

SUNO DRIVER'S GUIDE

What we wish we'd had when we started
by the ROS Collective
2025

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Accessing the Guide

The complete SUNO Driver's Guide is available through the ROS Collective GitHub repository. Each chapter is provided as a separate document so readers can jump directly to what they need instead of reading straight through.

Introduction

This guide exists because SUNO is powerful, confusing, and often does something other than what you clearly asked for.

If you've ever felt like you were basically saying the right thing and still ended up with a whispery ballad, a softened groove, or a genre drift you did not request, you're not alone. Most frustration with SUNO does not come from lack of creativity or musical skill. It comes from not being shown how the system behaves when it is unsure.

This is not an official manual. It is a user-written guide, created by people who spent long nights experimenting, failing, retrying, and slowly recognizing repeatable patterns that were never clearly documented.

Our goal is simple: shorten the learning curve. We want to help you understand what SUNO does when prompts are mixed or incomplete, and how to steer it more reliably without fighting it or blaming yourself.

Preface

If you're reading this, there's a good chance SUNO has already frustrated you.

It may have turned an energetic idea into something polite, ignored a clear genre request, or looped a section until you started questioning your life choices. That experience is frustrating because it feels random, even when it isn't.

We wrote this guide after many long, caffeinated nights in the producer's chair, trying to figure out why the same problems kept happening and why nobody seemed to explain them plainly. We looked for a manual when we were novices. We didn't find one. So we made the one we wished we'd had.

This guide does not ask you to be more technical, more patient, or more reverent. It assumes you already know how music should move and sound.

The work here is about giving SUNO fewer chances to guess. If this guide saves you time, frustration, burnout, or one late-night argument with a partner who has heard the same draft one too many times, then it has done its job.

CHAPTER 1

HOW SUNO ACTUALLY WORKS (AND WHY IT CONFUSES SO MANY MUSICIANS)

If we're being honest, this guide exists because we spent a lot of late nights in the producer's chair wondering what on earth had just happened. We came to SUNO excited, curious, and — like most people — reasonably confident in our musical instincts. What followed were outputs that were almost right, but consistently off in the same strange ways. Songs softened when they shouldn't. Genres blurred. Vocals turned breathy. Energy drained out of tracks we were sure should move. None of it felt random — just stubbornly wrong in the same directions.

At first, we assumed we were doing something wrong. So we did what everyone does: we went looking for help. We read tips, watched videos, scanned forums, and tried to reverse-engineer prompts from other people's successes. What we didn't find was a clear explanation of why SUNO behaved the way it did — or how to think about it as a system rather than a muse. So we learned the hard way. Through trial, error, and more than a few slightly unhinged, caffeine-fueled nights, patterns started to emerge. The same failures kept repeating. Not randomly — predictably. Once we saw that, everything changed. This is the manual we wished we'd had when we started, offered in the hope that it saves a few late-night meltdowns, prevents some burnout, and maybe even spares a marriage or two from hearing the same whispery ballad at 2 a.m.

Here's the first thing you need to understand.

SUNO is not following your instructions. SUNO is a generative audio model. It doesn't "do what you say" in the way a tool or instrument does. Instead, it predicts what should come next based on patterns learned from a vast amount of existing music and text. That difference sounds subtle, but it explains most of the behavior people experience as stubbornness, randomness, or refusal to listen. When you write a prompt, SUNO isn't asking what you want it to do. It's asking what a song like this usually sounds like.

That distinction explains why good ideas still go wrong.

People naturally write prompts the way humans talk about music: darker, more energy, no reverb, not a ballad, indie noir. To another musician, those phrases carry meaning and taste. You know exactly what you're pointing toward when you write them. When a prompt contains vague descriptions, mixed directions, or leaves important musical details unspecified, SUNO doesn't stop and ask questions. It doesn't resolve conflicts the way a human would. It treats the prompt as incomplete input and fills in the missing pieces using its most familiar patterns.

When SUNO fills in gaps, it does not do so randomly.

If the model is unsure, it falls back on music that is safe, familiar, and easy for it to stabilize. Most often, that means soft emotional ballads. Vocals become breathy. Tempos slow. Pads and emotional synths move to the foreground. Melodies simplify and repeat. Percussion fades into the background. This happens because that musical world is extremely common in the training data and forgiving to generate without producing obvious artifacts. From SUNO's perspective, it's a low-risk place to land.

If you didn't ask for this and got it anyway, you didn't fail. You hit the safety floor.

The same logic explains why songs sometimes loop. When SUNO can't find a musically safe way to move forward — from verse to chorus, or chorus to bridge — it repeats the last thing that worked. Repetition is safer than guessing something new, so the model stalls. This isn't stubbornness or a glitch. It's a transition failure. Tweaking emotional language usually doesn't fix this, because the problem isn't expressive. It's structural. It also explains why vocals so often drift toward breathy, whisper-adjacent delivery. If SUNO can't settle on a vocal tone, it defaults to what blends easily, hides artifacts, and appears everywhere in the training data. Once again, this isn't a stylistic choice. It's a safety behavior.

All of this leads to the same conclusion.

You are not battling a temperamental system or failing at prompting. You are steering a model with known biases, known defaults, and very consistent fallback behaviors. Most frustration comes from treating SUNO like it's disobeying you, when it's actually doing exactly what it does under uncertainty. That's why this guide exists. Before you can steer well, you need to understand what the vehicle does when no one is steering. Once you understand how SUNO guesses, the rest of this guide becomes practical instead of mysterious.

CHAPTER 2

WHY PROMPTS DON'T MEAN WHAT YOU THINK THEY MEAN

Most people approach SUNO the way they would approach a human collaborator. You describe what you want, refine it, add detail, and expect the result to move closer to your intention. Sometimes that works. Often, it doesn't. The reason is simple and unintuitive. SUNO does not treat a prompt as a single instruction. It treats it as a collection of influences that it tries to satisfy at the same time. When you type something like "make it darker," "more energy," or "not a ballad," those phrases feel meaningful to a human. They rely on shared context, taste, and implied comparison. SUNO does not have access to that context. It does not ask clarifying questions. It does not stop and negotiate meaning.

It guesses. Each part of a prompt nudges the song in a particular direction. Some nudges are stronger than others. Some agree. Some quietly conflict. When they line up, the result feels intentional. When they don't, the song drifts or collapses into something safer. This is why adding more words does not always improve results. More detail can sharpen intent, but it can also introduce contradictions. A prompt that feels precise to a human can feel noisy to SUNO.

It's also why changes don't behave linearly. Removing a single word can radically change the outcome, while adding several sentences might do almost nothing. SUNO isn't responding to the length of the prompt. It's responding to how its internal influences stack up. Once you understand this, many common frustrations start to make sense. Songs that soften unexpectedly. Energy that disappears. Vocals that turn breathy. Genres that blur. These aren't random failures. They are the result of competing influences being resolved conservatively.

We're spelling this out here because most people never get told this part. We learned it the hard way, by generating a lot of songs, squinting at a lot of results, and slowly noticing patterns. What comes next is a way to make those patterns visible, so you can actually work with them.

CHAPTER 3

THE AXIS SYSTEM — WHY SONGS GO SIDEWAYS (AND HOW TO STOP IT)

By this point, you may have noticed something frustrating but consistent: you can be very clear about what you want and still end up with a song that feels like it is pulling in several different directions at once, even when your prompt looks reasonable on the surface.

SUNO does not follow a single instruction at a time. It responds to multiple influences simultaneously. When those influences reinforce the same idea, the song feels intentional and controlled. When they pull in different directions, the output starts to drift. This is not because your idea is unclear. It is because different parts of your prompt can mean different things to SUNO than they do to you. Words that feel compatible from a human perspective often carry very different implications for the system. When those interpretations conflict, SUNO tries to satisfy all of them at once, and the result is usually a compromise you never intended.

