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MIXING

Preparing Files for Mixing

Essential guidelines for organizing and preparing your multitrack files for professional mixing.

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FOREWORD

A clean mix starts with clean files.

To ensure the best possible result when sending your project for mixing, it's important that everything is well-organized, properly labeled, and exported in a format that gives the mixing engineer full flexibility. Below you'll find a detailed checklist and explanations to help you prepare your session for mixing. These are guidelines, not gospel. They're refined over time, and there's more than one way to get a great result. If any questions should arise, feel free to get a hold of me either via mail or phone.

1. Exporting Your Tracks

Consolidate All Tracks

Every audio file should start from **bar 1 (or 00:00:00)**, even if the actual sound comes in later. This ensures that when all the files are imported into a new session, everything lines up perfectly.

Good example:

A vocal harmony that only plays in the chorus is still exported as a full-length file, starting at bar 1.

Bad example:

A vocal harmony stem that starts exactly when the part comes in. This will cause alignment issues.

Tip: Most **DAWs** have a "consolidate" or "bounce in place" feature for this.

Clear and Consistent Track Naming

Use clear, descriptive names for each **stem**. This saves time and avoids confusion for the mix engineer.

Recommended format:

`Instrument_Role_Position`

Examples:

- `LeadVox_Main`
- `Guitar_RhythmL`
- `Guitar_RhythmR`
- `Kick`
- `SnareTop`
- `SnareBottom`
- `BassDI`
- `BassAmp`
- `Synth_Arp`
- `BV_StackL`, `BV_StackR`

Avoid default names like `Audio_01.wav` or `Track5.wav`.

For the full breakdown of what a finished session should include per instrument, DI vs. mic'd tone, how many doubles, whether pitch and timing have already been checked, see the "What to Deliver to Your Mixer" checklist in each instrument's section of the [Home Recording guide](#):

- Drums
- Electric Guitar
- Bass
- Acoustic Guitar
- Vocals

Print Dry Tracks (No Effects)

Unless a specific effect is absolutely essential to the sound or the vibe (for example, a chorus on a synth or a creative vocal delay), export your tracks dry:

- No EQ
- No compression
- No reverb or delay

If you're unsure whether an effect should be kept or removed, you can send both a dry and a wet version, clearly labeled (e.g. `LeadVox_Main_Dry.wav` and `LeadVox_Main_Wet.wav`).

Audio File Format

- **Format:** WAV (or AIFF if needed)
- **Bit Depth:** 24-bit (or higher if recorded that way)
- **Sample Rate:** 44.1 kHz or 48 kHz (match your session settings)
- Do not send **MP3 files** unless there is no other option

Lossy files like MP3 reduce audio quality and can negatively affect the final mix.

2. Session Information & Extras

Provide a Tempo Map or BPM

Let your mix engineer know the **BPM** (tempo) of the track. If your song includes tempo changes, export and include a **tempo map** or a **MIDI** file with tempo automation.

Example:

"The track is in 6/8 at 90 BPM throughout."

Include a Reference Mix

Always include a **rough mix** of your track, even if it's not polished. This gives your engineer an idea of:

- How you envision the balance
- Panning ideas
- Effects usage
- Vocal placement

Label it clearly, for example: `TrackName_RoughMix.wav`.

Add Notes If Needed

If there are parts that need special attention (or things you're unsure about), include a short text file or an email with notes such as:

- "The vocals in the bridge need tuning."
- "The guitar solo is meant to sound raw."
- "Let me know if you think the harmonies are too loud."

More context always leads to a better result.

Keep It Simple

Don't send full **DAW** projects unless requested. Engineers often work in a different DAW than you, so audio files (WAVs) are the universal standard.

Example folder structure:

```
/TrackName_MixPrep/  
├─ Audio Stems/  
│   ├── LeadVox_Main.wav  
│   ├── LeadVox_Doubles.wav  
│   ├── Guitar_RhythmL.wav  
│   └─ ...  
├─ TrackName_RoughMix.wav  
├─ TrackNotes.txt  
└─ BPM_TempoMap.mid
```

3. Final Checklist

- ☐ All files start at bar 1 and are the same length
- ☐ Tracks are clearly named
- ☐ Effects removed unless essential
- ☐ 24-bit WAV, 44.1/48 kHz
- ☐ **Rough mix** included
- ☐ **BPM** and notes provided