

DEMO PRE-RECORDING CHECKLIST

In Part 1 of this sheet, you'll find instructions on what to prepare before sending us your information, including proper formats, file types, and other relevant details. The second part is a checklist of what to send, on the last page for convenient printing.

PART 1 - GETTING PREPARED

Have You Registered Your Song for Copyright?

If you've written both the lyrics and the vocal melody, it's always wise to copyright your song before sharing it with anyone.

If you've only written the lyrics:

You have two main options to complete your song and secure copyright:

a) Collaborate with a co-writer.

You can team up with someone to create the melody and then register the copyright jointly. You'll share ownership of the completed song.

b) Hire a melody writer as a work-for-hire.

This means paying someone to create the melody specifically for you. Once the work is finished and payment is made, you own the whole song. The hired writer retains no rights.

Tip: In copyright law, only the lyrics and melody are protected. Chord progressions alone are not copyrightable—they're considered supportive elements derived from the melody.

We offer work-for-hire lyric and melody writing services. See our Services page for pricing.

2. Do You Have Your Lyric Sheet Ready?

Make sure your lyric sheet is formatted correctly and includes clear sections (verse, chorus, bridge, etc.).

Please save your file as **.rtf** (preferred), or use one of the following accepted formats: **.doc, .docx, or .txt**.

Note: Please avoid sending PDF files—they're harder for us to work with.

Help your vocalist by formatting your lyrics the Nashville studio way: Please read our article: [Lyric sheet preparation](#).

↓📄 Download our [Lyric Sheet Preparation Guide](#) PDF for additional info.

3. Do You Have a Basic Recording of Your Song's Melody?

To produce your demo, we need to hear your melody—even if it's rough around the edges.

- **Phone voice memos are perfectly fine.** Just sing your lyrics and melody clearly.
- **If you play an instrument,** a simple vocal + chords recording works great. A chord chart or sheet music is helpful but not required.
- **If you don't sing or play,** no problem—send your lyrics, and we can quote you for melody writing services.

Let us know what you have—we'll guide you from there.

4. Do You Have Chords for Your Song? (*Optional*)

Chords aren't required, but they're helpful if you have them.

- **If you play an instrument,** feel free to jot down basic chords on a chart, tab, or manuscript paper.
- **If you don't,** someone else can write chords to fit your melody. *(This doesn't change ownership—chords are considered extensions of the melody and aren't copyrightable.)*
- **No chords? No problem.** We're happy to create the chords for you—permit us to shape them around your melody

5. Have You Finalized the Song's Structure?

(Verse, chorus, bridge, etc.)

If not, no worries—we can help. As producers, we're happy to offer arrangement suggestions if we believe they'll enhance the song's strength. But don't worry: the final decision is always yours.

6. Have You Decided Which Instruments Are Needed?

Do you need a simple guitar or piano vocal demo, or is a full band the best way to bring your song to life? It all depends on your goals. Here are a few quick tips:

- **Ballads:** A piano/vocal or guitar/vocal may be all you need to show off the emotion and quality.
- **Lyrical rich or story-driven songs:** Simple instrumentation can help keep the focus on the words.
- **Groove-driven or uptempo songs:** These typically require a full band to bring out the energy and rhythm.
- **Artist pitches:** If you're promoting yourself as an artist, your demo should reflect your sound. A radio-ready band demo production may be essential to showcase your unique style.

Still unsure? No problem. We'll offer guidance on which instruments will best serve your song. We only recommend what we feel is necessary, because sometimes, less truly is more. But the final call is always yours.

7. Have You Identified the Vocal and/or Musical Style for Your Song?

While your genre may be obvious, it's always helpful to include a short note about your creative vision, especially if you're sending only a melody or a minimal track.

Here's what you can share:

What kind of demo are you aiming for? (One-instrument, full band, or radio-ready?)

What's the style or subgenre? (Traditional country, modern radio, pop-country, Americana, folk hybrid?)

Any reference songs or artists? For example: *"In the style of ARTIST NAME, similar to their song 'SONG TITLE.'"*

Groove or tempo notes?

Specific instruments you'd like included? (Especially if requesting extras, like pedal steel or fiddle.)

The more context you give us, the better we can capture your vision. And if you're not sure yet, no problem. We're happy to help shape the sound with you.

8. Have You Determined Your Recording Budget?

This is the final crucial step before moving forward. If you're unsure what you'll need, we're happy to provide a free consultation to help you prioritize services that fit your budget and goals.

Here are a few things to consider:

Are you pitching to both male and female artists?

Depending on the melody range, you might need two versions—one with a male vocal and one with a female vocal. While female artists can often “hear through” a male vocal, the reverse is less common. If budget limits you to one version, a male vocal is usually a safer bet for country pitches.

Do you need a full-band sound but only have funds for a guitar or piano vocal?

If your song truly needs a band, it may be wise to wait. We'll always be honest with you about whether it's time to move forward or hold off.

Can you add extras later?

If your budget is tight now, you can record a piano or guitar vocal version and return later to add more instruments (such as drums, bass, and electric guitar), or create a basic band demo that can be developed into a radio-ready production later. Please note that overdubs will require remixing your song and will add to the final cost.

We'll work with you to help get the most out of your budget—honestly, creatively, and with your song's success in mind.



CHECKLIST - SENDING WHAT WE NEED

❑ 1. Lyric Sheet

Follow the formatting guidelines in our [Lyric Sheet Preparation Guide]. Submit as an email attachment in .rtf (preferred), or .doc, .docx, or .txt format. Please do not send lyrics as PDF files.

❑ 2. Melody

Send a basic vocal recording (such as an .mp3 voice memo) or a written lead sheet in .pdf format.

❑ 3. Chords (Optional)

If available, send a chord sheet in .rtf, .doc, or .pdf format.

❑ 4. Instructions & Preferences

Tell us about your song's arrangement, desired instruments, genre, tempo, and any reference artists or tracks. Please send your notes via email as an attachment.

❑ 5. Lyric-Only Writers

If you're hiring us to write the melody and chords, send your lyrics and any creative preferences as described above.

songwriterdemoservice.com, a division of Music City Recording.