A Guide to Sending Me Your Multitrack Files

Use this guide to prepare your files before sending them to me for mixing.

The goal is to deliver a clean, organised and technically consistent set of audio files so I can spend my time doing what you hired me to do: **making your music sound great.**

Proper preparation saves time, avoids technical problems and helps me focus on the creative side of your mix rather than fixing editing issues, sorting out poorly labelled files or trying to work out which take you intended to use.

Please take the time to follow these guidelines before sending your session.

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1. Finalise Your Arrangements and Edits

Before exporting, make sure your production is finished and you're happy with the performances and arrangements.

Commit to your decisions. I don't want to guess which vocal take you prefer or which guitar part belongs in the final arrangement. Send only the tracks you want included in the mix.

- **Finish your comping and tuning.** Complete your vocal comping, pitch correction and timing adjustments before exporting.
- **Tighten your performances.** Fix any timing issues that need attention. Don't leave obvious editing problems for the mixing stage.
- **Clean up your audio.** Remove unwanted background noise, headphone spill where practical, mouth clicks, microphone bumps and other unnecessary sounds.
- **Add fades and crossfades.** Apply short fades (typically 10–15 ms where appropriate) at edit points to prevent clicks and pops. Use longer fades where the material requires them.
- **Check every edit.** Make sure edits don't cut off important transients or leave unwanted sounds, such as extra drum hits or audio bleeding through from another section. Sometimes you'll need to move an edit point slightly earlier, before the beat or bar.

Print essential sounds

If a particular plugin, tuning effect, guitar amp simulation or other processing is essential to the sound of a track, make sure that sound is captured in an audio file.

For example, if you've created a guitar sound using a specific amp simulator, don't assume I'll have the same plugin or be able to recreate it exactly.

When in doubt, send me both the processed and unprocessed versions, clearly labelled.

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2. Standardise Your Export Settings

Consistency is essential. Every track needs to start at exactly the same point so I can import your files into my session and have everything line up correctly.

Start every file at Bar 1, Beat 1

Every audio file must start at the same session start point, even if the instrument doesn't play until much later in the song.

Export or consolidate all tracks from Bar 1, Beat 1 through to the end of the song, including any reverb tails, delays or other sounds that continue after the final note.

Don't export each track only from the point where it starts playing. If you do, the files won't automatically line up when imported into my session.

Use WAV files at your session's native settings

Please send high-quality, uncompressed WAV files.

- **Bit depth:** Use the session's native bit depth where practical, such as 24-bit or 32-bit float.
- **Sample rate:** Keep the sample rate you recorded and mixed the session at, such as 44.1 kHz or 48 kHz.
- **Format:** WAV only. Please don't send MP3s or other lossy compressed audio formats.

Don't upsample or downsample your files just to match a different setting. If you're unsure about your export settings, let me know.

Mono or stereo?

Export tracks in the format that makes sense for the source.

- **Mono:** Lead vocals, bass, kick, snare and other genuinely mono sources.
- **Stereo:** Stereo keyboards, stereo synths, overheads, stereo effects and other sources with meaningful left/right information.

Please don't export everything as stereo files unnecessarily. A mono source should generally remain mono unless there is a specific reason for it to be stereo.

3. Effects, Processing and Headroom

I want to receive the best representation of your recording while retaining the flexibility to shape the mix.

Remove unnecessary processing

Unless a particular effect is essential to the sound, bypass general tracking or mixing processing such as:

- EQ
- Compression
- Noise gates
- Limiters
- Other corrective or mix-bus processing

If you've recorded through hardware processing and that sound is already printed into the recording, don't worry about trying to undo it. Just let me know what was used.

Don't remove processing that defines the sound of the production. If a compressor, distortion, filter or other effect is an important part of the sound, keep a processed version available.

Provide wet and dry versions when needed

For effects that are important to the identity of a track, send both versions where possible:

- **Dry:** The unaffected recording.
- **Wet:** The recording with the essential effect printed into the audio.

