Mixing & Mastering Cheat Sheet

Starting numbers for every step, from the first fader to the final file.

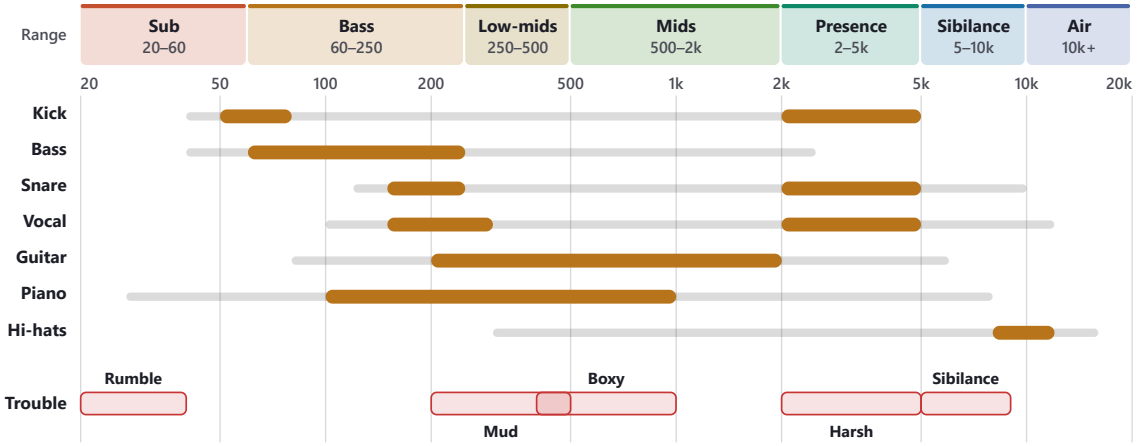
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THE SIGNAL PATH mixing 1–7 · mastering 8–9

1 Record	2 Gain	3 EQ	4 Compress	5 Space	6 Stereo	7 Bus	8 Master	9 Export

Recording peaks: **−10 to −6 dBFS** Track average: **About −18 dBFS (RMS)** Mix bus peaks: **−6 to −3 dBFS**

EQ FREQUENCY CHART BY INSTRUMENT card: EQ



Gray = where it lives · color = where it matters most · Hz, log scale

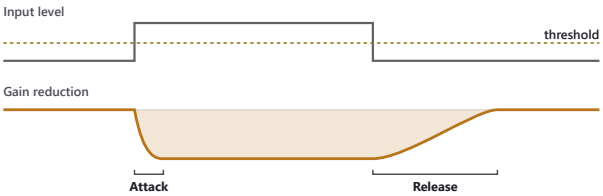
INSTRUMENT BY INSTRUMENT

INSTRUMENT	WEIGHT	OFTEN CUT	BITE & AIR
Kick	50–80 Hz	300–500 Hz (boxy)	2–5 kHz (click)
Bass	60–120 Hz	200–300 Hz (mud)	700 Hz–1.5 kHz (growl)
Snare	150–250 Hz	400–800 Hz (ring)	2–5 kHz (crack)
Lead vocal	150–300 Hz	Below 80–100 Hz, 200–400 Hz (mud)	2–5 kHz, 10–12 kHz (air)
Acoustic guitar	100–250 Hz	200–400 Hz (mud)	2–5 kHz, 10 kHz+ (sparkle)
Electric guitar	100–250 Hz	Below 80–100 Hz, 200–500 Hz	2–4 kHz (bite)
Piano	80–200 Hz	200–500 Hz (mud)	2–5 kHz (attack)
Hi-hats & cymbals	—	Below 300–500 Hz	8–12 kHz (shimmer)

COMPRESSION SETTINGS card: compression

SOURCE	RATIO	REDUCTION	ATTACK	RELEASE
Lead vocal	3:1–4:1	3–6 dB	5–15 ms	50–100 ms
Bass	4:1	3–6 dB	10–30 ms	50–100 ms
Kick	4:1	3–5 dB	10–30 ms	50–100 ms
Snare	3:1–4:1	3–5 dB	5–20 ms	50–100 ms
Acoustic guitar	2:1–3:1	2–4 dB	10–20 ms	About 100 ms
Drum bus	2:1–4:1	2–3 dB	10–30 ms	Timed to the groove
Mix bus	1.5:1–2:1	1–2 dB	About 30 ms	Auto

Lower the threshold until you see the reduction, then match the output with makeup gain.



Attack 10–30 ms keeps the punch; under 5 ms tames it. Release recovers before the next hit.

