

Exposing the Artist Perspective

BUILDING BLOCKS OF CONNECTION

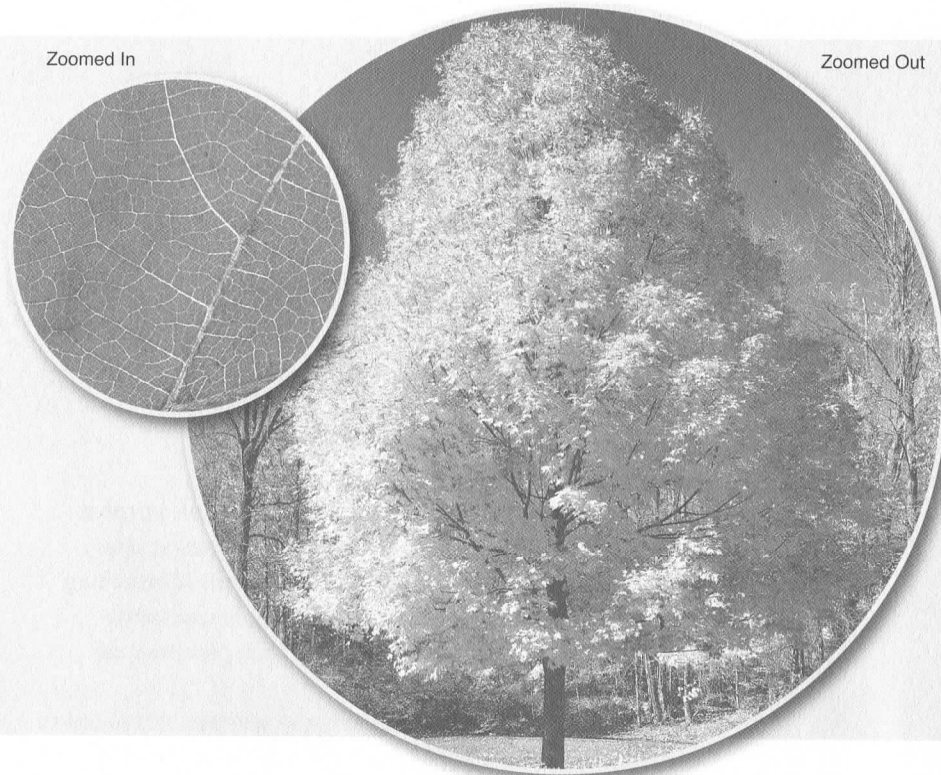
"Object writing is writing from your senses. Its whole purpose is to connect your writing to what you see, touch, taste, smell, and hear; to the way your body responds—increased breathing, heart rate, pulse, muscle tension; and, finally, to your sense of movement. It provides your songs with their pictures and experiences."

—PAT PATTISON, *WRITING BETTER LYRICS*

Sense-bound writing will be the foundation of all connection throughout this book. This explosion of thought is crucial to getting to the heart of what connects within our idea and expressing it vividly and efficiently to our listener. Daily object writing is a great way to become skilled at using sense-bound language.

For the purpose of coming up with song lyrics, I use a type of object writing called *destination writing*. Destination writing is sense-bound free writing directed at a place, a person, or a time instead of an object. The key to both destination writing and object writing is involving the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, and also movement. When those senses are involved, the writing springs to life.

A good way to visualize what we're doing when we destination-write is to imagine ourselves as a camera lens. The closer we zoom in, the more detail we see. The bulk of our writing will be spent zoomed in so close that we will see the very pores and veins of a place, person, or time.



But once in a while, we'll also zoom out and comment on the landscape and big picture. Let's imagine we're destination writing about a place, such as a busy sidewalk in New York City. Zoomed in, we might describe "handbags slapping against passing elbows and the rhythm of legs like windmills propelling bodies through a mass of driven faces . . ." But zoomed out on the same scenario, we might write, "A sidewalk full of people trying to get somewhere, all worrying about their schedules, their relationships, and scurrying for direction in life." Detail allows our listener to step into our shoes, know what we know, and feel how we feel. Too little detail and we generalize the experience, losing intensity. Too much detail and we run the risk of delving so deep into the abyss of description that we only emerge with some thoughtful poetry.