Over time, it became obvious that treating a single prompt as a single instruction made sense from our perspective, but not from SUNO's. SUNO treats a prompt as several distinct aspects — emotion, genre, rhythm, vocals, structure, and texture — and responds to each of them separately. Once this becomes visible, it also becomes much easier to see where and why a song goes south. What felt vague or arbitrary starts to look understandable and, more importantly, fixable.

The axis system is one practical way — not the only way — to make those interactions visible and workable. It is not a theory and it is not a checklist. It is a way of noticing which parts of a prompt are doing the steering, and whether they agree with each other. In this guide, an axis is simply a name for one of those aspects. Each axis represents something SUNO makes decisions about independently. You do not need to think about all of them at once. Most problems come from just one or two axes being unclear or quietly pulling against the others.

When the axes align, SUNO stabilizes. When they do not, it defaults to safety.

3.1 THE EMOTIONAL AXIS (E-AXIS)

The emotional axis controls the mood of a song — most obviously in the vocal delivery and chord movement — and answers a practical question: what does this song feel like while it's happening? For SUNO, emotional language is not decorative; words like dark, energetic, tender, or angry actively push on tempo, vocal tone, texture, and intensity. When emotional direction is clear and consistent, SUNO settles. When it is mixed or vague, SUNO hedges — and hedging has a sound.

Common E-axis signals include:

Dark, Brooding, Energetic, Uplifting, Intense, Tender, Angry, Haunting.

When the emotional axis contradicts the rest of the prompt, you tend to get:
soft rock instead of rock;
dreamy pop instead of indie;
whispery vocals instead of grit.

The fix is not to remove emotional language; it is to make sure the emotional axis supports your musical intention. One clear emotional direction works better than several subtle ones, especially early on.

3.2 THE GENRE / STYLE AXIS (G-AXIS)

The genre axis controls the musical world a song lives in — instrumentation, arrangement habits, and stylistic expectations. Humans treat genre as identity; SUNO treats genre as pattern. When you name a genre, SUNO picks up some of its usual traits, but it does not treat all of them as equally important. Genre suggestions are fragile, and if something else in the prompt is clearer or louder — especially emotion, rhythm, or vocal behavior — genre is usually the first thing SUNO will let go of.

Common G-axis signals include:
indie rock, post-punk, ambient techno, trap, folk, cinematic, lo-fi, acoustic, orchestral.

When the genre axis contradicts other parts of the prompt, you tend to get:
genre dilution;
“average” versions of the style;
songs that feel stylistically correct but emotionally wrong.

Genre tells SUNO what neighborhood you are aiming for; other axes decide what actually gets built there.

3.3 THE RHYTHM / ENERGY AXIS (R-AXIS)

The rhythm or energy axis controls whether a song moves or just sort of exists. This is the axis at play when a track has a tempo but no urgency, when beats are present but timid, or when a song keeps repeating the same section instead of moving forward. That is not a bug; it is what happens when the prompt never clearly commits to energy.

Common R-axis signals include:
fast, driving, minimal, pulsing, slow burn, danceable, restrained, aggressive, sparse.

When the rhythm / energy axis contradicts other parts of the prompt, you tend to get:
tracks with tempo but no urgency;
songs that loop instead of build;
beats that exist without momentum.

If a song stalls, loops, or never builds, the rhythm / energy axis is the second place to look, right after emotion.

3.4 THE VOCAL BEHAVIOR AXIS (V-AXIS)

If there is one place where SUNO gets cautious to the point of absurdity, it is vocals. Vocals are the most exposed part of a song, and when anything else is unclear, SUNO protects the voice first. Safer vocals mean fewer glitches, fewer awkward transitions, and fewer moments where the voice cracks, smears, or suddenly sounds synthetic in an obvious way.

Common V-axis signals include:
confident vocals, aggressive delivery, intimate voice, spoken, shouted, chant-like, detached.

When the vocal behavior axis is unclear or unsupported, you tend to get:
breathy or whispery vocals;
tentative phrasing;
voices that sound “safe” regardless of genre.

If you keep thinking “why is it whispering at me,” this is the axis to check.

3.5 THE STRUCTURE / PROGRESSION AXIS (S-AXIS)

The structure axis controls whether a song goes somewhere. This is the axis you are hitting when a track loops endlessly, when sections feel interchangeable, or when nothing ever peaks. SUNO is cautious about transitions; when it is unsure what comes next, repetition is safer than guessing.

Common S-axis signals include:
verse–chorus, build, breakdown, bridge, drop, progression, escalation.

When the structure axis contradicts other parts of the prompt, you tend to get:
endless looping;
flat songs with no peak;

sections that feel interchangeable.

If a song feels trapped or stalled, the structure axis is usually why.

3.6 THE TEXTURE / PRODUCTION AXIS (T-AXIS)

The texture axis controls how finished a song sounds — space, polish, grit, atmosphere. Texture is the lowest-stakes axis. It rarely breaks a song, but it is the first thing people reach for when something feels wrong.

Common T-axis signals include:
raw, polished, lo-fi, spacious, dry, saturated, atmospheric, gritty.

When texture is used to compensate for other unclear axes, you tend to get:
pretty but empty results;
lots of space with no movement;
production gloss over weak structure.

Texture cannot fix unclear emotion, stalled energy, timid vocals, or missing structure. Used late, texture feels magical. Used early, it feels compensatory. Texture is seasoning, not the meal.

IN PRACTICE

You do not need to specify every axis. Many strong songs only anchor two or three clearly. The danger zone is not omission; it is contradiction. Once you can see which axes you are touching — and whether they agree — SUNO stops feeling mysterious and starts feeling steerable. You do not need to be good at this yet. Being able to notice where things agree or conflict is enough to move forward.

Next, we use the axis system in a practical way, focusing on simple decisions rather than complete prompts.

AXIS RECAP

HOW THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER

This section is intentionally separate from the main Axis chapter. It exists so you can see the whole system at a glance, without rereading every explanation. You do not need to use every axis for every song. Many strong results only anchor two or three axes clearly. Problems arise not from omission, but from contradiction. Each axis represents something SUNO makes decisions about independently. When those decisions reinforce each other, the song stabilizes. When they pull in different directions, SUNO defaults to safer ground.

THE SIX AXES AT A GLANCE

Emotional Axis (E-Axis)

Controls how the song feels. This is the strongest axis. If it is unclear or conflicted, everything else softens.

Genre / Style Axis (G-Axis)

Controls the musical world the song draws from. Helpful, but fragile. Genre bends easily when other axes disagree.

Rhythm / Energy Axis (R-Axis)

Controls momentum and movement. If this is weak or conflicted, songs stall, loop, or feel timid.

Vocal Behavior Axis (V-Axis)

Controls how the voice acts: confidence, grit, intimacy, presence. SUNO protects vocals aggressively and will soften them first when unsure.

Structure / Progression Axis (S-Axis)

Controls whether the song goes somewhere. If this axis is not implied, repetition is safer than transition.

Texture / Production Axis (T-Axis)

Controls polish, atmosphere, and sonic detail. Lowest stakes. Exaggerates whatever is already happening upstream.

A PRACTICAL NOTE ON FRAGILITY

In practice, axes do not survive conflict equally well. Roughly speaking, they tend to stack from hardest to override to easiest:

1. Emotional direction
2. Rhythm / energy
3. Vocal behavior
4. Genre / style
5. Structure
6. Texture / production

This is not a rulebook. It is a practical observation from use.

HOW TO USE THIS

Use the axis system as a diagnostic tool, not a checklist. When something feels wrong, ask which axis is misaligned or quietly undermined. Most fixes involve adjusting one axis, not rewriting everything.

The diagram that accompanies this section shows the axes as independent controls. You do not need to engage all of them. Alignment matters more than completeness.