VOCAL CHAIN card: vocals

1. Clean edit noise and breaths, high-pass 80–100 Hz → **2. EQ** cut mud, add a little presence → **3. Compress** 3:1–4:1, 3–6 dB → **4. De-ess** 5–9 kHz, 2–4 dB → **5. Space** plate reverb and a timed delay, on sends

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Page 2: space, mastering, loudness and export.

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REVERB & DELAY card: reverb & delay

TYPE	DECAY	SOUNDS LIKE	GREAT ON
Room	0.3–1 s	Tight and natural	Drums, guitars, a dry vocal
Plate	1–2.5 s	Smooth and bright	Vocals, snare
Hall	1.5–3 s+	Big and slow	Ballads, strings, pads

Reverb and delay on sends. Pre-delay 20–60 ms; high-pass the return at 200–300 Hz.

DELAY TIMES AT 120 BPM

1000	500	375	250	167	125
1/2 note	1/4 note	Dotted 1/8	1/8 note	1/8 triplet	1/16 note

Delay in ms = 60,000 ÷ BPM. Any tempo: the calculator.

MASTERING CHAIN card: mastering chain

1. EQ broad, 0.5–2 dB → **2. Compress** glue, 1–2 dB → **3. Saturate** optional warmth → **4. Stereo** width check, mono lows → **5. Limit** −11 LUFS, −1.0 dBTP

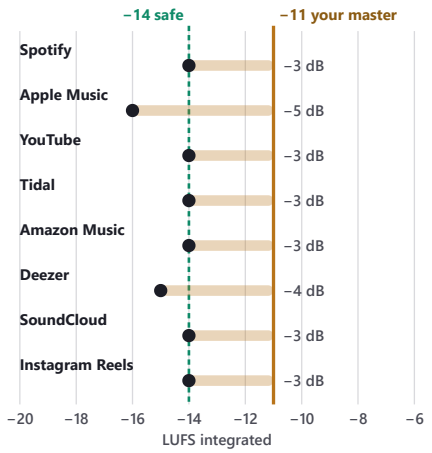
EQ moves	**0.5–2 dB, wide**
Compression	**1.5:1–2:1, 1–2 dB of reduction**
Limiter ceiling	**−1.0 dBTP**
Target	**−11 LUFS (or −14 streaming-safe)**

Gleam does these finishing steps free in your browser: about −11 LUFS with a −1.0 dBTP ceiling, or −14 LUFS on Low. Real WAV, nothing uploads.

GleamAI is the optional paid master ($1.99 a track): it plans your song section by section with one of five AI mastering engineers, and you can preview it free.

LOUDNESS BY PLATFORM card: loudness

PLATFORM	PLAYS AT LUFS	PEAK CEILING dBTP	YOUR −11 turned down
Spotify	−14	−1.0	**−3 dB**
Apple Music	−16	−1.0	**−5 dB**
YouTube	−14	−1.0	**−3 dB**
Tidal	−14	−1.0	**−3 dB**
Amazon Music	−14	−2.0	**−3 dB**
Deezer	−15	−1.0	**−4 dB**
SoundCloud	−14	−1.0	**−3 dB**
Instagram Reels	−14	−1.0	**−3 dB**
TikTok feed	none	−1.0	**plays as is**



Release default −11 LUFS, −1.0 dBTP; streaming-safe −14 LUFS. Levels as measured July 2026. TikTok's feed plays files as they are.

EXPORT SETTINGS + CHECKLIST card: export

FILE	FORMAT	NOTES
Mix for mastering	24-bit (or 32-bit float) WAV, session sample rate	No limiter, no normalize, peaks −6 to −3 dBFS
Master for streaming	24-bit WAV, 44.1 kHz or higher	Check what your distributor accepts; −1.0 dBTP ceiling
Master for CD	16-bit, 44.1 kHz WAV	Dither when you go down to 16-bit
Preview or sharing	MP3, 320 kbps	Not for your distributor

BEFORE YOU EXPORT

- ☐ Mix bus peaks around −6 to −3 dBFS, with no clipping on any bus
- ☐ Played once in mono: nothing disappears
- ☐ Checked on earbuds and a phone speaker
- ☐ Compared with a reference at matched loudness
- ☐ Fade-ins, fade-outs and the last tail are clean
- ☐ Exported at the session sample rate, 24-bit
- ☐ Dither only on the final 16-bit file
- ☐ No limiter and no normalize on the mix you send to mastering
- ☐ File named clearly: artist, title, and mix or master