So what does destination writing actually look like on paper, and how do we tap into the depth of detail we need when we're writing? I find it helpful to list the senses at the top of the page, before I begin writing. These six keys of connection keep us focused, and our writing poised for a powerful experience.

SIX KEYS OF CONNECTION:

1. Taste
2. Touch
3. Sight
4. Sound
5. Smell
6. Movement

In the destination writing below, pay special attention to the sense each detail describes. Consider how describing an experience in terms of our senses allows us to imagine and become part of the event itself.

KEYWORD: **Airport**

I slumped down on the cool plastic chair in front of gate B14. The crack in the seat exhaled as the weight of my duffel bag sank like a barbell on top. As I looked around, the woman next to me was reading a worn romance novel, her bifocals resting on the ball of her nose, her wrists poised on her lap as she rigidly held the book upright. The man beside her glanced nervously around, patting his right shirt pocket for cigarettes and murmuring expletives as he fought with the button that kept him from his habitual relief. The small of my back ached as I shifted in my chair. I combed my hair with my fingers, feeling the futility of sifting through my bag for a brush. I hadn't showered for two days, being trapped on a bus, then a train, then another bus, until finally I was spit out in the hustle of an airport crowd, misshapen and generally disgusted with the lines at security. The intercom rang through the terminal, muffled and washed out by the buzz of travelers. My nose caught the pungent odor of a hamburger and french fries...

Each sentence in this paragraph contains critical details that provide the reader with an experience rather than just plot. At this point you may be thinking, "It sounds good, but I just can't write like that." Well, I'm going to let you in on a secret. Ready? You can. The answer lies in tiny powerhouse words that mean the difference between a bored audience and one that is hanging on your every word. Let me illustrate by rewriting the same paragraph, replacing one particular group of powerhouses called **verbs**, with a more generic substitution:

I sat down on the cool plastic chair in front of gate B14. There was a crack in the seat and the weight of my duffel bag was like a barbell on top. As I looked around, the woman next to me was reading a worn romance novel, her bifocals on the ball of her nose, her wrists on her lap as she rigidly held the book upright. The man beside her looked nervously around, touching his right shirt pocket for cigarettes and speaking expletives as he tried the button that kept him from his habitual relief. The small of my back hurt as I moved in my chair. I combed my hair with my fingers, feeling the futility of going through my bag for a brush. I hadn't showered for two days, being trapped on a bus, then a train, then another bus until finally I was let out in the hustle of an airport crowd, unhappy with the lines at security. The intercom went through the terminal, muffled and washed out by the noise of travelers. My nose smelled the pungent odor of a hamburger and french fries...

You might feel that the paragraph has lost some of its ability to cause a strong experience. The intensity of the original verbs certainly helped to garner some valuable attention. But at this point, it still has some redeeming qualities found in another tiny powerhouse, the **adjectives**. Let's experiment by deleting the adjectives and even some adverbs that color our everyday nouns:

I sat down on the chair in front of the gate. There was a crack in the seat and the weight of my duffel bag sat like a barbell on top. As I looked around, the woman next to me was reading a romance novel, her bifocals on her nose, her wrists on her lap as she held the book upright. The man beside her looked around, touching his right shirt pocket for cigarettes and speaking expletives as he tried the button that kept him from his relief. The small of my back hurt as I moved in my chair. I combed my hair with my fingers, feeling the futility of going through my bag for a brush. I hadn't showered for two days, being trapped on a bus, then a train, then another bus until finally I was out in the airport crowd, unhappy with the lines at security. The intercom went through the terminal, over the noise of travelers. My nose smelled the odor of a hamburger and french fries...

At this point, my destination writing is really suffering. It seems that all that is left are basic plot ideas. The experience caused by this paragraph is far weaker than the experience caused by the original. From this exercise, we can draw a few conclusions about what turns a plot into an experience and how much attention we can expect from our audience:

Experience is caused through verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
The way the idea is written matters *more* than the idea itself.

Ideas in themselves are neither good nor bad. They're just simply ideas. It's what's in between those ideas that is the secret to connection. Generalized detail causes generalized emotion. Specific detail causes strong, specific emotion. You decide what you want your audience to remember more—their burger and fries, or you.

EXERCISE 2.1. Getting Sense Bound

Practice using your senses to describe the destination keyword listed below. Beside each question, describe the situation in as much detail as possible.