CHAPTER 4

USING THE AXIS SYSTEM IN REAL PROMPTS

4.1 HOW TO THINK ABOUT PROMPTS (BEFORE YOU WRITE ONE)

This is not about building perfect prompts. It is about making one or two clear decisions at a time and seeing what they do. You are not trying to use every axis. You are just practicing how to notice which ones matter for the song you are working on. A good SUNO prompt isn't a wishlist. It's a decision. Most people try to describe the finished song they hear in their head. That makes sense from a human perspective, but it often leads to vague or conflicting instructions. SUNO does not hear your internal reference track. It only sees the words on the page, and it takes all of them seriously. What works better is deciding what actually matters first, and being clear about that before adding detail.

Before you write a prompt, ask yourself a few simple questions:

- What should this song feel like?
- Should it move, or should it stay restrained?
- Do the vocals need to be forward, confident, intimate, or neutral?

If you can answer those, you already have enough information to get a usable result. Genre, structure, and texture can come later, or not at all.

This is why many short prompts work better than long ones. They commit early and don't talk themselves out of it. Extra detail only helps if it reinforces the same direction. Pick your must-haves first. These are the few decisions that define the song. Say them clearly. Everything else is a nice-to-have you can leave loose or add later. Most problems show up when a nice-to-have quietly undermines a must-have. You don't need to control everything. You just need to stop fighting yourself.

4.2 PROMPT STARTING POINTS

Successful prompts are not about finding the right magic phrase. They tend to follow a few reliable ways of starting. Once you recognize those, you can build your own prompts quickly without starting from zero every time. These starting points are not rules. They are patterns that commit one axis early and let the rest follow.

4.3 STARTING POINTS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

Feel First

Start by anchoring emotional direction clearly, then add only what supports it.

Energy First

Commit to movement or restraint early so the song knows whether to push or hold back.

Vocals First

Decide how the voice should behave before worrying about genre or texture.

Structure First

Imply progression, build, or change so SUNO knows the song is meant to go somewhere.

Restraint First

Explicitly limit scope so SUNO does not overfill gaps with defaults.

4.4 FULL PROMPT EXAMPLES

You can copy these prompts exactly if you want. They will work. More importantly, they show how to make decisions in the right order. Each example commits to one main must-have first, then only adds details that support that choice.

4.5 WHEN THINGS GO WRONG (QUICK FIXES)

Most failures fall into a small number of repeatable buckets. You do not need to start over. You just need to know which axis to adjust.

If a song softens unexpectedly, check emotional direction.

If it stalls or loops, check rhythm or structure.

If vocals go breathy, check vocal behavior.

If genre blurs, check which axis is overpowering it.

You do not need to use the axis system all the time. It is most useful when something feels off and you want a quick way to see why.

If a song is working, leave it alone. If it is not, change one thing, then listen again.

The templates that follow are designed for exactly this: quick, clear starting points when you don't want to overthink.

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL PROMPT TEMPLATES THAT ACTUALLY WORK

By this point, you understand why prompts drift and how small contradictions cause big changes, and this chapter is about putting that understanding to work without overthinking it. These templates are not rules and they are not magic phrases; they are examples of clear decision-making. You can copy them exactly and they will work, but more importantly, they show how to commit to what matters first so you can adapt them to your own taste over time. Each template commits to a few must-have decisions up front, then adds only details that support those choices. Common failure modes are blocked early, before SUNO has room to drift. If something doesn't work, don't rewrite the whole prompt — adjust one decision at a time.

5.1 TEMPLATE 1 — INDIE NOIR (NO BALLADS)

What You Want

A dark, atmospheric indie song with energy — no ballads, no softness, crisp vocals, and a driving rhythm.

Your Prompt

"Create an indie noir track with raw, crisp vocals, driving percussion, minimal atmospheric synths, and an edgy electric bass. Mid-tempo groove with tension, minimal reverb. No ballads, no soft vocals, no dreamy sound."

What It Does

Commits early to energy and tension, anchors vocal delivery before it softens, and blocks ballad gravity and dreamy drift.

5.2 TEMPLATE 2 — POP SONG WITH ENERGY (NO DISNEY)

What You Want

An upbeat pop song that's catchy without becoming overly sweet or sparkly, with clean vocals and a strong beat.

Your Prompt

"Write a pop song with strong rhythmic percussion, crisp vocals, catchy melody, bright synths, and a steady beat. Keep it energetic but not 'Disney princess' — no soft pads, no lullaby tone."

What It Does

Keeps energy forward without tipping into cuteness, anchors rhythm so emotion doesn't slow the track down, and prevents soft-focus pop defaults.

5.3 TEMPLATE 3 — AMBIENT DARK (NO DRIFTING)

What You Want

A dark ambient track with space and restraint, without dissolving into fog or mush.

Your Prompt

"Generate a dark ambient track with sparse piano, low drone bass, and deep atmospheric textures. Minimal reverb, no floaty synths or breathy vocals. Keep the tempo slow and the mood intense. No drifting or loss of clarity."

What It Does

Holds intensity even at low energy, prevents texture from taking over, and keeps the track deliberate instead of vague.

5.4 TEMPLATE 4 — INDIE ROCK ANTHEM

What You Want

An energetic indie rock track with guitars, crisp drums, and a driving beat — no ballads, no floaty vocals.

Your Prompt

“Write an indie rock anthem with strong electric guitar, punchy drums, driving bass, and clear vocals. Mid-tempo, no ballads, no breathy vocals, and minimal synth pads. Crisp, tight sound.”

What It Does

Anchors classic rock instrumentation early, keeps energy high without drifting into softness, and holds vocals present and confident.

5.5 TEMPLATE 5 — SOFT INDIE POP (EMOTIONAL BUT CRISP)

What You Want

An emotional indie pop track with warmth and clarity, without drifting into haze or sentimentality.

Your Prompt

“Create an indie pop track with soft but clear vocals, light percussion, warm synths, and a catchy melody. Keep the sound emotional but crisp. No excessive reverb or soft pads. Make it dreamy without drifting.”

What It Does

Allows emotion without surrendering clarity, keeps vocals present instead of washed out, and prevents warmth from collapsing into fog.

5.6 TEMPLATE 6 — CINEMATIC SCORE (INTENSE DRAMA)

What You Want

A cinematic score with high tension and dramatic weight, focused on orchestral power rather than sweetness or polish.

Your Prompt

“Create a cinematic score with dramatic orchestral strings, deep brass, pounding percussion, and high tension. Slow build, no electronic sounds, no soft synths. Keep it epic, powerful, and tense.”

What It Does

Anchors the track in orchestral force, prevents soft textures from taking over, and keeps tension driving the structure.

5.7 TEMPLATE 7 — JAZZ FUSION (GROOVY, COMPLEX)

What You Want

A jazz fusion track with groove, rhythmic complexity, and room for movement and improvisation.

Your Prompt

“Write a jazz fusion track with complex drum patterns, electric bass, electric piano, and groovy guitar. Include improvisation and rhythm changes. Keep the melody lively and offbeat, with no overly simple harmonies.”

What It Does

Anchors rhythmic complexity early, encourages interaction between instruments, and prevents collapse into smooth or predictable jazz.

5.8 TEMPLATE 8 — DARK EXPERIMENTAL (WEIRD AND WOBBLY)

What You Want

A dark experimental track that explores tension, instability, and unconventional sounds.

Your Prompt

"Generate a dark experimental track with unconventional rhythms, odd time signatures, and strange electronic textures. Use deep bass, industrial percussion, and eerie vocals. No mainstream sounds, no soft melodies."

What It Does

Gives permission to break symmetry, anchors darkness in rhythm and texture, and prevents fallback into safe or familiar patterns.

5.9 TEMPLATE 9 — POP PUNK ANTHEM

What You Want

A fast, punchy pop-punk anthem with high energy and attitude.

Your Prompt

"Create a pop-punk anthem with fast, punchy drums, gritty electric guitar, and energetic vocals. Keep the tempo fast and the energy high. No soft pads, no ballad structure. Fun and rebellious."

What It Does

Locks in speed and energy immediately, prevents emotional softening or slowdown, and keeps the track punchy and direct.

