

# MIX PREP GUIDE

HOW TO CORRECTLY SEND  
FILES TO THE MIX ENGINEER

GUIDE CREATED BY



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You've done it! You've recorded your songs or album(s) completely and you are ready to send your music to a professional mix engineer! You should be very excited now. The end is so near! Here are some things you can do to make the final steps of the recording project a breeze for both you and the engineer.

## 1. Manage expectations with your engineer

Have a conversation with the engineer over email ([info@mercenarymuzik.com](mailto:info@mercenarymuzik.com)) about the direction of your song, what your expectations are, and if you have any specific "must have" needs as far as processing, or effects. We also highly recommend you send the engineer reference tracks of professionally mixed tracks you would like your tracks to sound similar to. Discuss and agree upon the deliverables that you will be expecting from your mix engineer i.e. number and type of mixes, what file format, bit depth, sample rate, and max db peak that you will want for mastering. It is good to finalize what you agree upon in an email so that it can be referred back to later.

Common mix deliverables are:

- Master Mix (The final mix that will go to mastering if you want that separate)
- Vocal Up (Almost the same as the master mix, but with the vocals .5db to 1db louder)
- Backing Track (Everything but the lead vocals)
- Instrumental
- Lead Vox Acapella
- Background Vox Acapella

You may not need or want all of these different mix types, or you may want something not on this list. Let your mix engineer know at the beginning of the project.

## 2. Delete any plugins or tracks that are not important

Take some time and go through your session and clean up anything that is muted or bypassed. If you are not using it, the mix engineer doesn't need to see it.

## 3. Consolidate as many tracks as you can into mono or stereo files

If you have five different tracks for a single guitar take you may want to bounce those down to a single track in mono, unless there was a specific reason to spread the instrument take across the stereo field. In that case, then you could bounce it as a stereo track, but you may want to supply mono tracks with that just in case the mix engineer wants to change the panning. Make sure that you zero out any panning that you may have applied to tracks before you export the files. Ideally all the files will be mono, and panned center (except for synth, keys, and effects)

## 4. Name your tracks logically

Before exporting your project as stems, name all the tracks in a way that will help the mix engineer make sense of the session. Kick, Snare, HH, Tom 1, Floor Tom, Bass, Rhythm Guitar, Lead Guitar, Moog Synth, Lead Vox, Back Vox, are all examples of good track naming. If you have multiple mics of a single take make sure they are clearly identified. Ideally you would have consolidated these down to one track, but if you must pass multiple tracks of a single take make sure each take can be identified. RH1 sm57, RH1 direct, RH1 R121, RH2 sm57, RH2 direct, RH2 R121 would be examples of how to clearly identify two different takes of rhythm guitar with a multi mic setup.

## 5. Finish the editing and cleaning process

Edit and align your drums if needed, and tune your vocal tracks as necessary. Consolidate all those different guitar or vocal takes into a single composite take. Check your tracks for pops, glitches, noise, and clean up those discrepancies. Editing can take time, so doing this before handing it off to a mix engineer is one of the things you can do to help speed up the process. Many mix engineers will charge an hourly fee for editing tasks if there is still significant work to do.

## 6. Double check track levels

Make sure that none of your individual track levels are clipping. If you print tracks that are too hot with digital clipping, there is very little a mix engineer will be able to do for you, and most likely they will send the project back to you to fix. Louder is better, but too loud is bad.

## 7. Export tracks/stems

Export or bounce all your individual tracks as files. Most mix engineers can accept either .wav or .aiff files, but .wav is always the safe bet. Print any effects that you are absolutely sure of, or are critical to the sound of the instrument, to the track as you export. Reverb and delay that is not critical to the sound of a particular instrument should be bypassed. As you bounce, you may see an option to “normalize” the tracks.

**Make sure normalization is off.**

Quick tip: In almost every brand of recording software, there should be a way to export all the tracks individually all at once rather than bouncing them one at a time. Also, **BOUNCE ALL STEMS THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE SONG** so the engineer does not need to guess where to place the files in the song. **DOUBLE CHECK** to confirm all files are the same length and actually have sounds in them. (You would be surprised how often producers send me empty tracks).

## 8. Note the critical session information

Take note of the sample rate, bit depth, and tempo of your project. Include this information with whatever documentation you supply to your mix engineer.

## 9. Organize your files and info

Package up all the track files in a folder with the “Artist Name – Song Title – Date” as the folder name. Take a quick look at all the files inside and make sure that the names are clear, and your mix engineer will be able to make sense of them. You can zip this folder and send it to you mix engineer through email, WeTransfer.com, google drive/dropbox, or bring it in person on a flash drive or hard drive. Just make sure that if you are bringing an external hard drive that it is compatible with Apple computers.

And that’s it! You are now an absolute pro and every mix engineer you send files to will love you from now

on. If you have any further questions, email us at [info@mercenarymuzik.com](mailto:info@mercenarymuzik.com)!

### Important note:

Mercenary Muzik uses Pro Tools as the main mixing software. If your songs are already in ProTools, you can zip the entire song folder (including session file, audio files folder, backup sessions folder, etc) and send that instead of individual tracks. Make sure to render, freeze, or print all the tracks with important plugins. Mercenary Muzik has an incredible selection of plugins, but that does not mean we will for sure have the ones you used to create your song. If you would like to know what plugins we have, email us at [info@mercenarymuzik.com](mailto:info@mercenarymuzik.com)!

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- 4. Name your tracks logically**
- 5. Finish the editing and cleaning process**
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