KEYWORD: **Bus Station**

Taste Touch Sight Smell Sound Movement

On what are you standing or sitting?

What do you smell?

What do you taste?

What around you is moving?

What do you hear?

What clothes, jewelry, and hairdo are you wearing?

What are you feeling and thinking?

Look back over your descriptions from this exercise. Compare your verbs and adjectives with those listed below. If you find duplicates, you may not be getting specific enough. Try replacing those generic placeholders with some alternates and compare the results. Also, locate any nouns standing alone without the help of descriptive adjectives and give them a friend.

Generic Verbs, Adjectives, and Nouns:

Good, bad, food, walking, sitting, sad, smell, taste, hear, big, small, pants, shoes, shirt, dress, earrings, necklace, suit and tie, smile, face

EXERCISE 2.2. Generating Powerhouse Verbs

In the list below, you'll find common verbs and adjectives used in everyday conversation. To the right of each generic word is a list of specific words that can be swapped out for our one- or two-syllable sleeping pill. For help coming up with these lists, just look to your thesaurus. Every time you feel yourself reverting back to generalized action words, refer to the smorgasbord of synonyms. Try filling in your own ideas in the blanks below and complete the list.

Walk: wander, stroll, march, step, strut, shuffle

Put: lay, set, store, place, plant, fix

Said: utter, breathe, blurt, pronounce, stammer, stutter, mouth, jabber, muffle

Shine: glint, glare, sparkle, radiate, shimmer, flash, blaze, beam, flicker

Realize: discover, find, determine, unravel, interpret, unearth, disclose, recognize

Color: _____

Describe: _____

Want: _____

Think: _____

Grow: _____

Love: _____

Jump: _____

EXERCISE 2.3. Daily Destination Writing

Six minutes is all you need to begin destination writing. Reserve a notebook especially for your lyric gems, and set a timer or watch the clock so you don't run over. Using the list of places, people, and times in appendix A, let your stream of consciousness flow over the paper. Remember to post the six keys of connection somewhere that you can refer to them often while you write.

WRITING FROM THE SUBJECT

Much of our destination writing will flow from a keyword place or "where." But sometimes, you'll find that a person or time as your keyword will yield some great material. Whether you're writing from bus station, TV evangelist, or just after midnight, you'll use the same six keys of connection to tap into that great sense-bound language.

I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about my Aunt Louise. If your family is anything like mine, you'll understand that after Thanksgiving dinner, she's got her hands in the dishwasher while her husband of thirty-nine years retires his bulging belly to the living-room easy chair. Now, let's say my Aunt Louise is the keyword that sparks my next destination writing. There are a few ways I can approach this subject, so I'll just start from the shoes of Aunt Louise:

KEYWORD: Aunt Louise

I gazed down at my dry, rough fingers swishing in the murky, lukewarm dishwasher. They weren't attractive anymore, I thought. The hands of a working girl. A thin film of grease floated over the surface of the water as tiny soapsuds popped and dissipated into nothingness. The drain acted like a funnel, sucking small doses of the particled water with a wheezy slurring sound. I smiled as the laughter from the living room drifted under the door into the kitchen. Family meant everything to me, the kids, the grandkids, the exes, and the in-laws. To take care of them was my joy in life.

We can see the powerhouses at work with specific verbs and adjectives like swishing, wheezy, slurring, and popped. Those details allow our listener to experience this event rather than just watch it from a distance. But there is something else at work here. You may have noticed that instead of writing about Aunt Louise, I became Aunt Louise. Using "I" instead of "she" provided an intimacy that may not have otherwise occurred. This is called first person point of view. When destination writing from "who," it is often helpful to write from first person point of view, assuming the role of the main character of the song.

When destination writing from "who," it is helpful to assume the role of the main character of the song.

That way, the details have the opportunity to become as intimate as possible and the experience as authentic as it can be. Later on, we can change our point of view, if we can't see how Aunt Louise would make the top-ten list for our next record.

