keep barking up the wrong tree....

Incorrect:

Until you respect me and my dogs
I'll keep barking up the wrong tree
(Repeat x2)

Spoken Word Content

Currently, spoken word/conversational content within a song should not be transcribed.

Background Vocals

Background vocals are described as vocal content, word and non-word/onomatopoeia that is heard behind primary foreground vocals, or "hushed" vocal content occurring mid-line or end of line.

- Background vocals should be formatted in parentheses. Parentheses should be used to set off non-main lyrics.
- Background vocals, both word and non-word, should only be transcribed if they add to the content of the song, either narratively or stylistically. (e.g. as loud as other words)
- Please note that Featured Artist content is considered main lyrics, and should not be placed in parentheses

Correct: (You're a black room boy)

Incorrect: (you're a black room boy)

Non-Word Vocal Sounds

Non-word vocals should be transcribed sparingly, and only if they add to the content of the song, either narratively or stylistically. However, easily identifiable non-words spoken by artists should be transcribed.

- Improvised scatting (jazz singing using non-word sounds) is considered instrumental content, and should not be transcribed. (e.g. "Ashoobie-woobie-ska-ba-doop-e-doop")
- Non-lyrical, or "Harmonious Non-Word Vocal Sounds," should be transcribed.

Harmonious Examples

Ooh (sounds like "ooo")

Ah (sounds like "ahh")

Oh (sounds like "O")

Whoa ("What's new pussycat, whoa-whoa-whoa-oh")

Mmm

Ha ("I'm a soul man, ha")

La (La-la-la)

Da (De, Do Do Do De, Da Da Da)

Do (De, Do Do Do, De Da Da Da)

De (De, Do Do Do **De** Da Da Da)

Stylized Examples:

Skrrt or Skrrt-Skrrt (car sound)

Burr (referring to all things "cold")

Brrr/brrrt (phone or bird or gun)

Rah/Rrrah/Grrah (interjection)

Rrr/Grrr (growl)

Woo! (interjection)

Pow!/Bow! (interjection, gun)

Shh (hushing/quiet)

Blaow! (Interjection)

Do not include computer generated sound effects in lyrics.
(Door slamming, car horn, phone ringing, etc.)

Samples, Sampled Content

Sampled content is described as sounds, voices, and instrumentation or any portion of one sound recording that is used stylistically in a separate recording or song.

Sampled content should be transcribed if it supports the lyrical content of the song. Electronic or reproduced audio that clearly adds value to the lyrical content should be transcribed.

Clean and Explicit Lyrics

'Clean' should only be used if there is an available corresponding explicit version of the track. Dropped and edited content should be represented with asterisks.

Example:

Let's get lost tonight

You could be my black Kate Moss tonight

Play secretary, I'm the boss tonight

And you don't give a f*** what they all say, right?

Awesome, the christian in Christian Dior

Damn, they don't make them like this anymore

I ask, 'cause I'm not sure

Do anybody make real **** anymore?

Common examples of clean and explicit lyric content

Explicit language heard in the audio (explicit): All explicit language must be transcribed as it is heard in the audio

Audio: "I'm the motherfucking man"

Lyrics: I'm the motherfucking man

Partially censored words (clean): If only a portion of a word has been removed from the audio, include what is audible and replace each omitted letter with an asterisk.

Audio: "I'm a f(break of silence)r"

Lyrics: I'm a f****r

Fully censored words (clean): If an entire word has been clearly edited or removed from the audio, substitute the word with four asterisks. (e.g. "I'm the **** man, y'all don't get it, do ya?")

Audio: I'm the (silence/beep) man

Lyrics: I'm the **** man

Live Versions

If the singer speaks in a live version (for example, introducing the members of the band or telling the audience to turn their phone lights on, etc.), it should be included in the lyrics as long as it doesn't overlap with the song or it doesn't take away its main flow.

Special Cases

Lyrics sung in languages different from the primary language of the song should be transcribed in the language in which they are sung, not phonetically.