

My 5-Step Approach to Creating Memorable Melodies

Now that you know a little theory, it's time to launch into the practical side of things. While melodies *can* be created by randomly plotting in notes, I find it better to use a structure. Using a structure DOES NOT mean you won't suffer from lack of inspiration or [ideas](#), or that you're restricting yourself. It means that you'll be able create a musical idea more quickly and easily.

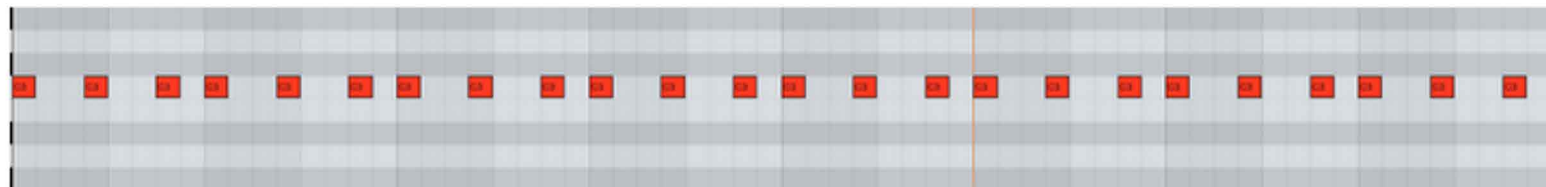
1. Choose a scale

Starting with a scale limits the amount of notes you can use straight away, so you won't waste time plotting each note by ear or hitting random keys on your keyboard. I've chosen a C Major pentatonic scale which contains C, D, E, G, and A.



2. Create a Rhythm

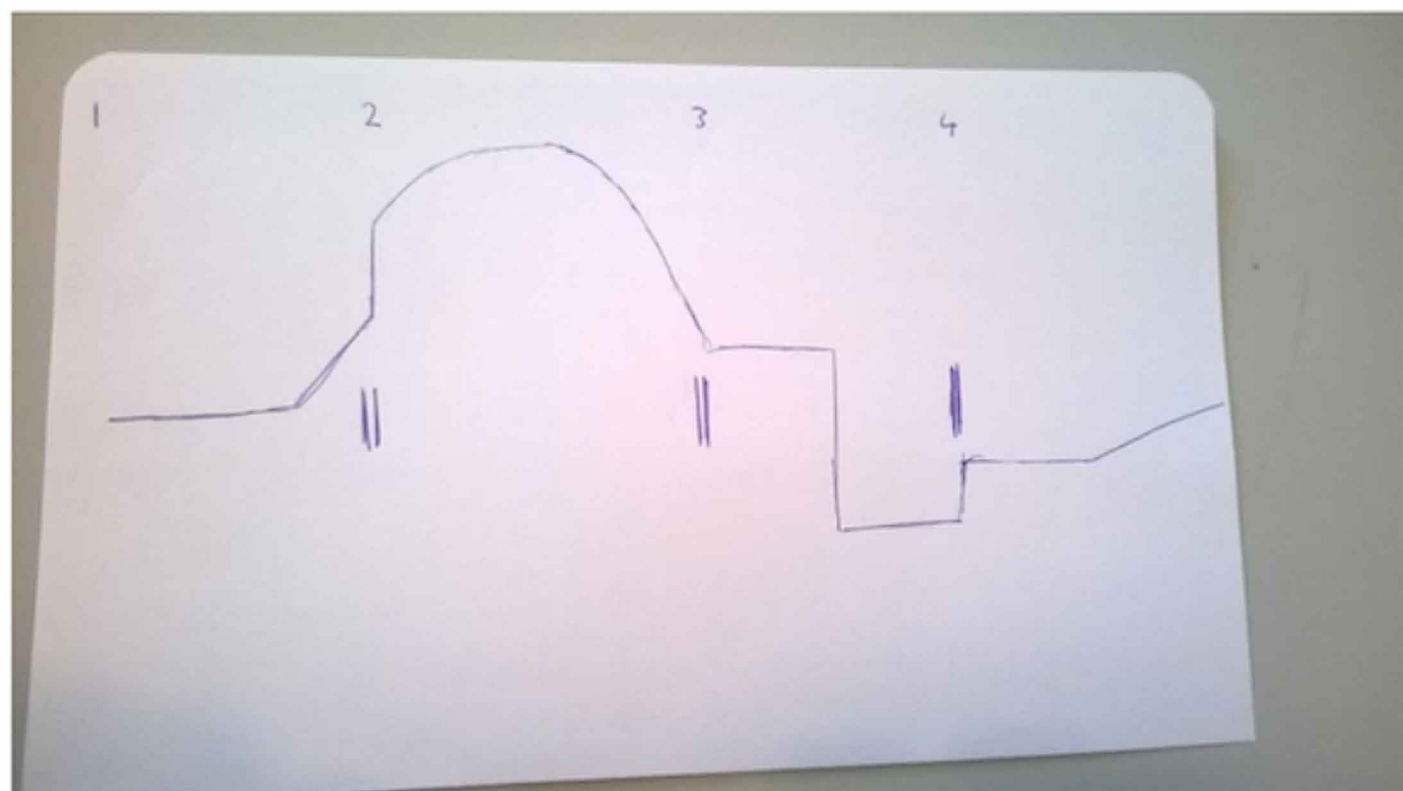
After identifying the scale you want to create your melody in, you need to come up with the rhythm for your melody. You see, melody isn't just a succession of notes. It's a *rhythmic* succession of notes. Rhythm is extremely important in melody. Don't neglect it.



