

Mastering Checklist¹

So you're ready for mastering! Please review the following checklist to make sure the process flows as smoothly as possible. These are MANDATORY guidelines.

1. Stereo track, interleaved.²
 - 1.1. Sample rate AT LEAST 44.1kHz/16-bit for ANY track at time of recording. Higher rates preferred: For rock band or loud music no need to go over 48kHz/24-bit; solo acoustic instrumentals (especially music with dynamically contrasting material) should be recorded at 96kHz/24- or 32-bit; voice & broadcasting monologue should be 48kHz/24-bit. Please contact us if your sample rate exceeds 96kHz.
 - 1.1.1. Do not up-sample after recording, there is no advantage.
 - 1.2. Only acceptable digital formats are WAV or AIFF. Absolutely no mp3's will be mastered!
2. No effects on the Master Bus.
 - 2.1. No compression, limiting, or other effect should be on the Master Bus when you bounce your stereo mix.
 - 2.2. No dithering.
 - 2.3. No automation. Please remove any master volume fade-ins/outs. Mark the time where you would like such automation and inform the mastering engineer.
3. Headroom. Please give at least 3 to 6 dBFS headroom, your highest volume peak should be between -3 and -6dB.
4. At least half a second of silence at the beginning of the track. [Usually a full bar is good]
5. Tempo information if applicable. [This is optional but highly recommended as it speeds up the mastering process. The less time spent navigating your track the less money you spend!]

¹ These guidelines are for digital CD "Redbook" format. The resulting masters may be used professionally for Compact Disc distribution and digital vendors such as iTunes, CD Baby, Tunecore, et. al.

² Stem tracks may be submitted however the mastering process involves a higher hourly rate.