5.10 TEMPLATE 10 — ACOUSTIC SINGER-SONGWRITER (RAW AND HONEST)

What You Want

An acoustic singer-songwriter track with intimacy and honesty, without tipping into breathy fragility.

Your Prompt

"Generate an acoustic singer-songwriter track with raw, intimate vocals, minimal guitar, and soft percussion. Keep it honest, stripped-down, and emotional without becoming overly soft or breathy."

What It Does

Preserves intimacy without collapse, keeps vocals present and grounded, and anchors simplicity without sentimentality.

The goal isn't control. It's clarity — because once SUNO starts wandering, you'll spend the rest of your time dragging it back from places it didn't need to visit. Templates are useful because they reduce guesswork, not because they are perfect. Once you start using them, the real work is knowing what to adjust when something almost works — or works once and then slips.

CHAPTER 6

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES & ANCHOR BEHAVIORS

Sometimes a prompt is mostly working, but the song starts to drift, loop, or soften anyway. This chapter gives you a set of small, practical adjustments you can use to nudge things back on track without starting over. These are not hacks or tricks; they are lightweight anchors you add only when you recognize a familiar problem and want to correct it quickly. You will not use most of them most of the time. Think of them as tools you reach for when something feels off and you want to steady the song rather than reinvent it.

6.1 ANCHOR A — STABILIZE THE SONG

Use this anchor when a track starts strong but gradually drifts, softens, or loses clarity. This usually shows up as fading energy, loosening rhythm, or a slow slide into safer territory after a solid beginning. The goal here is not to add intensity, but to hold the song where it already is.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Steady rhythmic backbone"
- "Consistent beat throughout"
- "Clear, present vocals"
- "Minimal soft pads"
- "Maintain energy evenly"

What it does:

- Keeps rhythm and structure from loosening
- Prevents gradual softening or slowdown
- Helps the song stay anchored instead of wandering

6.2 ANCHOR B — SOFTEN THE MOOD (WITHOUT LOSING SHAPE)

Use this anchor when a track feels sharp, crowded, or overly intense, but you still want momentum and structure. This is for controlled softening — not surrender. It creates space without tipping the song into ballad mode or collapse.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Light atmospheric texture"
- "Gentle harmonic support"
- "Soft percussion accents"
- "Warm tonal palette"

What it does:

- Smooths the surface without collapsing structure
- Reduces harshness without slowing the song
- Keeps motion intact while easing edges

6.3 ANCHOR C — BREAK REPETITION & REFRESH THE SONG

Use this anchor when a song gets stuck repeating the same idea — a melody, rhythm, or emotional posture — even though nothing is obviously broken. This is common in bridges and second halves. The goal is movement, not replacement.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Introduce a new melodic direction"
- "Add variation in this section"
- "Contrast the previous pattern"
- "Shift the energy here"
- "Change the rhythm for this part"

What it does:

- Encourages forward motion without breaking continuity
- Helps the song progress instead of looping
- Refreshes interest while preserving identity

6.4 THE MOMENTUM RESET

Use this when a song starts well but gradually loses energy halfway through. Nothing crashes, but intensity sags and never fully recovers. This anchor reinforces forward motion across the whole track.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Maintain forward momentum"
- "Keep the rhythmic pulse present"
- "No fading energy in the second half"

What it does:

- Prevents slow unwinding over time
- Holds energy steady across sections
- Keeps the second half from feeling like an afterthought

6.5 THE ANTI-WHISPER APPROACH

Use this when vocals turn airy, breathy, or apologetic even though the song itself has energy. This is a classic safety behavior when SUNO is unsure. The goal is not aggression, but presence.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Crisp vocal tone"
- "Clear diction"
- "Minimal breathiness"
- "Forward vocal presence"

What it does:

- Pushes vocals forward instead of pulling them back
- Reduces excessive softness
- Helps the voice sound confident and grounded

6.6 BREAKING MELODY REPETITION

Use this when a song keeps circling the same melody and never develops, even as sections change. Everything sounds fine, but nothing evolves. This anchor encourages real melodic motion.

Helpful phrases to try:

- "Distinct melody in each section"
- "Variation in melodic contour"
- "New harmonic movement here"

What it does:

- Encourages melodic development
- Helps sections feel meaningfully different
- Prevents stagnation around a single idea

6.7 AVOIDING BALLAD MODE

Use this when you want literally anything other than a slow emotional ballad. Certain words quietly pull SUNO toward softness whether you intend them to or not, especially early in a prompt.

Words to avoid:

- Tender
- Dreamy
- Heartfelt
- Soft
- Reflective

Instead, anchor your prompt with:

- Crisp
- Driving
- Minimal pads
- Sharp percussion
- Present vocals

6.8 CONTROLLING COMPLEXITY

Use this when you want richness without chaos, or simplicity without monotony. This anchor helps keep arrangements legible and intentional.

When things get too mushy:

- "Moderate complexity"
- "Clear transitions between sections"
- "Controlled arrangement"

When things get too chaotic:

- "Dynamic structure"
- "Layered textures"
- "Variation across sections"

Anchors are not something you stack or sprinkle everywhere. They are small corrective nudges you use when you recognize a specific failure mode. If a song is already doing what you want, adding anchors usually makes it worse, not better. Most of the time, if something feels wrong, it is because one of the core axes is unclear or conflicted. Anchors are for moments when the axes are mostly aligned and the song still needs help staying steady, moving forward, or holding its shape. If you find yourself adding more and more anchors, that is a sign to step back and revisit earlier decisions instead of pushing harder.

Up to this point, the focus has been on structure and intent — deciding what a song should do at a high level. From here, attention narrows to the effects of specific words, tags, and small phrases. These are lighter tools, but they have outsized effects. Used carefully, they let you guide style without pulling the song apart.

CHAPTER 7

STYLES VS TAGS (AND WHY CONFUSION STARTS HERE)

This chapter clears up one of the most common sources of frustration with SUNO: why a prompt that sounds reasonable produces something chaotic, bland, or oddly unfocused. The short version is simple — styles and tags do different jobs, and problems start when we ask them to do the same one. Once you see the difference, many “why did it do that?” moments stop being mysterious and start being predictable.

7.1 WHAT A STYLE ACTUALLY DOES

A style isn’t just a genre label. It sets the overall operating mode for the song. When you choose a style, you’re quietly deciding things like the general arrangement and structure, the kinds of instruments that show up, how vocals tend to behave, and the emotional range the song lives in. Think of a style as the recipe. It defines the basic shape of the dish before any seasoning goes on. This is why stacking too many styles often backfires. SUNO is trying to cook multiple recipes at the same time.

7.2 WHAT A TAG ACTUALLY DOES

Tags are much smaller and more local. They don’t define the song — they nudge specific details. Tags usually influence mood or energy (“dark”, “uplifting”), texture (“minimal”, “lo-fi”), or delivery (“raw vocals”, “tight arrangement”). Think of tags as seasoning. They adjust flavor, not structure. Used well, tags sharpen a style. Used in excess, they pull the song in too many directions at once.

7.3 WHY STYLE + TAG CONFLICTS CAUSE PROBLEMS

Most muddy or confused results come from mixed signals, not bad prompts. A calm, restrained style paired with aggressive, high-energy tags; a dark, minimal style paired with bright, cheerful tags; or multiple styles combined with a long list of emotional tags all force SUNO to guess which instruction matters more. When instructions pull in opposite directions, SUNO doesn’t choose — it compromises. That’s when songs start to feel flat, generic, or oddly unfocused. The fix usually isn’t more detail. It’s fewer competing decisions.

7.4 HOW MANY STYLES IS TOO MANY?

In most cases, one style is enough. Two styles can work if they’re closely related and you’re clear about which one is primary. Beyond that, things get shaky fast. When you stack styles, SUNO isn’t blending them intelligently. It’s trying to satisfy multiple blueprints at once, which usually leads to safe, generic compromises instead of interesting hybrids.

