

Songwriting Workshop - Observation Exercises

Observation is an important skill for songwriters. Learning and practicing the process of collecting details doesn't always come naturally to people, but it's something that can be developed over time with practice. The following exercises are designed to help you consider new ways of sensing the world around you and considering it in a new way.

1.) Spend five minutes looking and writing ten things you notice **right now** from where you are. Not ideas about those things, just observations about the place you are in. Make sure to use all of your senses, smell, taste, feeling, sound, & sight.

Examples:

The coffee stain on the piano.

The kid swinging one leg.

The fluorescent light buzzes.

Someone laughs too loudly.

The old man folds his receipt twice.

Then choose ONE.

Write for ten minutes.

This teaches that songs don't begin with inspiration.

They begin with attention.

2.) Observe a photo for four minutes. Put the photo away. For the next five minutes write a description of what you saw. For ten minutes, write about the observation you found most unusual in your description.

3.) Look at a single piece of artwork featuring a busy scene. List ten detailed nouns. Now list ten detailed verbs that you see. Now ten detailed adjectives. Now ten detailed adverbs.

4.) Make a list of thirty tiny things that you see. Concentrate on the smallest details you can observe. Keep trying to find smaller and smaller details as you go.

5.) Observe someone nearby and ask yourself these questions.

What do you know about them?

What are you guessing about them?

What questions would you ask them?

It's easy to confuse observation with assumption, and important to know the difference.

example:

Know

- They're wearing hiking boots.
- They have a wedding ring.
- They're carrying a violin case.

Guess

- They're a musician.
- They're married.
- They drove here.

Question

- Why do they play?
- Where are they going?
- Who taught them?

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