The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Composition

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Write the songs that make the whole world sing.

A step-by-step guide to writing music, this book shows musicians how to compose simple chord progressions and melodies, and leads them through more advanced compositional techniques and musical forms. Designed for composers of all types of music, it includes instruction on composing stand-alone melodies, using different scales and modes, themes and variations, orchestration, and composing for film, theater, and videogames.

-Perfect complement to *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Theory* and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Songwriting*

-Includes a comprehensive glossary of musical terms, as well as an appendix of various computer-based composition tools

-Easy-to-use oversize trim

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Composition Details

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From Reader Review The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Composition for online ebook

Sarah says

This was a great basic introduction to the techniques of music composition, as well as a good review of some basic music theory which I once knew. I wish there had been more on how to develop a short melody into a full-length piece, however.

Troy Soos says

The content of this book merits five stars; I'm deducting one from the overall rating because of the unfortunate title. Before starting this book, a reader/musician should have some basic knowledge of music theory (at least scales and chords) as well as an ability to pick out notes on a keyboard. With that foundation, this book can make the mysteries of music composition understandable and intriguing. Both chord-first and melody-first approaches are presented. Chord leading and chord progressions are explained, with common examples from different styles of music. The author shows how to organize motifs and phrases into complete and increasingly complex compositions. The exercises at the end of each chapter are optional, and I skipped some advanced material which just didn't interest me (e.g. atonal and experimental music). I definitely recommend this book for anyone who would like to learn the basics of composing music.

Elisa says

Even though I find the name off-putting (as I don't see that music theory has to be difficult to teach or understand), I really liked the casual way of explaining all the relevant concepts in music composition. He goes over all the fundamentals of the way music is put together, and all the possible rules you can use if you want to make it easier for yourself in the beginning. Of course he's careful to mention that once you know all the rules of harmony, you can discard them at your leisure as there is no right way to compose music. Anything that sounds good to your ear is a worthy piece of music.

DW says

This book is not really for "complete idiots" because it requires you to know at least rudimentary music theory. But overall it seems like a good overview of techniques to use. I recently took a composition class where the teacher taught us simply "make up a melody, vary it, plop the variations on top of each other." That can make interesting music, but I feel like most music is not put together that way. I appreciated seeing the basics of working with harmony/melody. It was also good that it touched on topics that I would never seek out on my own, like serial music or microtonal music. Now at least I know what they are.

One thing I thought was weird was that the author said that everybody uses the natural minor ... my theory teacher says everybody uses the harmonic minor because everybody raises the leading tone, which seems more correct to me. And that he calls out *only* the French horn as a difficult instrument to play. I also

thought that in the orchestration chapter, it would be more helpful if he listed the ranges that an amateur would be expected to play comfortably on the instrument. Clearly, anybody reading this book is not writing for professional musicians, and it's much easier to look up the absolute range of an instrument than the range of the average amateur.

Also, this book suggests substituting chords by extending the chord or using one that is a third up or down (so that it shares two notes with the original). I suppose that's a good starting place if you don't know theory, but really it makes more sense to substitute chords which have the same function (like tonic or predominant). But then you have to get into a bunch of theory ... so I guess it makes sense. Anyway, a lot of helpful information, just seemed a little uneven.

Charles says

An excellent tutorial/reference on composing melodies to fit chords, adding chords to melodies and understanding the differet chords available to the composer and performer.