7.5 WHEN TAGS START DOING TOO MUCH

Tags are powerful, but they don’t stack cleanly. A short list can sharpen a song. A long list often cancels itself out. When too many tags are present, SUNO starts averaging them instead of following them. This is why prompts with long tag lists often sound bland, oddly neutral, or emotionally vague. If you want to add a tag, ask one simple question: is this reinforcing the style, or fighting it? If it’s fighting it, it’s probably doing more harm than good.

7.6 A SIMPLE RULE THAT SAVES A LOT OF TIME

When something isn’t working, remove before you add. Instead of piling on more tags or another style, try this: pick one clear style, remove half the tags, and keep only the ones that clearly support that style. Very often, the song improves immediately — not because you added information, but because you removed confusion. Styles give SUNO a foundation and tags add nuance. When each stays in its lane, prompts stay clear and songs stay focused. If something feels off, it’s usually not because you didn’t say enough — it’s because you said too many things at once. From here, the focus shifts to what happens when you stop naming styles altogether and start shaping behavior more directly.

CHAPTER 8

CREATING YOUR OWN GENRE

(Playing without losing the song)

Most people start with a genre because it feels safe; it gives you a place to stand, a set of expectations, and a sense that you're doing something "correct." But some of the most interesting results happen when you don't quite know what to call what you're making yet, because that unsettled space is where discovery lives. If a song comes back strange, uneven, or not quite anything you recognize, that doesn't mean it failed — very often it means you're in the middle of discovering a new lane. This chapter is about how to explore that space deliberately, without turning the process into technical busywork or second-guessing yourself out of the fun.

When you are actively exploring or building a new genre, SUNO will often behave erratically. That is expected. You are asking it to operate in territory without a stable set of patterns yet, so uneven results, odd combinations, and temporary instability are part of the process. This kind of behavior is not a warning sign by itself — it is what exploration looks like when something genuinely new is forming.

Genre thrashing or thrashing in general is what happens when that exploration collapses. It is the point where experimentation turns into noise, and SUNO starts throwing incompatible genres, moods, and structures at you. This usually happens when too many specific instructions, hard boundaries, or conflicting signals are added at once. The key difference is direction. During healthy exploration, the song may be strange, but you still know what you are asking it to do. During genre thrashing, that intention gets buried under too many instructions.

A CONCRETE WAY TO EXPLORE (STEP BY STEP)

The safest way to explore is to be clear about the job of the song before you decorate it.

Start simple:

- Style: indie rock
- Tags: dark, driving

This asks for one clear thing: a dark, energetic indie rock song.

Now add a single layer of complexity:

- Style: indie rock
- Tags: dark, driving, minimal synth texture

The job of the song hasn't changed. You're still asking for the same thing, just with a new color added.

Explore by nudging, not piling:

- Keep the style the same.
- Change or add one tag.
- Listen for how the change behaves.

If the song comes back odd but still recognizable, you're exploring.

WHAT THRASHING LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

Thrashing usually starts when the job of the song becomes unclear.

For example:

- Styles: indie rock, ambient, cinematic, lo-fi
- Tags: dark, uplifting, aggressive, tender, minimal, lush

This prompt asks for too many incompatible things at once. SUNO can't tell what matters, so it guesses —

and the guesses don't line up.

The result often feels:

- chaotic rather than curious,
- inconsistent from run to run,
- or strangely generic despite lots of detail.

That's not exploration. That's collapse.

WHAT TO DO WHEN IT COLLAPSES

When you recognize thrashing, don't push harder.

Strip back:

- Pick one style.
- Keep two or three tags that clearly support it.
- Remove emotional contradictions.

Then start exploring again from there. Thrashing is not failure; it's feedback that the system can't hold the current level of complexity.

PRACTICAL HANDLES FOR STAYING ORIENTED

Before adding detail, ask:

- What is the song's job?
- What should stay steady if I change something?

Signals you're exploring:

- The song is strange but coherent.
- Each change teaches you something.
- You want to tweak, not restart.

Signals you're thrashing:

- You no longer know what you asked for.
- Everything changes at once.
- Results feel noisy or meaningless.

Creating your own genre isn't about forcing novelty. It's about holding a clear intention while you explore variations around it. Erratic behavior is part of discovery; collapse is just a signal to simplify and try again.

From here, the focus turns to restraint — knowing when to stop adding — and why less often produces stronger, more distinctive results.

CHAPTER 9

WHEN THINGS GO SIDEWAYS

(Common problems and simple fixes)

Exploration is fun until it isn't. Sometimes a song comes back strange in a way that feels promising. Other times, it comes back strange in a way that feels stuck, mushy, or inexplicably wrong. This chapter is for those moments. Nothing here means you did something incorrectly. These are common behaviors that show up when signals conflict, anchors drop out, or SUNO starts guessing in places you didn't intend. The goal isn't perfection — it's knowing what you're hearing, why it's happening, and what small change usually fixes it.

9.1 WHY DOES IT KEEP TURNING INTO A BALLAD?

This is one of the most common frustrations. You ask for energy, movement, or drive, and what comes back is slow, soft, and emotionally earnest. Nothing is technically broken, but the song feels like it quietly sat down. This usually happens when emotional or atmospheric cues outweigh structural ones. Words like emotional, gentle, dreamy, or reflective carry a lot of weight, and if they aren't balanced by clear rhythm or structure cues, SUNO tends to default toward ballad territory. It can also happen when anchors drop out. If the prompt doesn't clearly reinforce tempo, pulse, or forward motion, SUNO fills in the gaps with something safe. Ballads are safe.

The fix is rarely to add more detail. Instead, re-anchor the song with one or two stabilizing cues. Explicit rhythm language, a clear tempo feel, or a reminder to maintain energy throughout often does more than piling on additional descriptors. If a song keeps turning into a ballad, it isn't ignoring you. It's responding to the strongest signals it hears. Once you know which words pull hardest, it becomes much easier to steer things back where you want them.

9.2 IT ONLY GETS GOOD AT THE VERY END

This one feels especially cruel. The song finally locks in — the groove tightens, the vocals land, the energy makes sense — and then it immediately ends. What's happening here is late convergence. SUNO is spending most of the song resolving mixed or weak signals, and only figures out what you really wanted near the end. By the time everything lines up, there's no room left to develop it. This often shows up when the prompt contains several competing cues early on. SUNO tries to accommodate all of them, gradually shedding the weaker ones until a clear direction finally emerges — unfortunately, just as the track is wrapping up.

The fix isn't to make the song longer or more complex. It's to help SUNO converge sooner. Simplifying the prompt, removing low-priority tags, or reinforcing the core style early usually pulls the "good part" forward. If you notice a song consistently getting better toward the end, that's useful information. It means SUNO can do what you want — it just needs clearer guidance earlier so it doesn't spend most of the track figuring it out.

9.3 IT SOUNDS GENERIC EVEN THOUGH THE PROMPT IS SPECIFIC

This one is especially confusing. You've named styles, moods, instruments, even specific qualities — and what comes back sounds fine, polished, and completely forgettable. Nothing is obviously wrong, but nothing stands out either. This usually happens when the prompt contains too many equally weighted instructions. When everything is marked as important, SUNO averages the signals instead of committing to any one of them. Specific details don't stack into specificity — they flatten into something broadly acceptable.

The result is competence without character. The fix is to restore hierarchy. Decide which element actually matters most and let the rest support it instead of competing. Removing secondary tags, narrowing the emotional range, or clearly favoring one style over the others often makes the result feel more distinctive immediately. If a song sounds generic, it's not because you weren't clear — it's usually because you were clear about too many things at once.

9.4 IT KEEPS SOFTENING NO MATTER WHAT

This one feels stubborn. You ask for drive, edge, or energy, and the result keeps sliding back into something polite and gentle. Even when parts of the song work, the overall feel never quite toughens up. This usually happens when emotional cues outweigh structural ones, or when anchoring language drops out. Words that emphasize feeling, atmosphere, or mood can quietly overpower requests for intensity if they aren't balanced by clear rhythm, tempo, or arrangement cues. When that balance tips, SUNO fills in the gaps with something safe — and safe often sounds soft.