Creating a simple rhythm which will be the foundation for the melody.

3. Draw a contour

Now that the rhythm is nailed, it's time to start sketching the outline of the melody. This is where you have to think! I like to draw one on paper, but you can just paint a mental image in your head if you want to save the trees.



A badly taken photo of my hand-drawn contour.

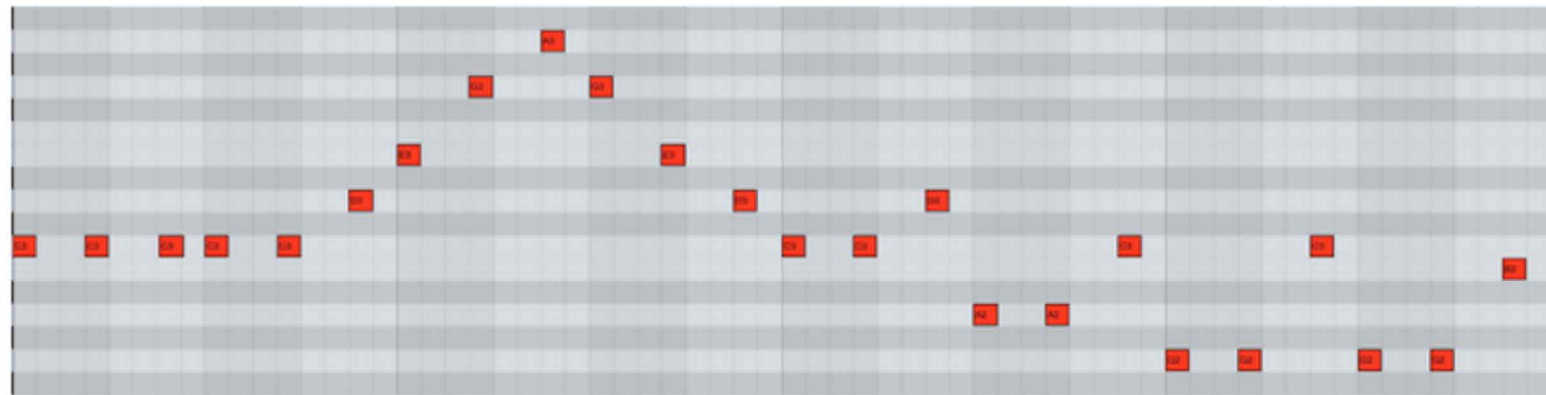
4. Choose/create a sound

Whether you want to write your melody before or after sound design is completely up to you. I prefer to create or choose a sound first as I know **having a good sound will influence my writing decisions** (certain melodies will work great with a massive trance lead, but not as well with a cheap piano sound). I created a simple pluck sound in NI's Massive.



5. Create!

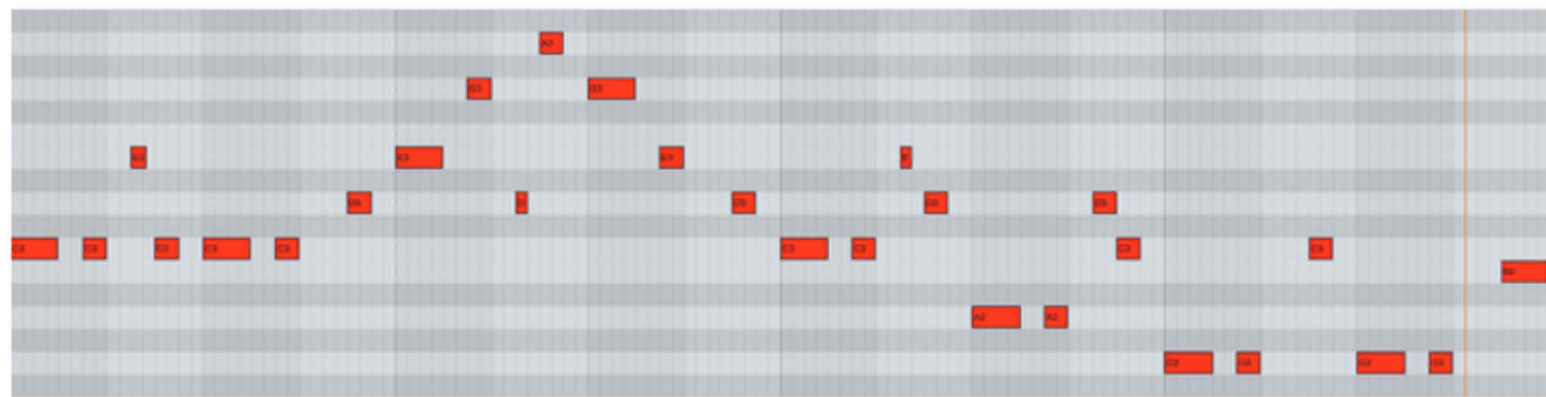
At this point it's time for you to refer back to the contour line you drew (or thought of) and change around some notes until you find something that rings with you. Don't feel like you have to follow your contour line exactly. If something sounds out of place, fix it.



Following the contour line created earlier.

Adding Flair

The melody is nice, but it isn't great. After creating something simple, you'll want to make a few adjustments to add interest and flair. Try adding extra notes and varying note length.



Varied note length and added in extra notes