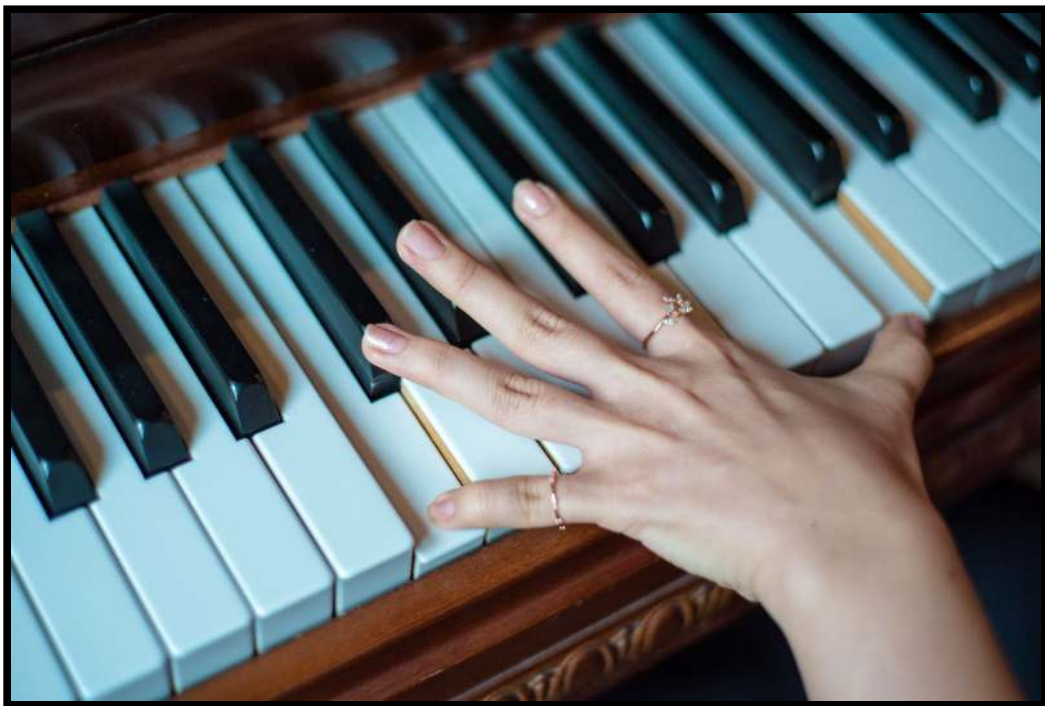


MIXING PIANO CHEAT SHEET



THE 10 STEPS TO MIXING PIANO

1. GIRATS (Get It Right at the Source)

- Your mixes can only be as good as your recordings.
- Spend as much time as necessary to get quality recordings. Don't just throw some mics up and expect to "fix it in the mix."
- "You can polish a turn until it sparkles, but at the end of the day... you're still holding a turd."

2. Route Your Piano Mics to a Bus

- This will allow you to use the bus as a "master fader" for the entire piano.
- Do all of your processing on the bus so that you don't have to use copies of plugins on each individual channel.

3. Check Your Phase

- Always check your phase before you start mixing!
- Phase is basically how the location of two similar waveforms react with each other.
 - “In-Phase” = the peaks and troughs of the waves are lined up
 - The volume increases, but the tone remains the same.
 - “Out-of-Phase” = the peaks are in line with the troughs
 - Out-of-Phase waveforms cancel each other out
 - The bottom end of the sound is lost, causing it to sound thin and unnatural.
- To fix phase, either...
 - Use the “Phase Invert” button on a gain plugin, or...
 - Zoom in on your mics and nudge one over so that the peaks and troughs are lined up.

4. Get Your Volume Balance Right

- Mute any unnecessary mics.
 - Use no more than 3 *mics tops* with a piano.
- Balance the mics with each other.
 - One mic will be the tone mic. It will be the loudest.
 - The other mic(s) will add extra color.
- Balance the piano with the rest of the instruments.
 - You’ll use the Piano Bus fader to do this.

5. Cut Your Lows

- If the bass or kick is holding down the low end, then use a high pass filter to cut the piano between 150-250 Hz.
- If the piano is the main low end instrument, then move the filter up until you can start to hear the attack of your low notes begin to dull.
 - Then back off a bit - that’s the sweet spot

6. Find the Nasty Stuff Using EQ

- Use an EQ sweep to find any room resonances in the sound.
 - Listen for any frequencies that get extra loud and/or “nasty.” Those are probably resonances.
- Use a narrow band to cut them by 3-12 dB’s (depending on how bad the resonance is).

7. Rein It in with Compression

- If the piano is rhythmic and aggressive...
 - 4-6 dB’s of gain reduction
 - A higher ratio, like 5:1
- If the piano is full and subtle...

- 2-3 dB's of gain reduction
 - A lower ratio, like 3:1
- If you want the piano as a background instrument (or just "thicker")...
 - Use a fast attack (between 3-15ms)
- If you want the piano to be more percussive and "punchier"...
 - Use a slower attack (between 20-40ms)
- Time your release time to your tempo.
 - Start with 100ms.
 - If the song is faster, slowly move the release faster.
 - If the song is slower, slowly more it slower.
- Don't forget to use your makeup gain!

8. Use Range Allocation to Make Your Piano Fit

- First, find a place in the frequency spectrum where the piano sounds good. Make a 3dB boost there.
 - More roundness = boost the low end
 - More presence = boost the upper mids
 - More clarity and "air" = boost the highs
- Cut in that area in your other major instruments - vocals, kick, snare, guitars, etc.
 - Don't forget to cut the same amount that you boosted.
- Finally, head back to the piano and make 3 cuts where the most important instruments were boosted.

9. Pan It to the Side

- Where you pan the mics is up to you.
 - Some people pan them 100% to the left and right
 - This is problematic if you have a dense arrangement
 - Some pan them to a single area, like 50% to the left
 - Some pan them to a single area but with a stereo spread, like one mic 100% to the left and the other kept in the center.
- Ask yourself these questions: How busy is my mix? And how wide do I want my piano to sound?

10. Give It a Little Space (With Reverb)

- If you have a room reverb set up for your entire mix, create a send and point it there.
 - The level of the send will determine how much reverb the piano has.
- If you don't, then create a send for a new reverb.
 - Use a small-to-medium sized room reverb with a decay time under 2 seconds.
 - Mix the reverb in by turning the reverb fader all the way down, then slowly bringing it back in until it feels "right."