

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Texas Hold 'Em

Beyoncé

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Country imagery, dance imperatives and contemporary American culture.

20 verified learning cards / Level B1 / guided practice

SECTION 00

Your learning journey

Watch first, explore second, practise from memory and finish with the complete card library.

1 WATCH	Follow the official lyric video and synced cards.
2 EXPLORE	Study language, extended vocabulary, culture and sound.
3 PRACTISE	Complete the guided challenges without looking back.
4 REVIEW	Use the final 20-card library by category.

Three sources of value

Song language gives you patterns to reuse. **Extended vocabulary** helps you discuss the themes and music. **Context** helps you understand cultural references and form your own interpretation.

Lyrics on video

[Open the lyric video used for this lesson](#)

Listen, read and return to the workbook whenever you want to explore a language point in greater depth.

SECTION 01

Map the song

Follow how poker language gives way to communal movement and survival.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Opening	Identify the speaker, situation and first useful pattern.
Development	Track the main contrast, image or relationship problem.
Hook	Notice how repetition changes emphasis and memory.
Late return	Retrieve earlier language under new vocal or narrative pressure.

Listening challenge

For each stage, write one word for the sound and one for the speaker's emotional position. Then explain which language choice helped create that impression.

SECTION 02

Language Lab

Move beyond the quick cards: compare structures, notice register and learn how to avoid common mistakes.

LANGUAGE POINT	GO DEEPER	USE IT WELL
lay and lie again	Lay your cards uses a direct object; lie your cards would be incorrect in standard English.	The past of lay is laid: She laid the cards down.
damned if	I will be damned if is an emphatic refusal or expression of disbelief. It is stronger and less neutral than definitely not.	Avoid it in formal or sensitive settings.
take it to	Take it to the floor/stage/streets means move an activity into a new arena. The pronoun it refers broadly to the action.	Meaning comes from the destination and context.
creative word formation	English speakers readily coin words with productive endings such as -genic. New forms can be understandable without being dictionary-standard.	Use playful coinages where creativity is welcome, then define them if clarity matters.

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

This bonus language expands what you can say about the narrative, emotion, performance and production.

to ante up	phrasal verb	To put money into the pot before a round of poker starts - or, more generally, to commit your share to something. <i>If you want a seat at the table, you'll have to ante up first.</i>
a full house	noun	A winning poker hand made of three cards of one rank and two of another. <i>She stayed quiet, then laid down a full house and swept the pot.</i>
to bet the house	idiom	To risk everything you have on a single outcome. <i>He bet the house on the food truck idea, and it actually worked out.</i>
honky-tonk	noun	A small, informal bar in the American South that features country music and dancing. <i>We ended up in a honky-tonk on the edge of town, two-stepping until midnight.</i>
twang	noun	A strong nasal quality in someone's speech, or the bright, plucky sound of a string instrument like a banjo. <i>You could hear the banjo's twang from the porch before you saw the band.</i>
to two-step	verb	To dance a fast country dance in 2/4 time, common in Texas dance halls. <i>Grab a partner - the band's about to play something to two-step to.</i>
boots	noun	Cowboy boots, closely tied to Texan and western style. <i>She wore her best pair of boots to the barn dance.</i>
a poker face	noun	An expression that hides what you're really thinking or feeling, useful for bluffing in cards. <i>He kept a poker face even after he saw his winning hand.</i>
to call someone's bluff	idiom	To challenge someone to prove a claim you suspect isn't true. <i>She called his bluff and asked him to show the paperwork on the spot.</i>
to raise the stakes	idiom	To increase what's being risked, or to make a situation more intense. <i>Losing the first round only raised the stakes for the final hand.</i>
a dive	noun	An informal, slightly rough bar or club - often used affectionately. <i>The band cut their teeth playing dive bars before the arena tour.</i>
denim	noun	The sturdy cotton fabric used for jeans, a staple of classic western style. <i>He showed up in denim from his jacket down to his boots.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

Use these additional expressions to discuss the song's situations and themes in natural English.

