



## Preparing files for mastering

### Headroom

Ideally audio files should have some headroom, with the peak level sitting below full scale. If clipping or saturation is part of the production, keep it; that's a creative choice and it masters fine. The thing to avoid is unintended clipping at export, which adds distortion that can't be removed later. Make it sound right to your ear and leave the peaks a touch below full scale.

### Master-bus processing

If you've used any processing on the master bus while mixing (compression, EQ, saturation, clipping, limiting), please send me that version: the mix the artist has heard and signed off on. That's the reference I need to work from. I treat everything else on the bus as part of the mix, so leave it in. If there's a final limiter, a second export with just that limiter bypassed is useful; and if you're unsure about any of the bus processing, send a version without it as well and I'll compare.

### Tops and tails

Leave a few seconds at either end of your audio, silence or noise. If you'd like me to fade the audio, include notes or audio examples. Snipped starts and endings can be repaired if needed.

### Edits and crossfades

Clicks and pops are usually caused by edits between takes without a crossfade, or bass tracks snipped mid-cycle. Limiters and compressors used in mastering can make these more audible. They can be repaired in mastering, but the least destructive fix is during mixing. Spend an extra few minutes listening through your mixes for export errors.

### Digital formats

WAV or AIFF, up to 32-bit float, 192 kHz. Leave audio at the rate it was recorded and mixed at; don't up-convert for mastering. Apple Digital Masters requires 24-bit minimum.

MP3, M4A, AAC and other lossy formats aren't accepted unless a lossless codec was used. If compressed files are all that's available, please say so in your session notes.

Physical media: hard drive / USB stick, DAT, or CD/DVD (data disc preferred; CD-R acceptable).

### Analogue

$\frac{1}{4}$ " tape at 15 or 30 ips. Please include alignment tones at 40 Hz, 100 Hz, 1 kHz and 10 kHz at your noted reference level, and upload digital reference files if possible.

## Vinyl

The longer the playing time per side, the lower the record's playback level will need to be. Because of the reduced circumference and poorer high-frequency response towards the centre of the disc, slower or softer tracks are often placed there. Sibilance, excessive high-frequency content and hard-panned low-frequency elements are the most common causes of cutting problems.

| FORMAT        | MAXIMUM PER SIDE | OPTIMAL PER SIDE |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| 7" · 45 rpm   | 5 min            | 4 min            |
| 7" · 33⅓ rpm  | 8 min            | 6 min            |
| 10" · 45 rpm  | 9 min            | 7 min            |
| 10" · 33⅓ rpm | 14 min           | 10 min           |
| 12" · 45 rpm  | 14 min           | 12 min           |
| 12" · 33⅓ rpm | 22 min           | 18 min           |

## Delivery and confidentiality

Previews and finished masters go out via Samplify. Streaming links can be individually watermarked on request, so if anything leaks it can be traced to a specific recipient. Unreleased material is treated as confidential and is never placed in public folders.