

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

ACTIVITY: HIP HOP FOUNDATION CREATION

If you've been following these SCHOOL'd lessons from the beginning, you know we love writing about how Hip Hop culture began because its origin story demonstrates that it was created by ordinary people who had the desire to make their own urban art. In today's activity, we are going to challenge you to actually create Hip Hop for yourself. We are going to focus on the foundational elements to guide you through your creation. By doing so, not only will you get to try your hand at making all of the things that make Hip Hop great, but you will have an opportunity to see what aspects call to you the most. Follow the directions under each category and, if you want to add a twist to this activity, consider linking together each thing you create under a common theme. Take your time, be creative and, most of all, have fun.

EMCEEING/RAPPING

Not all rappers are writers and not all writers are rappers. But, you won't know which one you are until you give each a try. In this portion, we started you out with the first and the fifth lines of an eight line rhyme. It's your job to fill in the rest. Remember, when writing rhymes, you do not have to limit yourself to simple end rhymes. For example, in the rap below, you might be tempted to rhyme the last word of your second line with the word "own". However, another approach would be to write "This guy came to me though he ain't knew me" where you start another rhyme within the line itself (to/knew aka internal rhyme) while still following the context of the first line. Or, you can get really intricate with your rhymes by writing something like, "Just finding my phone, don't know where it gone." Remember, words don't have to rhyme perfectly (warned/orange, aka slide rhyme), the way you pronounce them can make words rhyme that don't usually (gone/phone) and your grammar does not have to be perfect ("ain't even knew me"). Within a song, you have the freedom to play with language. Think outside of the normal rules and see what you can create.

Line 1: One day I was chillin', just mindin' my own

Line 5: That's when I knew

DEEJAYING/BEATBOXING/MUSIC PRODUCTION

You need some beats to go with your rhymes. Here are a few options ...

- 1) Come up with a beat in your mind and play around with it until you can completely make the beat with only your mouth as the instrument (aka beatboxing).
- 2) Come up with the percussion part of the beat, record it, and then come up with a melody to put over the beat. Then play the beat and hum/sing the melody over it. Certain computer and phone applications will allow you to record layers of sounds and synchronize them into a song.
- 3) Think of a song that you like and choose that beat for the background of your rhyme. For example, you may decide that the rhyme you wrote above goes really well to the instrumental from your favorite Beastie Boys song. Or, maybe you like one single 8-count of the new Wale track and you decide you just want your rhyme to go over a loop of that sample. Perhaps it's not an instrumental sample at all but a vocal sample. Whichever you choose, make sure it fits you rap.
- 4) If you play an instrument, put an instrumental together and record it. Then, try to spit your rap over that instrumental.

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GRAFFITI WRITING

Graffiti and tagging predate Deejaying, Emceeing and B-boying. Writers have been putting their tags everywhere and anywhere they could find since the 1960s. If you have a legal and safe environment to create aerosol paint-based graffiti art, we strongly encourage you to give it a try. In the meantime, creating a personal tag is something anyone can do. Typical taggers use special edged markers to give their art that quintessential Hip Hop look but you can use any writing implement you have available. Markers, pens, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, and paints can be used to create your very own tag. Most taggers write their artist name or nickname and we would suggest that is where you start, as well. If you do not have a nickname, make one up that fits your personality and style. Maybe the word is fun to draw or say, or maybe it represents some quality that you feel is important. Whichever word you choose, remember, just like all other aspects of Hip Hop culture, tagging is meant to be stylistic and eye-catching, so go big with it and aim to impress. Finally, though you may have fun getting intricate with your design here, know that tags are often meant to be done quickly, like an artistic signature. Come up with something that you can reproduce fairly easily and quickly once you have it practiced. But again, for the sake of this activity, once you have your foundational tag decided, feel free to get fancy with the extra design work.

TAG HERE

B-BOYING/FUNK STYLES/FREESTYLE HIP HOP DANCING

Now that you have a song, beat and tag, come up with your own signature dance/dance move and name it. Usually, a signature dance is pretty simple so that it can be taught and followed easily but we will leave the details up to you. It can be as easy as a Dougie or as choreographed as an Electric Slide. As for the name, many people name their signature move after themselves, but sometimes it can just be something catchy but not necessarily related to the movement like the Cabbage Patch. Make sure you can dance your move to the mini-song you created. Once you have practiced your dance and know it well, see if you can teach it to someone else.

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BONUS: FASHION DESIGN

A big part of Hip Hop has always been having a personal fashion style. Hip Hop entrepreneurs in the 1990s took that aspect of the culture to another level and started creating their own fashion lines to be sold to the public. Why should you be left out of the fashion game? Try putting together a Hip Hop inspired outfit on the person outlined here.

SHARE YOUR CREATIONS

Hip Hop was meant to be seen, yo! Rap your song for people live or record it and play it for someone. Teach people your new dance. Show off your tag. Let others have a look at your fashion design work. Once you have a chance to share your work, find ways to take it to the next level. Find some instrumentalists who can make your music come to life or put it together using computer software. Take the first few lines you wrote and add on until you have a whole song. A trip to a thrift store or fabric store may give you some of the raw materials you need to start putting your custom outfit together. You can turn your dance into a whole song worth of choreography. Or, maybe you keep your dance short but get a few friends together to record an instructional video of it and then post that video online for the whole world to learn. Start by showing your creations to family and friends and, when you feel like you are ready, start to expand that circle of people as far as you keep finding interest. That is how Hip Hop began to grow and that is how it continues to grow. You can be the next step in the evolution of the culture. Discover what you love, be proud of your art and your culture, and most importantly, as a contributing member of the Hip Hop community, never stop creating.

HIP HOP WORD OF THE WEEK

Hit me up: contact me. Hitting someone is a form of contact and while this expression isn't literal, it is playing off of that idea.

EX: "Ayo, I gotta get outta here right now but hit me up later and we'll talk more."

Song reference: "Kingdom Remix" by Common: "Nas hit me up on the phone like 'Peace, Isa' / You know you need to preach how the pyramids of Giza alone condemn Easter"

BONUS: NAME ANOTHER SONG/ARTIST THAT HAS USED THIS HHWOTW

