

# STEP-BY-STEP MIXING CHEAT SHEET



## STEP 0: PREP THE MIX

**Remember: every minute you mix is valuable! Your ears become less accurate the longer you listen to a song. Properly prep your session so that you can mix less.**

- Organize your tracks by instrument
- Label your tracks correctly
- Color-code your tracks
- Set up your routing for group busses
- Gain stage each track - make sure it is in the [digital sweet spot](#)
- Any preliminary EQ (*obvious room resonances, etc.*)
- Import your reference mixes
- Add your mix buss plugins (but keep them bypassed)

## STEP 1: BALANCE

**80% of the mix comes from how well your tracks are balanced. Invest plenty of time on this step!**

- Loop the loudest part of the song
- Turn all your volume faders down
- Bring up most important instrument first
- Then bring up the next important instrument, and so on
- Spend time tweaking the balance between these tracks
- Return to this step after both Step 2 and Step 3

## STEP 2: FIX

**Don't change things for the sake of it. Find problems and solve them. Be intentional about everything in this step!**

- Listen through the mix, write down any problems you hear
- Solve the big problems that can be fixed with mix buss processing
- Then solve smaller problems on instrument busses and individual tracks

**Problems you might find:**

- Out-of-tune tracks (*fix with tuning*)
- Out-of-time tracks (*fix with time-alignment*)
- Tracks that are too dynamic or uncontrolled (*fix with compression*)
- Tracks that with unbalanced frequencies (*fix with EQ*)
- Tracks that do not "fit" together (*Fix with [Range Allocation](#)*)
- Tracks with clicks, pops, or ambient noise (*Fix with a noise gate*)

## STEP 3: ENHANCE

**This step is to make the song sound larger-than-life, professional, and exciting. Here are some tools you can use:**

- Automation
- Compression and Limiting
- EQ
- Saturation and Distortion
- Modulation effects (*chorus, tremolo, etc.*)
- Panning
- Delay and Reverb
- Spot effects