For example, you might send a clean guitar DI alongside a distorted guitar printed through an amp simulator.

Clearly label both files so I know which is which.

Turn off master-bus processing

Before exporting, bypass mastering and mix-bus plugins on your master output, including:

- Limiters
- Mastering compressors
- Loudness maximisers
- Other processing intended to make the overall mix louder

I need the individual tracks with enough headroom to build the mix properly.

Leave plenty of headroom

Make sure individual tracks aren't clipping or digitally distorting unintentionally.

As a general guide, aim for individual track peaks somewhere around **-18 dBFS to -10 dBFS**, where practical. This isn't a strict requirement for every instrument, but it is a useful target.

Don't normalise every track to maximum level or push everything into the red. Louder files aren't automatically better files.

If distortion is an intentional part of the sound, that's fine. Just make sure it's deliberate rather than an accidental result of clipping.

MIDI instruments and virtual instruments

If your session contains MIDI instruments, please send both:

- The MIDI files, including any relevant performance or arrangement information.
- Printed audio files of the instruments as they sound in your production.

For example, print your piano, strings, organ, synths and other virtual instruments to audio.

This gives me the actual sound of your production while preserving the option to make changes to the MIDI arrangement if needed.

Essential plugins

If any plugin is essential to a track's sound, print it to audio and also provide the unaffected version where possible.

Clearly label both files and tell me which plugin was used.

For example:

- `Guitar DI`
- `Guitar Dirty - UA Marshall JMP`
- `Vocal Wet - Waves Vocal Plugin`

If you want me to recreate a sound using the same or a similar plugin, let me know the plugin name and any important settings.

4. Organise and Label Your Files

Clear file names make a huge difference. They help me understand your session quickly and keep the mix organised from the start.

Use descriptive track names

Avoid generic names such as `Audio 1_bounce`, `Track 12` or `TrapKick_v3_final_final`.

Use names that tell me exactly what I'm listening to.

Good examples:

- `Kick In`
- `Kick Out`
- `Snare Top`
- `Bass DI`
- `Lead Vox`
- `Backing Vox High`
- `Acoustic Guitar L`
- `Acoustic Guitar R`
- `Guitar DI`
- `Guitar Dirty - Amp Sim`
- `Piano Stereo`
- `Synth Pad Stereo`

If you have multiple takes, layers or effects, identify them clearly.

Include the song's BPM and key

Please provide the following information with your files:

- Song title and artist name
- Tempo (BPM)
- Musical key, if known
- Any tempo or time-signature changes
- A lyric sheet, preferably with chords

If the song contains tempo changes, please include a tempo map as a MIDI file and a printed click track that follows the changes. This helps ensure the session is aligned correctly.

Include track notes where useful

A simple spreadsheet listing your tracks is extremely helpful, particularly for larger sessions.

Useful columns include:

- Track number
- Track name or instrument
- Microphone or DI used
- Preamp or recording chain
- Tracking notes
- Mix notes
- Plugins used

You don't need to fill in every column for every track. The aim is to provide useful information that helps me understand what was recorded and what you want done with it.

Example track notes:

Track	Source	Recording details	Notes
1	Kick In	D6 / Focusrite	Distorted; feel free to sample-replace
2	Snare	SM57 / Neve preamp	Over-compressed during tracking; consider sample replacement
10	Guitar DI	Focusrite	Clean DI used for the amp simulator
11	Guitar Dirty	UA Marshall JMP	Processed version of the guitar DI
17	Main Vocal	U47 / Neve preamp / LA-2A	Main lead vocal

These notes help me understand the recording, identify any potential issues and make informed decisions during the mix.

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5. If You're Using Pro Tools

I mix in Pro Tools, so if you're also using Pro Tools, **the best option is to send me a copy of your complete session** as well as your consolidated audio files.

In Pro Tools, use **File → Save Copy In**.