But there is another way to write in first person without taking on the role of Aunt Louise. I could write from the position of an outsider. Maybe I'm a relative, a friend, a lost love, or even a stranger passing by her kitchen window. Whoever I am, I'm still writing with "I." The details are given stronger purpose and the emotions made more intense because of my intimate relationship to the story. Distancing myself from my main character risks weakening the intensity of the emotion I am able to feel. This doesn't mean that only songs written in first person point of view succeed in relating strong experiences. But what we're trying to do in this stage of our writing is become intimately acquainted with our story. If we're not specific with what emotion we're trying to evoke, the feeling the audience experiences will also be unspecific. Later on, we can play with perspective, or use Aunt Louise only as a metaphor and a means for conveying our ultimate chorus message.

Let's use the same keyword, only this time, take on the role of an outsider:

KEYWORD: Aunt Louise

Her hands delicately drew the tattered washcloth over the pan, dunking the griddle halfway into the dishwasher before drawing it up again and inspecting what was left of the grease. Wisps of hair fell over her eyes and she brushed them away behind her ears. I thought I could hear her humming, and out of the corner of my eye I saw her hips sway a little. As I cleared the rest of the dishes from the table, I thought about how many Thanksgivings we'd shared at her house. Even when things weren't great at my

own home, she always managed to make this feel like the place I belonged and the family that couldn't live without me.

The description is just as intimate and the connection just as believable, but my role has simply moved outside of Aunt Louise.

Let's say I'd like to write a song to go along with that fantastic video collage your cousin Hernando had been whipping up for your aunt and uncle's fiftieth wedding anniversary. The experience I want to create is one of nostalgia and respect. Instead of acting as a main character in the song, I'd like to focus the tune around the happy couple.

KEYWORD: Aunt Louise

She swished her hands in the murky dishwater and felt for the ratted green sponge she used to scrub the dried gravy from the griddle. From the living room floated a hefty chuckle from the gut of her husband of more years than she could remember. She smiled to herself, as the drone of the TV filled the house with a warmth and glow that surrounded them for nearly all their married life. It wasn't always so easy. She examined her fingernails, soft and opaque as if she had rubbed her hands in chalk dust. The smell of lemon and chlorine drifted from the dishwasher and she could almost taste the dry heat escaping from the rinse cycle into the air. She drew tap water from the kitchen sink and lit the gas under the teapot. It sparked and hissed as droplets dripped from the bottom edge of the ceramic pot down into the elements...

When writing from "who," it helps to imagine an action being performed. For example, "middle-aged woman" might not give you many ideas. But, "middle-aged woman painting in the nude" would certainly arouse some questions. Adding an action helps us to get more specific with our details.

Different roles yield different details. In all roles, the details we choose to include are the result of the intimate portrayal of the expe-

rience. Writing from "who" as well as "where" can lead to song ideas we never imagined we had. And who doesn't want more ideas?

WRITING FROM "WHEN"

There is one more type of keyword we can use as the topic for our destination writing. We can use a time or "when" to spark specific details and content. Whether or not we're aware of it, "when" always plays a role in our destination writing. In the case of "airport," "when" was defined as a moment probably no longer than a minute while waiting and watching others around me. For Aunt Louise, "when" was after dinner while doing dishes. The interesting thing about "when" is that the shorter the time that passes, the more specific the details we can provide. Conversely, the longer the span of time, the more generalized the details end up being. Remember that connection with our audience depends on our ability to cause an experience. Generalizations do very little to grab and hold attention, so I'll say it again:

The narrower the time frame, the more specific the detail.

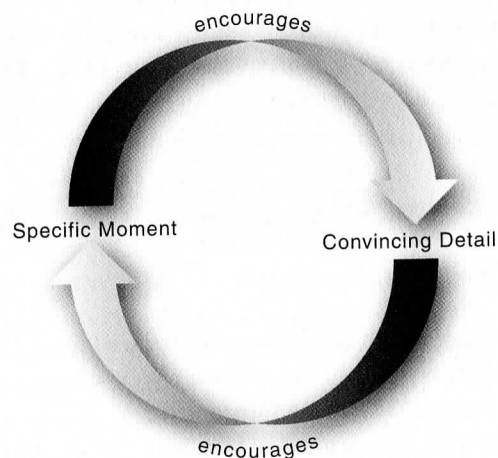
Imagine you and I meet face to face for the first time. After you introduce yourself, you politely ask how I am. Now, deep down, I know that it's simply a pleasantry, and you're not really interested in hearing about my dog barking at 3 A.M., the hot water heater that always seems to provide only enough water for my upstairs neighbor to take a long relaxing dip, and the shirt I intended on wearing this morning tossed in a heap in the dirty laundry. No, I'd probably just say, "Fine, thank you, and you?" The point is, to truly expect you to understand and experience how I was feeling, I'd have to go into greater detail. Grazing the surface of those events forces you to stay on the outside of my experience.