to lay your cards on the table	extension	To be completely open and honest about your intentions or feelings. <i>After weeks of dodging the subject, she finally laid her cards on the table.</i>
the house always wins	extension	A saying meaning that in gambling - and often in life - the odds favor whoever is running the game. <i>He kept doubling his bet, forgetting that the house always wins in the end.</i>
all in	extension	Fully committed to something, holding nothing back. <i>Once she quit her job to launch the business, she was all in.</i>
to hit the jackpot	extension	To have sudden, great luck or success. <i>They hit the jackpot when their tiny café got mentioned online.</i>
to fold	extension	To give up on something, especially once the odds turn against you - from folding your cards in poker. <i>He folded on the deal the moment the numbers stopped adding up.</i>
to play your cards right	extension	To act wisely and make smart decisions in order to get what you want. <i>Play your cards right this quarter and that promotion is yours.</i>

Make the language yours

Complete the exercises later in the workbook to check meaning, structure and register.

SECTION 05

Pronunciation as performance

A sung voice is not a neutral accent sample. Listen for concrete features, then compare theatrical delivery with everyday speech.

The Southern drawl	Beyoncé leans into a Texan drawl here, stretching short vowels so a one-syllable word can sound like it has an extra little glide inside it - a hallmark of Southern American speech that's largely absent from her pop material.
Dropped final G	As in most relaxed American English, -ing endings lose their final g-sound: 'holdin', 'dancin'. In a country-flavored track like this one, it's part of the genre's signature, not just casual speech.
Strongly rhotic R	Unlike the British ballads elsewhere in this catalogue, this is fully rhotic speech - every R is pronounced clearly and often given extra weight, a defining feature of Southern and Texan American English.
'Y'all' and Southern contractions	The contraction 'y'all' (you all) is central to Texan and wider Southern speech and appears naturally in the song's conversational, inviting tone.

Three-pass shadowing

1. Tap only the stressed beats.
2. Reproduce the phrase slowly and clearly.
3. Contrast a natural spoken version with the musical performance.

SECTION 06

Context and creative choices

Discover the cultural and creative decisions that shaped the song, then listen again with this context in mind.

"Texas Hold 'Em" arrived as a surprise on February 11, 2024, during Super Bowl LVIII, when a Verizon commercial cut to Beyoncé announcing new music. The song dropped that same night alongside a second track, "16 Carriages," instantly signaling that Beyoncé's next era was heading somewhere new: country.

That new era took full shape on March 29, 2024, with the release of *Cowboy Carter*, Beyoncé's eighth studio album and the second chapter of a planned trilogy that began with *Renaissance* in 2022. The album debuted at number one on the Billboard 200, and "Texas Hold 'Em" led the way as its lead single.

The song made chart history in its own right: it became Beyoncé's ninth number-one single on the Billboard Hot 100 and, simultaneously, topped the Hot Country Songs chart - making her the first Black woman ever to reach number one on that country chart. It has since been certified 2x Platinum by the RIAA.

Behind the track is a small, close-knit writing team: Beyoncé wrote it with Canadian songwriters Nathan Ferraro, Elizabeth Boland (known as Lowell), and Megan Bülow. Production credits include Ferraro, Killah B, and Beyoncé herself, with additional production from Raphael Saadiq, Stuart White, Hit-Boy, and Mariel Gomerez. One of the most talked-about contributions came from Rhiannon Giddens, the Grammy-winning folk and roots musician who plays the rapid-plucked banjo and viola heard in the song's opening - a deliberate nod to the banjo's often-overlooked Black origins in American folk and country music.

At the 67th Grammy Awards in February 2025, "Texas Hold 'Em" picked up nominations for Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best Country Song, though it didn't win in those categories. The album more than made up for it: *Cowboy Carter* won Album of the Year and Best Country Album, cementing Beyoncé's country pivot as one of the most decorated moments of her career.

For English learners, it's a fascinating pairing of accent and vocabulary: a Texan drawl riding over a poker-and-honky-tonk vocabulary that most pop songs never touch - a useful, very current contrast to the British and Australian voices elsewhere in this catalogue.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

Complete every activity without looking back, then use the answer key to correct your work independently.