The fix is to reintroduce one or two firm anchors and let them do the heavy lifting. Clear tempo language, explicit energy cues, or reminders to maintain drive throughout are often more effective than adding more descriptive detail. If a song keeps softening, it isn't resisting you — it's following the strongest signals it hears, and those signals just need to be reshuffled.

9.5 IT STARTS STRONG AND THEN FALLS APART

The opening feels right. The groove lands, the mood makes sense, and for a moment it feels like you've nailed it. Then the structure loosens, the energy drops, or the song quietly loses its spine. This usually happens when early anchors aren't reinforced as the song develops. SUNO often starts confidently with clear cues, but if those cues aren't implied or restated through the prompt, it begins to improvise. Over time, that improvisation can turn into drift, repetition, or structural collapse.

The fix is to give SUNO permission to stay where it started. Phrases that emphasize consistency, steady energy, or maintaining structure throughout the song can make a surprising difference. If a track falls apart after a strong beginning, it's often because the opening worked — and the rest just needed help staying aligned.

9.6 NOTHING IS WRONG, BUT NOTHING IS RIGHT EITHER

This one is oddly frustrating because there's nothing obvious to fix. The song plays fine, the elements are balanced, and nothing clashes — but it also doesn't really go anywhere. It feels competent, finished, and completely unremarkable. This usually happens when signals are spread too evenly. The prompt doesn't contain strong conflicts, but it also doesn't contain a clear priority. Without something to lean into, SUNO plays it safe, producing a result that avoids mistakes by avoiding commitment.

The fix is to introduce a single point of emphasis. Decide what you actually want to notice first — the rhythm, the vocal delivery, the mood, or the texture — and let that lead. You don't need more detail; you need more contrast. When nothing feels right or wrong, it's often because the song is waiting for you to tell it what matters most.

Most problems that show up here aren't failures so much as signals. When something feels stuck, generic, or oddly softened, SUNO is usually telling you that priorities are unclear or anchors have dropped out, not that the system can't do what you asked. Learning to recognize these patterns turns frustration into information and makes small fixes feel obvious instead of mysterious.

From here, attention shifts away from fixing problems and toward recognizing when a song is already working — and when the best move is to leave it alone.

CHAPTER 10

THE GOLD WAVE

(When things finally lock in)

As you listen through multiple versions of the same song, one of them lines up clearly with the idea you had in your head. The structure holds. The mood makes sense. The song reflects what you meant instead of surprising you. You stop correcting it every few seconds. You mostly listen.

That's what we mean by the gold wave.

It isn't magic, and it isn't mastery. It's the point where SUNO stops hedging and commits. Instead of averaging between mixed signals, it settles on a direction. The song stops sounding provisional. What you're hearing isn't a guess anymore. It's a version that knows what it's trying to be.

10.1 HOW YOU KNOW IT'S HAPPENING

The most reliable sign is stability. The song doesn't fight itself. Sections relate to each other. Changes feel intentional instead of random. When you make a small adjustment, the result behaves the way you expect instead of swinging wildly.

A few other things usually show up at the same time. The visuals often stop bouncing around and start looking like they belong to the same world. Not better or flashier — just more specific, and more consistent from run to run.

The sound does something similar. You can rerun the same prompt and get different versions of the song, but they clearly come from the same place. Same overall feel. Same energy. Same character. The details move, but the identity stays put.

When that happens, you've found something real. If everything keeps changing at once, you haven't.

Timing can shift too. When SUNO is still guessing, generation times tend to jump around. Once things lock in, those swings usually tighten. Runs start taking about the same amount of time, sometimes almost exactly. That's a side effect of less guessing — not something you need to chase.

At this stage, you're no longer testing possibilities. You're working inside a sound that holds together.

10.2 WHY IT SUDDENLY FEELS REPEATABLE

Once SUNO has a clear direction, it stops trying to cover every option at once. The important parts rise to the top, and everything else falls into place around them. Decisions stop competing and start reinforcing each other.

That's why things feel more reliable here. You can explore nearby ideas without the whole track falling apart. Small changes stay local instead of rippling through everything.

The foundation holds because SUNO understands what matters most. Repeatability isn't luck. It's what happens when the guessing drops away.

10.3 STAYING OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

This is also where people accidentally knock themselves out of alignment. Once things are working, big changes bring confusion back fast. Changing style, mood, structure, and energy all at once gives SUNO too many directions again. The lock loosens, and you're back to guessing.

At this point, restraint matters more than precision. Small, deliberate changes are safer than broad ones. Listening matters more than steering.

The goal isn't to improve the song endlessly. It's to avoid breaking what's already working. If you feel the urge to keep pushing just because you can, that's usually a sign to stop.

10.3.5 ONE-OFFS ARE ALLOWED

Something else can happen on the way to a gold wave.

When you're pushing the edges, you may get a version that's strange, intense, or unusually alive — and then never shows up again. It doesn't repeat cleanly. It doesn't behave. It may not even feel stable in the usual sense.

That doesn't make it a mistake.

If a version hits in a way nothing else does, it's a perfectly valid artistic choice to stop there and call it the song. Repeatability is useful, but it isn't the only thing that matters. Sometimes the right version is the one that happened once and refused to behave again.

10.4 WHEN IT'S TIME TO START OVER

Not every song is meant to be finished. Sometimes you don't just stall — things actually get worse. The groove falls apart. The vocal starts doing uncomfortable, twitchy things. Sections stop agreeing with each other. It can feel like the whole song is having a nervous breakdown.

This is what we used to call thrashing. SUNO isn't exploring anymore — it's flailing. It starts throwing dead eggs at your head, musically speaking, because the signals you've given it no longer add up to a direction it can hold.

When that happens, more fixing doesn't help. The song isn't asking for refinement. It's telling you it's done making sense.

Starting over here isn't quitting. It's listening.

People who do this a lot abandon far more songs than they finish. That isn't waste. It's how you keep moving without forcing things.

This process isn't about control. It's about clarity. Exploring, adjusting, aligning, and letting go are all parts of the same skill.

When you reach the gold wave, less usually works better. You don't need to squeeze more out of it. If something feels right, let it sit. You can come back later with fresh ears.

If it holds, it holds. If it doesn't, forcing it won't help. Knowing when to stop is part of knowing what you're listening for.

BEFORE YOU GO

This guide was never meant to teach you how to make music. It exists to help you recognize when something is working, when it is not, and when to stop pushing. Most of the problems people run into with SUNO are not technical. They come from guessing too much, fixing the wrong thing, or doing the same kind of work for too long. Making music this way is still sometimes a struggle for us, and that is okay. These are some of the useful things we picked up along the way.

We also wished we had a guide like this when we were starting out, which is why we wrote it and are sharing it freely. The goal is not to tell you where to go, but to help you spend less time troubleshooting the vehicle and more time actually driving. We hope it helps people who love music spend more of their time making it.

ABOUT THE APPENDICES

The sections that follow are not required reading. They are not lessons, and they are not a second book hiding in the back. Think of them as reference points you dip into when something feels off and you want to confirm what you are already sensing.

Appendix I (Glossary of Terms & Anchor Phrases) helps you recognize how certain words tend to behave.
Appendix II (Keeping Projects From Colliding) helps you avoid stepping on work that needs a different kind of care.
Appendix III (Style Sheet Dictionary Aâ€“Z) goes deeper into style-sheet mechanics for fine control.
Appendix IV (Quick Reference & Field Notes) is a fast sanity check for common patterns.

You do not read these straight through. You use them when you are stuck, uncertain, or double-checking a decision. If you never need them, that is fine too.

Nothing in the appendices replaces listening.
That is the work.