Now, let's say we knew each other very well, and you could sense that I was unusually upset. Instead of bombarding you with the highlights of my whole night, I'd choose a moment that captures the true frustration I experienced:

"I can't concentrate and my thoughts are scattered, now that my new puppy responds to every thump and twitter outside my bedroom walls. When I glanced at the clock last night, it was just after 3 A.M. My bed sheets were rumpled from his claws shuffling the cotton into a thick ball before he'd thrust his nose underneath and snort. Then he'd perk his ears and tail straight out like a dart, and catapult off the bed. In Stevie Wonder style, he'd sway his head side to side and bark aimlessly up towards the window."

At this point, I have given you enough detail that you could relate to and imagine my frustration. That experience causes connection in a way that grazing the surface of more numerous events never could.

We can think of time and detail as a cycle, each one feeding the other. The more specific the time, the more convincing the detail. In other words, the more details, the less time that passes.



When we talk about the amount of time that passes, we're not talking about the plot of the whole song. Many effective songs describe events that take place from childhood to adulthood, or before a relationship to after the relationship has ended. What we're interested in is identifying what happens within a single song section. Those details are the fruits of our destination writing. They are the result of a specific time, person, or place.



LISTENING SUGGESTIONS

Sting, "Stolen Car (Take Me Dancing)"

Joni Mitchell, "A Case of You"

Melissa Etheridge, "All American Girl"

Bob Dylan, "Big Yellow Taxi"

Chapter Summary

1. Destination writing is stream-of-consciousness writing involving the senses and directed around a keyword place, person, or time.
2. The six keys of connection are taste, touch, sight, smell, sound, and movement.
3. Experience is conveyed through verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
4. *How* we write matters far more than *what* we write.
5. The shorter the time that passes, the more convincing the detail. The longer the time that passes, the more generalized and less convincing the detail.
6. What experience do you want to cause for your listener?

CHAPTER 3

Two Types of
Detail

HIDDEN CLUES OF DESTINATION WRITING

Now that you've introduced daily destination writing into your creative process, let's explore how we can use these bursts of detail to compose song lyrics. Reading back over the first destination writing on "airport," we can categorize each phrase of our writing into two different types of detail. This categorization will help to organize the subject matter and recombine it into song form.

There are two types of detail: external and internal. **External detail** describes the actions or objects surrounding the main character of the song. The detail is concrete and often provokes an image in the mind of our listener. **Internal detail** describes the thoughts and emotions within the main character of the song. The detail is abstract, sometimes metaphorical, and does not provoke an image in the mind of our listener.

External Detail

- Actions and objects surrounding the main character
- Concrete
- Provokes an image

Internal Detail

- Thoughts and emotions within the main character
- Abstract
- Does not provoke an image
- Often metaphorical

To better understand these two types of detail, let's refer to the "Airport" destination writing. Each sentence is made up of phrases. Phrases can be two or more words long and will often consist of an adjective and noun, an adverb and noun, or a verb and noun. Now

don't worry, you won't need to have an in-depth study of grammar to determine the different types of detail. All you need to be able to do is identify and isolate those groups of words that create these phrases.

Phrase = Noun + Adjective/Adverb/Verb

Sometimes a useful detail will only be one word—a specific noun or verb that helps to describe the mood and action of the surrounding detail. In the paragraph below, I've underlined potentially useful phrases and words in my destination writing on "Airport."

KEYWORD: **Airport**

I slumped down on the cool plastic chair in front of gate B14. The crack in the seat exhaled as the weight of my duffel bag sank like a barbell on top. As I looked around, the woman next to me was reading a worn romance novel, her bifocals resting on the ball of her nose, her wrists resting on her lap as she rigidly held the book upright. The man beside her glanced nervously around, patting his right shirt pocket for cigarettes and murmuring expletives as he fought with the button that kept him from his habitual relief. The small of my back ached as I shifted in my chair. I combed my hair with my fingers, feeling the futility of sifting through my bag for a brush. I hadn't showered for two days, being trapped on a bus, then a train, then another bus until finally being spit out in the hustle of an airport crowd, misshapen and generally disgusted with the lines at security. The intercom rang through the terminal, muffled and washed out by the buzz of travelers. My nose caught the pungent odor of a hamburger and french fries...

