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 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