APPENDIX I

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & ANCHOR PHRASES

(SUNO vocabulary, in plain language)

This appendix collects words and phrases that repeatedly influence how SUNO behaves in practice. These are not rules and they are not magic incantations. They are patterns observed through use.

If a song suddenly softens, slows down, or changes direction in a way you didn't expect, this glossary is meant to help you recognize why. You do not need to memorize any of this. Think of it as something you dip into when a word behaves differently than you thought it would.

Some of these words act like anchors. They do not add detail so much as reduce guessing, helping SUNO hold its shape instead of drifting into something you didn't intend.

****TONE & TIMBRE WORDS****

(How the voice sounds)

These words mostly affect how vocals are delivered rather than what notes are sung. They influence clarity, distance, texture, and confidence. If vocals keep turning breathy, washed out, or oddly polite, this is usually where the cause shows up.

breathy / airy
→ Whisper mode. Soft delivery with lots of air.

crisp vocals
→ Clear, forward tone. Reduces breathiness.

dry vocals
→ Low reverb. Tight, close-mic feel.

forward vocal presence
→ Brings the voice closer in the mix.

minimal breathiness
→ Actively pulls SUNO out of whisper mode.

raw edge
→ Adds slight grit and reduces over-polish.

warm tone
→ Smooth and rounded. Can slide into softness if overused.

****RHYTHM & TEMPO WORDS****

(Energy and pacing)

These words influence pace, momentum, and rhythmic stability. If a song feels sluggish, rushed, or slowly loses energy as it goes on, something in this group is often responsible.

driving beat
→ Strong, steady percussion that pushes the song forward.

fast-paced
→ Increases energy and shortens phrasing.

mid-tempo groove
→ Balanced pace, often landing in a usable middle range.

no drifting

→ Resists slowdown and loss of focus.

steady pulse

→ Keeps tempo from dissolving or wobbling.

****INSTRUMENTATION WORDS****

(Texture and genre commitment)

These words steer what instruments show up and how dominant they are. If the mood feels right but the sound palette doesn't, this section usually explains why.

acoustic guitar

→ Warm, organic texture. Can soften a track if unbalanced.

clean electric guitar

→ Bright, defined guitar tone.

driving percussion

→ Reinforces momentum and structure.

minimal pads

→ Removes emotional haze and prevents ballad creep.

raw electric bass

→ Darker, more assertive low end.

subtle synths

→ Adds atmosphere without washing things out.

****ATMOSPHERE WORDS****

(Mood and emotional color)

These words shape mood and emotional color more than structure. They are powerful and easy to overuse. If a song suddenly feels foggy, heavy, or overly sentimental, look here.

dark / moody / tense

→ Pushes toward restraint and minor-key feeling.

dreamy

→ Soft focus with reduced rhythmic clarity.

haunting

→ Sparse, spacious, often minor-key feel.

intense

→ Raises emotional pressure.

uplifting

→ Introduces brightness and optimism.

****ENERGY & INTENSITY WORDS****

(How hard the song pushes)

These words affect attack, contrast, and overall force. If a track feels too aggressive or too restrained, this is the section to scan.

aggressive

→ Sharper edges and harder attacks.

controlled energy

→ Forward motion without chaos.

driving

→ Sustained forward pressure.

restrained

→ Held-back intensity.

soft

→ Reduced attack and contrast.

****STRUCTURE & ARRANGEMENT WORDS****

(How the song moves)

These words influence how the song develops over time. If sections blur together, loop too long, or never quite lift, something here is usually involved.

clear transitions

→ Stronger separation between sections.

dynamic structure

→ Noticeable rises and falls.

layered textures

→ Depth through multiple elements.

minimal arrangement

→ Fewer elements, more space.

variation across sections

→ Encourages development instead of looping.

****WORDS WITH STRONG SIDE EFFECTS****

(Use on purpose)

Some words do not just add flavor. They quietly change the whole direction of a song. None of these are wrong, but they have a stronger effect than most people expect.

emotional

→ Often softens vocal delivery and intimacy.

expressive

→ Loosens performance and timing.

gentle

→ Reduces attack and energy.

reflective

→ Slows pacing and pulls the song inward.

tender

→ Almost always pushes toward softness.

****WORDS THAT REDUCE GUESSING AND DRIFT****

(Small phrases with outsized impact)

These phrases reduce uncertainty more than they add detail. When included, SUNO tends to make fewer guesses and hold its shape more reliably.

clear, present vocals

→ Keeps the voice forward and intelligible.

minimal pads

→ Reduces emotional haze.

no drifting

→ Actively resists slowdown.

steady rhythmic backbone

→ Holds structure together.

tight arrangement

→ Limits excess and keeps focus.

APPENDIX II

KEEPING PROJECTS FROM COLLIDING

(One way to avoid stepping on your own work)

This appendix is about handling, not creativity.

A lot of frustration with SUNO doesn't come from bad prompts. It comes from doing the wrong kind of work at the wrong time — tweaking something that needs protecting, or protecting something that needs to be pushed harder. Mixing those states makes it easy to break things you actually like, or delete things you meant to keep.

One simple way around that is to separate work by how careful you're being with it.

This is not a system. It's just a habit that keeps different kinds of attention from crashing into each other.

You don't need to copy this. Use the idea, not the layout.

****DIFFERENT PLACES, DIFFERENT RULES****

We don't keep everything in one workspace. Different stages need different rules. The names don't matter much — what matters is knowing what you're allowed to do when you open something.

Here's how ours usually shakes out.

****THE LAB****

Rule: Nothing is precious.

This is where we experiment. Iterate fast. Change big things. Scrap freely. If something breaks, that's fine — breaking things is the point here.

If you're trying to find a direction, this is where you want to be.

WORKSPACE (INTERIM)

Rule: Be more careful.

This is the in-between zone. You think you might be onto something, but it's not locked yet. You listen more. You change fewer things at once. You're still allowed to abandon it, but you're not thrashing anymore.

A lot of gold waves first show up here.

****THE ALTAR****

Rule: Touch lightly.

This is for songs you really like, but aren't done listening to yet. Changes here are intentional and small. You're mostly checking whether it still holds together when you leave it alone.

If you're constantly "fixing" things here, it probably belongs back in the workspace.

****THE BONEYARD****

Rule: Don't touch.

For us, this is finished and published material. It's not dead — it's complete. Putting it here means we don't reopen it out of habit or second-guess ourselves later.

Done needs a place to live.

THE KILL LOT (OPTIONAL)

Rule: Let it go.

Some things served their purpose and don't need to come back. Parking them somewhere final makes it easier to move on without feeling like you lost something important.

****WHY THIS HELPS****

Separating work like this does one main thing: it removes constant decision-making.

You don't have to ask, every time you open a song, whether you're experimenting, refining, or just listening. The place already tells you. That makes it much harder to accidentally wreck something good, or overwork something that's already done.

If your setup does that — even in a completely different way — it's working.

That's the whole point.

APPENDIX III
STYLE SHEET DICTIONARY (A–Z)
(Observable behavior, not rules)

****Purpose:****

This appendix is a neutral reference. It describes common prompt terms, what they tend to do, and when to think about their side effects.

Nothing here is forbidden. Some terms simply have stronger effects than people expect.

****Format:****

- ****What it does****: Observable behavior
- ****Use when****: Conditions where it helps
- ****Avoid when****: Conditions where it works against you
- ****Notes****: High-leverage interactions or drift tendencies

****A****

****Airy**** — (Vocal Term; Danger Term)

What it does: Produces breathy, whisper-like vocals.

Use when: You want softness or fragility.

Avoid when: You need clarity, strength, or rhythmic precision.

Notes: Strongly increases whisper artifacts. Easily overrides clarity cues.

****Ambient**** — (Atmosphere Term)

What it does: Adds wide pads, reverb, and diffuse textures.

Use when: You want space or cinematic mood.

Avoid when: You need a strong beat or tight structure.

Notes: Frequently reduces rhythmic definition.

****Atmospheric**** — (Mood / Texture Term)

What it does: Emphasizes space and texture over rhythm.