Make sure you:

- Select the appropriate session audio format and bit depth.
- Match the session's sample rate.
- Choose WAV as the audio file type.
- Enable **Copy Audio Files** so the session includes the audio it needs.
- Save the copied session into a new folder rather than sending a session that relies on files stored elsewhere.

This gives me the original session structure, track names, routing and other useful information, making it easier to understand your production.

Please also provide the consolidated audio files as described in this guide. They give me a reliable, straightforwar

d way to import the tracks if needed.

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6. Include a Rough Mix and Reference Tracks

Your rough mix is one of the most useful things you can send me.

Please include your latest demo or rough mix so I can hear how you intended the song to sound before mixing begins.

It helps me understand:

- The overall balance you're aiming for.
- Which instruments should sit forward or back.
- The relationship between the vocals and instruments.
- The energy, dynamics and feel of the production.
- Any effects or sounds that are important to the arrangement.

The rough mix doesn't need to be polished. It's a reference for your intentions, not a test of how well you've mixed it yourself.

Include commercial reference tracks

You can also send one or two commercial tracks that represent the sound you're aiming for.

These might demonstrate a particular vocal sound, drum tone, guitar character, low-end balance, stereo width or overall mix aesthetic.

Tell me what you like about each reference. It's much more useful to know that you love the vocal placement or punchy drums than simply being told to make it sound like a particular artist.

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7. Package and Deliver Your Files

Once everything is prepared, put the files into a clearly named folder.

Use this naming format:

Artist Name - Song Title - BPM - Key

For example:

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The Example Band - Midnight Drive - 120 BPM - A Minor
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Organise your files into subfolders if needed. A larger project might look like this:

- `01 - Audio Tracks`
- `02 - Pro Tools Session`
- `03 - Rough Mix`
- `04 - Reference Tracks`
- `05 - MIDI and Tempo Map`
- `06 - Lyrics, Chords and Track Notes`

Not every project needs every folder. Keep it simple and include whatever is relevant to your session.

Once organised, compress the project into a single ZIP file. Use standard ZIP compression; there's no need to reduce the quality of the audio files themselves.

Upload the ZIP to Google Drive, Dropbox, MEGA or another reliable file-sharing service, then send me a download link. Make sure the sharing permissions allow me to access the files.

Before sending the link, double-check that the upload is complete and that all the required files are included.

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8. Most Importantly: Tell Me What You Want

All the technical preparation in the world can't replace good communication.

Tell me what matters most to you about the song.

Is the vocal the main focus? Do you want the guitars to dominate? Are the keys essential to the atmosphere? Should the drums feel huge and aggressive, or natural and understated? Do you want a polished, radio-ready production or something raw and live?

Tell me what you love about the song, what you want to emphasise and what you don't like about the rough mix.

If there are particular moments that matter to you, point them out. If there's a sound you absolutely want to preserve, let me know before I start.

There are no right or wrong answers here. The more I understand your vision, the better I can tailor the mix to suit your music.

Quick Pre-Delivery Checklist

Before sending your files, make sure you've ticked off the following:

- All arrangements, vocal comps, tuning and edits are finalised.
- Unwanted noise and editing clicks have been cleaned up.
- Every audio track starts at Bar 1, Beat 1.
- All tracks are exported as WAV files at the appropriate bit depth and native sample rate.
- Mono and stereo formats are correct.
- Essential effects have been printed, with dry versions supplied where needed.
- Master-bus mastering plugins are bypassed.
- Individual tracks are not unintentionally clipping.
- MIDI files and printed virtual instrument audio are included where applicable.
- Files are clearly labelled and organised.
- BPM, key, lyrics, chords and any tempo map are included where applicable.
- A rough mix and any reference tracks are included.
- The project is zipped, uploaded and accessible via the download link.
- I've included notes explaining what I want from the mix.

That's it! Follow these guidelines and we'll spend less time sorting out files and more time making your music sound the way you imagined it.

If you're unsure about anything, or your project doesn't fit neatly into these guidelines, get in touch before exporting. I'm happy to help you work out the best way to prepare your session.