A. Extended vocabulary in context

1. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To put money into the pot before a round of poker starts - or, more generally, to commit your share to something.*

to ante up / a full house

2. Choose the best term for this meaning: *A winning poker hand made of three cards of one rank and two of another.*

a full house / to bet the house

3. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To risk everything you have on a single outcome.*

to bet the house / honky-tonk

4. Choose the best term for this meaning: *A small, informal bar in the American South that features country music and dancing.*

honky-tonk / twang

5. Choose the best term for this meaning: *A strong nasal quality in someone's speech, or the bright, plucky sound of a string instrument like a banjo.*

twang / to two-step

6. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To dance a fast country dance in 2/4 time, common in Texas dance halls.*

to two-step / to ante up

B. Retrieve the expression

7. Which expression matches this meaning: *To be completely open and honest about your intentions or feelings.?*

8. Which expression matches this meaning: *A saying meaning that in gambling - and often in life - the odds favor whoever is running the game.?*

9. Which expression matches this meaning: *Fully committed to something, holding nothing back.?*

10. Which expression matches this meaning: *To have sudden, great luck or success.?*

C. Accuracy check

11. Correct the form: **I listened the song carefully.**

12. Choose the careful form: **The contrast lead to a new meaning / leads to a new meaning.**

SECTION 08

Answer key

Check each answer and return to the Language Lab when a form or distinction is still unclear.

1. to ante up
2. a full house
3. to bet the house
4. honky-tonk
5. twang
6. to two-step
7. to lay your cards on the table
8. the house always wins
9. all in
10. to hit the jackpot
11. I listened to the song carefully
12. The contrast leads to a new meaning

Review again

Cover the answers and repeat the activities after a few days. A delayed second attempt is a better test of learning than immediate rereading.

SECTION 09

Complete 20-card library

Use this compact summary for quick revision or return to the video cue when you want to hear a point again.

Vocabulary / 7 cards

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:18

lay your cards down

Lay your cards down is literal poker language and a metaphor for being open about intentions.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 0:54

pour some sugar on me

Sugar is playful figurative language for affection or sweetness. Pour + substance + on + person gives the physical pattern.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:06

tornado in my city

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air. The image grounds the song in Southern weather and creates urgency.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:24

red-cup kisses

Red cups are strongly associated with informal US parties. The compound compresses setting, alcohol culture and romance.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 2:00

dive bar

A dive bar is an informal, inexpensive and often shabby local bar. It can be affectionate rather than purely negative.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 2:27

heatwave

A heatwave is a prolonged period of unusually hot weather. Here heat also sustains the song's pressure-and-release imagery.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 3:36

solargenic and photogenic

Photogenic means looking good in photographs. Solargenic is playful word formation, inventing a parallel adjective from solar.

Grammar / 4 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:42

I will be damned if...

I'll be damned if introduces strong determination or disbelief. It is emphatic and mildly profane, so register matters.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:48

cannot slow-dance

Modal can takes a bare infinitive: can dance, cannot dance. Slow-dance functions as a compound verb.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:36

we survived

The past simple presents survival as a completed achievement. The following party invitation treats endurance as a reason to celebrate.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:12

I cannot read your mind

Read someone's mind means know their unspoken thoughts. Cannot makes the limitation explicit and supports the request for clearer signals.

Idioms / 4 cards

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:27

park your Lexus

Park is a direct imperative; Lexus is a luxury-car brand used as a compact marker of status before joining the dance.

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:33

throw your keys up

Throw your keys up suggests committing to the party and not driving away. It also works as a crowd-participation command.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:15

take it to the floor

Take it to the floor means move the activity to the dance floor. It is a party directive, not a literal instruction to place an object down.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:48

one step to the right

Dance instructions use imperatives and direction phrases. To the right marks movement toward a direction; on the right marks position.

Culture / 3 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 0:12

Texas Hold 'Em

Texas Hold 'Em is a community-card poker game. The title invokes Texas identity and risk even as the chorus rejects the game as the main event.

CULTURE / VIDEO 2:54

real-life boogie

Boogie is informal for dancing, especially with retro disco or funk associations. Real-life contrasts physical communal dancing with mediated experience.

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:15

hoops, spurs, boots

The list combines basketball and cowboy imagery, blending contemporary Black culture with country iconography.

Pronunciation / 2 cards

PHONETICS / VIDEO 2:39

run me to the left: rhythmic stress

The direction words left and right carry strong beats. Small grammatical words compress to keep the dance instruction moving.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 3:48

closing calls: shoot

Shoot functions as an energetic interjection and dance call. Its force comes from rhythm and context rather than literal meaning.

Keep learning

[Return to the synced learning experience.](#)