Notice that I underlined single words and groups of words, avoiding conjunctions and prepositions that connected phrases to each other. (For a list of prepositions and conjunctions, refer to appendix B.) My goal here is to grab only the essence of the phrase, retaining my original idea in the smallest grouping possible. In later steps, you'll see how this streamlines the process, eliminating clutter while allowing more flexibility when recombining the phrases into lyrical lines.

You may also notice that there are a few phrases that I have not underlined. "As I looked around," "that kept him from his habitual relief," "generally disgusted," and "then another bus" are phrases I have intentionally left blank. The reason is that the essence of those phrases is simply commentary. They are evaluations made by the main character, myself, about the events happening around me. They express thoughts or emotions and are therefore internal details. As you may have suspected, the underlined phrases are external details. They describe the actions and objects surrounding the main character and evoke an image instead of a thought or feeling. When determining if a phrase is external or internal, it is sometimes helpful to hold it against these two discerning questions:

Does the phrase describe what's going on around the main character?

If so, then the detail is external.

Does the phrase describe what's going on within the heart or mind of the main character?

If so, then the detail is internal.

Without the help of external details, internal details lie flat and remain two-dimensional. We saw the effects of that in chapter 1 with "Baby, when you left, it hurt so bad." As lyrics, these lines result in bored, fidgeting audiences who don't remember our songs

or us. But when we precede those internal detail lines with external detail, the thoughts and emotions come alive like a stained glass window in a burst of sunlight.

Now that we have identified the two types of detail within the destination writing, we can list them in two columns to get an overview of their combination potential.

Very simply, we'll transfer the phrases exactly as we've underlined them into an External column on the left and an Internal column on the right:

External

Slumped down	Airport crowd
Cool plastic chair	Misshapen
Gate B14	Wrists poised
Crack	Lap
Seat exhaled	Rigidly held the book
Weight	upright
Duffel bag	Man beside her
Glanced nervously	Lines at security
Patting	Intercom rang
Right shirt pocket	Terminal
Cigarettes	Muffled and washed
Murmuring expletives	out
Fought with the	Buzz of travelers
button	Nose
Small of my back	Pungent odor
Ached	Hamburger and
Shifted in my chair	french fries
Combed my hair	Fingers
Spit out	Sifting through my
Hustle	bag
Ball of her nose	Brush
Woman next to me	Trapped on a bus
Sank like a barbell	Train
	Worn romance novel
	Bifocals resting

Internal

Kept him from his
habitual relief
I hadn't showered for
two days
Generally disgusted
Then another bus

Sometimes, external detail can become internal, as it is lifted out of the destination-writing paragraph. This happens when the phrase has been cut too drastically and the essence of the meaning is distilled. An example of this is "trapped." I can either move the word into the Internal column and consider it a feeling or thought, or I can add back in the rest of the phrase "on a bus" to complete the image and leave it in the External column.

When you first begin destination writing, you may find you have a longer internal detail list than external detail list. But with practice and remembering to stay focused on those six keys of connection, you'll begin to throw more weight on the external column.

If you find you're having difficulty discerning whether a phrase is external or internal, don't lose heart. Refer back to the two discerning questions, and then ask yourself whether the phrase produces a strong image, or if it is more abstract or metaphorical. A phrase here and there that slips through the cracks and resides in the wrong column won't mean sudden death to your lyric. As we continue the process, your ability to identify the usefulness of each phrase will sharpen.

With our destination writing separated into two columns, we can now see the external and internal details clearly. Here's where the magic happens. Listen carefully, because this can get so exciting that you'll find yourself foregoing necessary chores and hygiene habits like cleaning out last month's leftovers from the fridge, feeding Rover, and maybe even flossing.

The external column is the majority of material that will become the verse content. It is our immediate tool for connection and the secret weapon in banishing boredom from our audiences.