Use when: You want mood or dimensionality.

Avoid when: You need focus or drive.

Notes: Can drift toward cinematic softness if stacked.

****B****

****Ballad**** — (Genre Term)

What it does: Slows tempo and emphasizes emotional delivery.

Use when: You want intimacy or narrative focus.

Avoid when: You want momentum or energy.

Notes: Strong gravity well; difficult to counter once engaged.

****Bright**** — (Vocal / Mix Term)

What it does: Emphasizes higher frequencies and presence.

Use when: You want lift or sparkle.

Avoid when: Combined with many soft terms.

Notes: Can skew sweet without rhythm anchors.

****Breathy**** — (Vocal Term; Danger Term)

What it does: Increases air noise and whisper qualities.

Use when: You want intimacy.

Avoid when: You want power or intelligibility.

Notes: One of the strongest ballad-drift triggers.

****C****

****Calm**** — (Energy Term)

What it does: Lowers intensity and percussion density.

Use when: You want restraint or minimalism.

Avoid when: You want drive.

Notes: Easily stacks with other softeners.

****Cinematic**** — (Style Descriptor)

What it does: Adds orchestral textures and dramatic arcs.

Use when: You want scale.

Avoid when: You want dryness or minimalism.

Notes: Often increases length and dynamic range.

****Crisp Vocals**** — (Vocal Term; ★ Magic Term)

What it does: Improves vocal clarity and reduces breathiness.

Use when: Almost always.

Avoid when: Whisper effects are intentional.

Notes: Reliable counter to breathy drift.

****D****

****Driving**** — (Energy Term)

What it does: Reinforces forward momentum.

Use when: You want motion or urgency.

Avoid when: You want softness.

Notes: Works best paired with tempo cues.

****Dreamy**** — (Mood Term; Danger Term)

What it does: Softens attack and blurs edges.

Use when: You want haze or atmosphere.

Avoid when: You want clarity.

Notes: Frequently overrides rhythm cues.

****E****

****Emotional**** — (Mood Term; Danger Term)

What it does: Heightens feeling while reducing structure.

Use when: You want expressive delivery.

Avoid when: You want precision.

Notes: Strong pull toward ballad territory.

****Energetic**** — (Energy Term)

What it does: Raises perceived intensity.

Use when: You want liveliness.

Avoid when: Paired only with soft descriptors.

Notes: Benefits from explicit tempo support.

****F****

****Fast**** — (Tempo Term)

What it does: Increases pace and urgency.

Use when: You want movement.

Avoid when: You want spaciousness.

Notes: Clarifies intent quickly.

****Flowing**** — (Structure Term)

What it does: Smooths transitions.

Use when: You want continuity.

Avoid when: You need contrast.
Notes: Can reduce dynamic edges.

****G****

****Gentle**** — (Mood Term; Danger Term)
What it does: Lowers attack and contrast.
Use when: You want softness.
Avoid when: You want drive.
Notes: Rarely neutral.

****Groovy**** — (Rhythm Term)
What it does: Emphasizes rhythmic feel.
Use when: You want movement.
Avoid when: Tempo is undefined.
Notes: Benefits from tempo pairing.

****H****

****Heavy**** — (Texture Term)
What it does: Adds weight and density.
Use when: You want impact.
Avoid when: You want openness.
Notes: Can overpower vocals.

****I****

****Intimate**** — (Mood Term)
What it does: Brings vocals forward.
Use when: You want closeness.
Avoid when: You want scale.
Notes: Often pairs with breathiness.

****L****

****Lush**** — (Texture Term)
What it does: Thickens layers and harmony.
Use when: You want richness.
Avoid when: You want minimalism.
Notes: Can blur structure.

****M****

****Minimal**** — (Structure Term)
What it does: Reduces layers and density.
Use when: You want focus.
Avoid when: You want complexity.
Notes: Clarifies rhythm.

****R****

****Reflective**** — (Mood Term; Danger Term)
What it does: Slows pacing and softens tone.
Use when: You want introspection.
Avoid when: Momentum matters.
Notes: Strong slowdown tendency.

****S****

****Soft**** — (Texture Term; Danger Term)

What it does: Reduces attack and contrast.

Use when: You want restraint.

Avoid when: You want punch.

Notes: Easily stacks into ballad gravity.

****T****

****Tight**** — (Structure Term)

What it does: Increases rhythmic precision.

Use when: You want control.

Avoid when: You want looseness.

Notes: Good stabilizer.

****U****

****Upbeat**** — (Energy Term)

What it does: Raises mood and pace.

Use when: You want positivity.

Avoid when: Emotional depth is required.

Notes: Can skew pop.

****V****

****Vocal Forward**** — (Mix Term)

What it does: Prioritizes vocal presence.

Use when: Lyrics matter.

Avoid when: Instrumental focus is desired.

Notes: Improves intelligibility.

APPENDIX IV

QUICK REFERENCE & FIELD NOTES

(Fast confirmation, not learning)

Purpose:

This appendix is for fast confirmation, not learning. It exists so you do not have to reread chapters to validate something you are already sensing. Nothing here introduces new concepts. Nothing here is prescriptive. These are pattern reminders drawn from lived use.

Use this appendix when you want to sanity-check what you are hearing.

****HIGH-LEVERAGE ANCHORS (QUICK RECALL)****

These cues tend to reduce guessing and stabilize results when used clearly and sparingly.

- Tempo language (fast, mid-tempo, driving)
- Energy cues (maintain momentum, steady drive)
- Structural cues (consistent rhythm, clear groove)
- Vocal clarity cues (clear vocals, crisp delivery)

When these are present, SUNO commits earlier and stays aligned longer.

****COMMON DRIFT PATTERNS (ONE-LINE CUES)****

- ****The song keeps turning into a ballad****
→ Emotional or atmospheric cues outweigh structure.
- ****The song only gets good at the end****
→ Late convergence caused by competing signals.
- ****The song sounds generic****
→ Too many equally weighted instructions.
- ****The song starts strong and falls apart****
→ Anchors are not reinforced across the whole track.
- ****Nothing is wrong, but nothing is right****
→ No clear priority for the model to commit to.

****STABILIZERS VS. SOFTENERS****

Some terms reinforce structure. Others quietly reduce it.

****Stabilizers tend to:****

- Reinforce rhythm
- Preserve momentum
- Maintain clarity

****Softeners tend to:****

- Reduce attack
- Lower contrast
- Encourage ballad gravity

Neither group is wrong. Problems arise when softeners stack without stabilizers.

****WHEN TO SIMPLIFY VS. WHEN TO ADD DETAIL****

****Simplify when:****

- Changes repeat the same outcome
- The song improves only at the very end
- Results feel averaged or generic

****Add detail when:****

- The song has locked in but lacks character
- One element needs emphasis over others
- You want controlled variation, not correction

More words do not equal more control. Hierarchy matters more than volume.

****SIGNALS OF GUESSING VS. LOCK-IN****

****Signs SUNO is still guessing:****

- Large variation between runs
- Unstable structure
- Wide swings in generation time

****Signs SUNO has locked in:****

- Related results across reruns
- Predictable response to small changes
- Narrow or nearly identical generation times

Reduced variability usually indicates reduced guessing.

****WHEN TO START OVER****

Sometimes a song just goes wrong. Not subtly or gradually — it ends up scattered, inconsistent, and hard to listen to. The structure does not hold, the tone keeps shifting, and every attempt to fix one problem creates another.

When that happens, trying harder does not help. If each revision makes the song different but not better, or if you cannot get it back to anything coherent, you are done with that attempt.

Starting over at this point is not failure or a mistake. It means this prompt has already shown you everything it is going to show you. You know how it behaves, and you know you do not like where it goes.

Most experienced users abandon far more songs than they finish, not because they are careless, but because they are saving their time and attention for things that still have a chance to work.

Stopping is not giving up. It is recognizing that this one is finished — just not as a song.