

## Tracking Tips

### General

- Determine recording sequence (plan of attack) in advance.
- Use click track or drum loop if possible – this will make editing easier later on. Have an idea of time signature and tempo of the song.
- 1 or more bar click or count intro before song starts.
- Record “Scratch” tracks to give reference points for recording real tracks. Can be some or all instruments & vocals. Can be a live performance. *Note – These often get used, but don’t tell anyone.*
- Set levels to peak at -5dB or less. Can be amplified later, but clips can’t be fixed.
- Add some reverb or delay to monitor mix to performer taste (if possible).
- Re-record main vocal at least 2 times. Consider additional takes for each instrument / key part.
- Repetitive parts don’t have to be recorded for the full length of the song.
- Record as dry (no reverb, delay, or other effects) and flat (no EQ) as possible. Exception – where effect can’t be re-created or changes the way the player plays (such as electric guitar distortion).
- Play through mistakes. Delete files until a “Keeper” take is recorded. *Note – Files from every take are saved to the hard drive and will still be available later.*
- Save the session often.
- Stay positive!!!

### Direct Recording (No Mic)

- Connect instrument output or amp direct output to recording interface.
- Use a Y cable to monitor and/or record with an amp also.
- Pros – Quick, perfect isolation, can monitor without headphones, amp won’t color sound, can add amp plugin later.
- Cons – May not sound normal / good (depending on interface), no amp coloring, no room sound, can have level and/or impedance mismatches (a cheap direct box can help with many of these issues).

### Mic Recording

- Determine how to isolate sound for each track (minimize bleed and reflection):
  - Distance.
  - Aim microphones away from loud sound sources.
  - Use headphones or very low volumes for monitoring.
  - Position mic to minimize reflection from walls, floor, and ceiling.
  - Use sound deadening and isolation devices.
- Test different mics and positions to find what works well for you.
- Move Mic 10”+ away from source due to bass proximity effect.
- Pros – Better captures actual sound of performance, may get some nice room sound, only method for many instruments.
- Cons – Takes longer (trial and error), isolation issues, cheap mics may be underwhelming.

## Tracking Tips

### Setup for Specific Instruments

- Vocals
  - Preferred method – Large diaphragm condenser mic.
  - Second method - SM58 or other dynamic mic.
  - Place pop filter half way between mic and singer. Use isolation shield if available.
  - No touching stand, slapping, stomping, or paper shaking.
- Acoustic Guitar
  - Preferred method – Direct (if interface sounds good).
  - Second method – Large diaphragm condenser aimed at 15<sup>th</sup> fret from above.
  - Use two tracks to capture both direct and mic.
- Electric guitar
  - Preferred method – Mic with SM57 (or other dynamic mic) 10” away and off axis from speaker.
  - Second method - Direct via amp, simulated amp, or right from pickup (can use amp simulation later).
  - Do not back amp right up to a wall. Aim angled in room.
  - Use Noise Gate or other tool to minimize amp/effects noise and humming. Experiment with facing instrument in different directions.
- Bass
  - Preferred method - Direct via amp, simulated amp, or right from pickup (can use amp simulation later).
  - Second method – Mic with drum dynamic mic or large diaphragm condenser mic 12” away and off axis from speaker.
  - Do not back amp right up to a wall. Aim angled in room.
- Drums
  - 4 drum mics. Place in front of kick (kick dynamic or large condenser mic), overhead left and right (small condenser or dynamic), and on snare (SM57). Can also close mic toms if need. If only two mics and/or channels, use two overheads but play with different locations. Also, can use guitar speaker as a kick mic.
- Keyboards
  - Preferred method – Direct via keyboard output.

### Prepare For Mixing

- Process each track to set max level to -5dB. Preferred method is to Hard Limit with <.01% clipping (eliminates stray spikes). Secondary method is to Normalize. Note - This is destructive editing, so Save-As a new file name.
- Clean out extra noise in sections where instrument is not playing (leave singer breathing).
- Remove any pops, clicks.
- Use Noise Reduction, Noise Gate, or other tool to eliminate amp noise, electrical humming, etc.