

# How to Prepare Your Mix for Mastering

Proper mix preparation is crucial for achieving the best mastering results. Follow these guidelines to ensure your tracks are ready for the final process. For assistance, contact Prizm Online Mastering.





# Final Checklist

- Headroom:
  - Ensure -6dB to -3dB of headroom.
- File Format:
  - Export as WAV, 24-bit or 32-bit float.
- Sample Rate:
  - Set to 44.1kHz or higher.
- Metadata:
  - Properly named and tagged files.
- Reference Tracks:
  - Include if available.
- Noise and Clicks:
- Remove any unwanted noise.
- Fades and Crossfades:
- Ensure smooth transitions.
- Consistency:
- Check levels and sound consistency across the mix.

a good  
mix is  
a  
goes  
long way

# preparing your mix for mastering

- **Level Balancing:**
  - Ensure every part of your mix is audible without overpowering others.
- **Panning Techniques:**
  - Create a wide, immersive soundstage by distributing instruments across the stereo field.
- **EQ and Compression Basics:**
  - Use EQ to carve out space for each element and compression to control dynamics, maintaining the natural character of your sounds.

## Common Mixing Mistakes to Avoid

*Prizm*

- **Over Compression:**
  - Excessive compression can squash the dynamics, making your mix sound flat. Aim for a balance that retains energy and punch.
- **Imbalanced EQ:**
  - Avoid letting any frequency range dominate. An imbalanced EQ can make your mix sound too harsh, muddy, or unclear.
- **Phase Issues:**
  - Be mindful of phase relationships. Phase issues can cause elements to cancel out, leading to a thin or hollow sound.

## Tips for Achieving a Balanced Mix

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  - Ensure every part of your mix is audible without overpowering others.
- **Panning Techniques:**
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  - Use EQ to carve out space for each element and compression to control dynamics, maintaining the natural character of your sounds.

## Understanding Headroom

Headroom is the space between your audio signal's highest peak and the maximum level that can be recorded without distortion (0dB). Adequate headroom, typically between -6dB and -3dB, is crucial for mastering, allowing engineers to process your audio without causing clipping or distortion.

# Step-by-Step Guide to Adjusting Headroom

- **Open Your DAW:**
  - Load your final mix project.
- **Check Levels:**
  - Play through your mix and observe peak levels on your master fader.
- **Adjust if Necessary:**
  - peaks are above -3dB, lower the overall mix level.
- **Master Fader Adjustment:**
  - Lower the master fader to create necessary headroom.
- **Gain Staging:**
  - Ensure proper gain staging throughout your mix to maintain a clean signal path.

## Why a Good Mix Matters

In the world of music production, mastering is the final polish, but it all starts with a solid mix. Think of mastering as the icing on a cake; without a well-baked cake (a good mix), the icing can only do so much. A well-balanced mix lays the groundwork, allowing mastering engineers to enhance your track's overall sound without having to fix basic issues.

## Exporting Your Mix

When exporting, choose between WAV and AIFF formats. Both are uncompressed and high-quality, but WAV is more universally accepted.



# Recommended Settings

File Format:  
Export as WAV.

Bit Depth:  
24-bit or 32-bit float.

Sample Rate:  
44.1kHz or higher.

**Sample Rate:**  
Number of  
samples per  
second.

Common rates  
are 44.1kHz,  
48kHz, and  
higher.

**Bit Depth:**  
Number of bits  
per sample,  
affecting dynamic  
range.

Common depths  
are 16-bit, 24-bit,  
and 32-bit float.

# additional preparation tips

## Naming Conventions and Metadata

Properly naming and tagging your files streamlines the mastering process.  
Include details like the song title, artist name, and mix version.

## Reference Tracks and Notes

Providing reference tracks and notes about your mix helps mastering engineers understand your artistic vision.