



# How to Capture a Feeling: Part One

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Have you ever been anxious, elated, scared, lonely, tired, overwhelmed, thrilled, motivated? Ever feel like you are having deep thoughts and have nowhere to put them? Have you ever wanted to translate this into music?

Throughout history all kinds of composers have put themselves and their feelings into their music. Anxiety, depression, elation, rage (Beethoven even wrote a short piano piece called “Rage Over a Lost Penny” and who can’t relate to that?) and of course love

Now every composer will do this differently — as should you— but let’s take a few concrete steps to plan your piece.

## Step One: What is the feeling?

Try writing in a journal. Or try talking to a friend or family member. Or maybe just making a list of words helps.

I often like to get specific because it can help later in the composition. So I sketch out the following:

“I am upset because I am not able to leave the house and it is a combination of boring, frustrating, and (oddly enough) relaxing...maybe too relaxing.”

That should be enough...

### Step Two: Some Decisions

Now that I have the feeling captured (and like all feelings, it can sure change) the time has come to make some decisions about the piece.

- Instrumentation
- Length
- First Sound (write this out in words)
- Title (optional)

**Every composer is different and will do this in a different way.** That is important to remember throughout, that and the fact that you can change your mind at any point.

### EXAMPLE

Here are MY decisions:

Instrumentation: I would like this to be a piece for solo piano because it is something I am comfortable with and I think it has the range of expression necessary to express what I am trying to do.

Length: I think it should be 4-5 minutes long, because I think this emotion is a process and I want some space to play it out.

First Sound: The first sound I want — because I think it would symbolize the emotion effectively — is a single struck note in the middle register, and perhaps an “E” because it is the first letter of “emotion”

Title: Simply: “Stuck”

### Step Three: Write the Piece

Now comes the hard part: composing. Write. Your. Music.

As always, along the way, some pieces take you other directions. Perhaps your emotions change; perhaps you want more or different instruments, or a piece that is longer or shorter; perhaps you think the single struck note was a better idea in the abstract than in reality; perhaps you grow to think your title is a bad title and want to come up with something better.

Whatever happens, just keep going!

