



## Syllabus

**Unit 1 - Introduction and Overview** -- I've written this condensed Crash Course in Musical Theatre writing for you to bash through, to see what's ahead, and for you to begin working with some of the basic building blocks right away. We'll cover the process of creating a musical, from beginning to end, including outlining, song spotting, lyric writing, formatting, and approaching producers.

**Unit 2 - The Idea** -- You have an idea for a fantastic musical. But...how do you know whether it IS any good? Is there an audience for it? Are you writing it for the commercial marketplace, or do you intend it to be a piece of art? Here's some straight talk on how to evaluate your musical before you even begin.

**Unit 3 - Outlining** -- Outlines aren't a lot of fun to write; they're even less fun to read. They're tedious, dry, and don't convey any sense of drama, comedy, musicality, or most everything which makes a musical worth watching. But what an outline can do is to allow you to think through various structures or approaches in a handful of pages, rather than writing the whole musical before realizing you're telling the wrong part of the story, or your focus is off.

**Unit 4 - The Beat Sheet, and 20 Questions to ask your outline** -- The "beat sheet" is a trick of the trade...a quick way to get your outline going and to start filling in the details. We also cover twenty questions to ask of your outline, to make sure you're ready to start writing the script.

**Unit 5 - The Rough Draft** -- The goal of the rough draft is simply accomplish your outline. Your rough draft becomes a blueprint for your collaborative team to use when

you move on to song spotting. Here's the good news about the rough draft: it's a very temporary document, and shouldn't take you more than a few days to write. Seriously

**Unit 6 - Song Spotting: the purpose of songs in a musical** -- Song Spotting is the act of creating possibilities for songs that might fulfill the dramatic needs of a musical scene. When you have a song spotting session, you're just spitballing ideas. Spotting a song should happen after you have completed the first draft of the book, at which point you have a better sense of characters, diction, action, plot, etc.

**Unit 7 - Progressions** -- A progression is an underlying organization which gives shape or movement to the idea of a lyric. That is, the lyric with a progression will take the listener on a journey from the beginning of the song through some action, some change, some drama, some conflict, some inflammation of conflicts, and resolution, and deliver them to an end that's measurably different from the beginning. Here's a look at five tried-and-true progressions: Problem-solution; Viewpoint; Calendar; Pronoun; and Geography

**Unit 8 - Rhyme** -- A highly-opinionated lecture on the importance and power of rhyme in musical theatre; when to use rhyme, and when not.

**Unit 9 - Prosody** -- Prosody refers to the alignment of the stress of music with the syllables of the lyrics. The study of prosody is quite complex and nuanced but vitally important to musical theater, which can take years to master. Here's a quick crash course in prosody.

**Unit 10 - Formatting overview** -- Introduction to formatting of musicals; overview of integration of book, lyric, music. Quick look at margins, indentations, and page numbering.

**Unit 11 - Formatting the score** -- Details for composers about formatting a professional musical theatre score. Chord symbols, tempo markings, cues, dialogue, etc.

**Unit 12 - Formatting book and lyrics** -- Details for book writers and lyricists about formatting a professional musical theatre book. Dialogue, stage directions, lyrics, character names, etc. Preparing a script for rehearsal.

**Unit 13 - Formatting tips, tricks, and anomalies** -- Details and special circumstances you might encounter when formatting a musical, getting it ready for rehearsal.

**Unit 14 - Approaching Producers** -- You're eager to start telling producers about your show, and putting on backers' auditions, and perhaps even investing your own money. Here's some hard talk about when and how to approach producers.