

Music Mastering Tips and Tricks for a Professional Sound

Being a musician takes skill, passion, and unwavering determination. Not only do they strive to create new pieces that resonate with their listeners, but they also seek that feeling that tells them their work is just right. All of this is no easy feat, especially when it's done over and over again.

You've probably felt it yourself before—that feeling of creating a single song or an entire playlist that's been fine-tuned to perfection. As a musician, you always want to share your best work with the world, but how do you know when your music has truly hit the mark?

This is where music mastering becomes valuable. It's the final touch on your audio—the cherry on top, so to speak. Here, we'll be offering some of our top tips and tricks for music mastering so that you can take your tracks from amateur to professional in no time.

Our Top Tips for Music Mastering

- 1. Get Your EQ and Compression Settings Right**
- 2. Keep Your Volume Levels Consistent**
- 3. Use Reference Tracks for Comparison**
- 4. Test on Different Systems and Devices**
- 5. Take Frequent Breaks**

The Top 5 Tips and Tricks for Music Mastering to Achieve a Professional Sound

1. Get Your EQ and Compression Settings Right

Equalization (EQ) and compression are two key tools you'll want to use while perfecting your music. EQ is what helps balance the different parts of your track, correcting inconsistencies and helping it get to a place where it sounds just right.

Compression helps control the volume of your track, allowing you to make the louder parts quieter and the quieter parts louder as needed. Using compression ensures that there isn't too much variation in the volume, making the song sound more consistent throughout.

Why It Matters:

Using EQ can bring clarity and balance to your track, making sure individual sounds aren't overpowering one another. Compression helps keep the dynamics of the track consistent, giving your work a more cohesive sound. While compression can add punchiness, increase detail, and make everything sound fuller, in music mastering, it's usually used to manage the loudness and softness of the track.

How To Do It:

- **EQ:** Start by using a parametric EQ to make small adjustments, making certain sounds louder or cutting them out altogether. Next, use high-pass filters to remove any unwanted low-frequency noise and mid/side EQ to adjust the stereo width and give your song more depth.
- **Compression:** Apply a small amount of compression to fix the volume differences in your track, making sure you're not changing its natural flow. This will help maintain the track's punch and presence while ensuring consistency from start to finish.

2. Keep Your Volume Levels Consistent

Throughout the music mastering process, it's crucial to monitor your track at a consistent volume level, as this will help you make accurate decisions as you perfect it. When you keep the volume steady, you can judge the balance and dynamics of your mix more effectively and ensure your perception of the song isn't being inadvertently affected.

Why It Matters:

Consistent monitoring levels are crucial because they prevent your ears from getting fatigued and allow you to maintain a stable perspective of your song each time you're working on it. If you keep changing the volume, your ears can become tired, which can skew your judgment. By sticking with a steady volume and keeping your hand off that button as much as possible, you can be confident that your decisions are based on the true sound of the track, leading to a professional final product.

How To Do It:

Implementing consistent monitoring levels involves setting your monitoring volume at a comfortable level and sticking to it throughout your music mastering session. Avoid adjusting the volume knob too frequently, as this can disrupt your perception and lead to inconsistent results. By keeping the volume constant, you can make more accurate and consistent decisions, resulting in a track that's mastered with quality in mind.

3. Use Reference Tracks for Comparison

During the music mastering process, reference tracks are one of the most important tools you can lean on. Think of them as benchmarks that you use to compare your current track to your ideal track. Reference tracks set industry standards and are something you'll want to continuously come back to while refining your work.

Why It Matters:

Using reference tracks helps you maintain perspective on your track's balance, tone, and overall sound quality. They give you a clear baseline to aim for, ensuring that your track not only matches—but even exceeds—the quality of other professional songs within your genre.

Reference tracks can reveal issues you might have not otherwise noticed and help you make decisions with more ease. If you're ever second guessing yourself about a change you'd like to make, you can listen to the reference track, make a comparison, and determine how potential adjustments will affect the overall sound.

How To Do It:

When choosing reference tracks, you'll want to pick songs that are similar to your own, both in style and genre. Consider whether these tracks have been through the music mastering process and have successfully achieved a sound you admire.

Once you've settled on these tracks, give yourself some time to become familiar with them, noting the different dynamics that make them sound great. Then, consistently compare them with your own work, making changes that align your song with a professional sound. The goal isn't to copy these tracks, but rather to retain the same kind of quality as you work on your own track.

4. Test on Different Systems and Devices

Listening to your song on various playback systems can help ensure that it sounds its best no matter what device or system it's streaming from. You might use headphones, car stereos, tablets, earbuds, or different types of speakers to make sure that the quality remains the same across devices.

Why It Matters:

Certain aspects of your song may not be clear on specific devices, making it important to listen to the track using different systems. For example, you might notice that when listening to the song on a car speaker, the bass is too overpowering, but when listening to it using headphones, the bass seems just right, but the vocals are overshadowed.

The goal is for your listeners to be able to enjoy your music regardless of *how* they choose to listen. Monitoring your music on different systems can help you catch and correct potential problems early on in the music mastering process.

How To Do It:

To effectively monitor your song on different systems, test it on a variety of devices, such as headphones, car speakers, home stereo systems, and portable speakers. As you listen, make note of any issues that arise, such as imbalances in certain frequencies or sounds that are too loud or unclear. Then, work to address these issues to create a solid track that holds up on any playback system.

5. Take Frequent Breaks

During the music mastering process, you'll want to take regular breaks to give your ears time to rest and reset. This will allow you to return with a fresh perspective. If your ears become too accustomed to the sound, you may overlook important details and miss out on doing what's best for the track.

Why It Matters:

Neglecting to take time to rest can cause you to miss issues with your tracks, as you may be too tired to catch what sounds out of place. A set of fresh, rested ears can help restore your sense of judgment, allowing you to stay alert and attentive to the small details.

How To Do It:

Taking small, 10 or 15-minute breaks every hour can help prevent ear fatigue and give you the energy you need to keep going. Stepping away for longer periods, like a day at a time, may be even more effective, especially if your piece requires more work. When you come back, you'll be able to catch any issues you may have missed before.

The Takeaway

Music mastering is all about being patient and paying attention to the tiniest of details. It's a process that takes time to become skilled at, so don't beat yourself up if you aren't an expert in all things audio overnight. By learning how to make subtle, calculated adjustments, maintaining consistency and clarity, and rewarding your hard work with regular breaks, you can improve your skills over time.

Once you're ready to get published and send your music out into the world, it's important to partner with someone whose expertise you know you can trust. **Sugo Music Group** has been helping artists perfect their work and share it globally for over thirty years. By working with one of the industry's top leaders, you can get your music the exposure it deserves and become the musician you've always wanted to be.