The internal column is the material that will aerate the verse and provide purpose. It jumps to the heart of the matter, summing up why the song is worth writing and listening to.

The external column will become the verse content.

The internal column will aerate the verse while providing purpose.

Using these guidelines as the compass for our song direction will help us to write a section that sounds as riveting and also as natural as possible. So how do we know what sounds natural and

what doesn't? Well, first we can use our ears and instincts. But we also have another tool called "weight." No, don't put down that jelly doughnut. When we talk about the weight of a section, we're talking about the amount of essential information that is present and the pace at which that essential information is relayed.

Weight = Essential Information + Pace

Read aloud the two verses below. Notice how the first section is laden with detail, while the second is light and more generic.

Verse:

*The mud from our shoes
left prints on the floor
and the rain on the stoop
spilled in as it poured
the shingles were flapping
the windows were clapping
but we stayed inside safe and warm*

Verse:

*Baby we could say what we feel
and do what we say
remember why we're together
and look forward to forever
then nothing can stop us
nothing can tear us apart
with these two hearts*

A heavily weighted section requires intense concentration for the listener to process. A lightly weighted section requires little concentration and therefore receives little concentration to process. Both extremes can result in a loss of connection. A balance between these two extremes is the most desirable weight for a section. Sometimes, we can feel instinctually that the scales are dipping to one side or the other. Those instincts are a valuable gauge, and with the tools of the next chapter, we'll learn how to not only identify heavy or flimsy areas but also fix them.

EXERCISE 3.1. Distinguishing Detail

Circle E for external or I for internal next to each phrase below. When in doubt, apply the two discerning questions presented in this chapter.

1. E or I Consider me gone
2. E or I Crisp, brittle oak leaves
3. E or I Only the lonely
4. E or I Coarsely woven, tattered quilt
5. E or I Thin black eraser crumbs
6. E or I There's no one else like you
7. E or I I thought about how much I missed you
8. E or I The door stuck slightly
9. E or I Cold rush of air-conditioned air
10. E or I But you're not
11. E or I Draperies flecked with grease
12. E or I This would all be bearable if you were here

Answers: 1. I 2. E 3. I 4. E 5. E 6. I 7. I 8. E 9. E 10. I 11. E 12. I

EXERCISE 3.2. Applying Identities

Practice identifying external and internal phrases in your own destination writing. Underline the external details, excluding prepositions and conjunctions. Leave internal phrases blank.

EXERCISE 3.3. Creating Columns

Practice listing your external and internal phrases in their appropriate columns. Take a clean sheet of paper, and draw a line down the center, marking the left column "external" and the right column "internal." Transfer your underlined and blank phrases from exercise 3.2 onto the new sheet.



LISTENING SUGGESTIONS

Counting Crows, "Mr. Jones"

The Eagles, "Hotel California"

Tori Amos, "Winter"

Faith Hill, "On a Bus to St. Cloud"

Chapter Summary

1. The two types of detail are **external** and **internal**.
2. External detail describes what's going on around the main character. Internal details describe the thoughts and feelings of the main character himself.
3. A phrase is a noun plus an adjective, adverb, or verb.
4. External details make up the bulk of verse content. Internal details aerate the verse while providing purpose.
5. Weight determines the amount of concentration our listener needs to process the song detail.

CHAPTER 4

Rhyme

ROLLER-SKATING FOR MATCHES

In the sixth grade, I took a few field trips to the local roller-skating rink with my brother and a few others whose moms remembered to turn in the consent forms. Smashed peanut-butter sandwiches and a token bag of carrots in our knapsacks, we'd skate until just past dinnertime before loading the bus to ride back home. It was indeed a special treat. But I also remember the terrifying entrance of a slow song pumping through the tinny speakers over the rink. That usually meant there was a humiliating game of snowball ahead, where pubescent boys would line up on one side of the oval and pretend the whole thing was silly, and blushing girls would rest their arms against the opposite wall wondering if and when they would be plucked from the row to dance. Well, I'll spare you the description of the horror on the faces of those left standing along the walls, but I will use the whole ordeal as a metaphor for rhyme.

Imagine our columned phrases represented the girls and boys lined up alongside their respective walls. Our job is to find rhyme pairs for our lyrics both between and within these columns. Let's use the columns from "Airport" and see some of the rhymes that exist.