

THE MUSIC GLOSSARY

149 terms across theory, production, mixing, synthesis, MIDI and formats, rights and royalties, and live sound. Every entry links to a free, official source you can verify yourself. Updated 2026-08-16.

Published by Sampled — sampledmusicblog.com/glossary

MUSIC THEORY BASICS

The vocabulary you need before anyone can explain a chart, a chord chart, or a session to you.

Pitch

How high or low a note sounds, set by the frequency of the vibration behind it. Concert A above middle C is standardised at 440 Hz.

[ISO 16:1975 \(A440 standard\)](#) · [Open Music Theory — pitch](#)

Interval

The distance between two pitches, counted in scale steps (a third, a fifth) or in semitones (4, 7).

[musictheory.net — intervals](#) · [Open Music Theory — intervals](#)

Scale

An ordered set of pitches inside an octave. Major, natural minor and the modes are the sets most pop, rap and dance music is built from.

[musictheory.net — scales](#) · [Open Music Theory — scales and modes](#)

Key and key signature

The home pitch a piece gravitates to, plus the sharps or flats written at the start of the staff that spell out its scale.

[musictheory.net — key signatures](#) · [Library of Congress — reading music](#)

Chord and triad

Three or more pitches sounding together. A triad stacks a root, a third and a fifth; add a seventh and you get the jazz and neo-soul colours.

[musictheory.net — chords](#) · [Open Music Theory — triads](#)

Chord progression

A sequence of chords over time. Roman numerals (I–V–vi–IV) describe it in a key-neutral way so you can move it to any key.

[Open Music Theory — roman numerals](#) · [musictheory.net — lessons](#)

Tempo and BPM

The speed of the pulse, counted in beats per minute. 90 BPM is a common rap pocket; 128 BPM is house's home address.

[musictheory.net — rhythm and tempo](#) · [Ableton — Learning Music \(beats\)](#)

Time signature

Two stacked numbers telling you how many beats fill a bar and which note value gets the beat. 4/4 dominates popular music; 6/8 and 3/4 swing differently.

[musictheory.net — time signatures](#) · [Open Music Theory — meter](#)

Syncopation

Accenting the weak parts of the beat instead of the downbeat. Most of what makes a groove feel alive is syncopation.

[Open Music Theory — rhythm](#) · [Ableton — Learning Synths & Music](#)

Harmony vs melody

Melody is the line you sing; harmony is everything sounding underneath or alongside it that gives that line a context.

[Open Music Theory](#) · [Yale Open Courses — Listening to Music](#)

Transposition

Moving a whole part up or down by a fixed interval, keeping the relationships between notes intact.

[musictheory.net — transposition](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

Cents

A hundredth of a semitone. Tuning software and pitch correction both measure error in cents.

[NIST — units and measurement](#) · [AES — technical library](#)

Octave

The interval between one pitch and another at double or half its frequency. The two notes share a name because the ear hears them as the same pitch class.

[Open Music Theory](#) · [Stanford CCRMA — Music 320 notes](#)

Semitone and whole tone

The semitone is the smallest step in Western equal temperament; two semitones make a whole tone. Everything from scales to chord spelling is counted in them.

[musictheory.net lessons](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

Equal temperament

The tuning system that splits the octave into twelve equal semitones so every key sounds usable, at the cost of pure intervals.

[Stanford CCRMA — tuning and intervals](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

Just intonation

Tuning built from small whole-number frequency ratios. Intervals beat less, but the tuning only works cleanly in a limited set of keys.

[Stanford CCRMA — tuning systems](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT research](#)

Overtone series

Almost every pitched sound contains a fundamental plus quieter harmonics above it. Their relative levels are most of what we call timbre.

[Stanford CCRMA — spectral audio](#) · [Xiph.org — digital show and tell](#)

Timbre

The character that lets you tell a trumpet from a saw wave at the same pitch and loudness. It comes from harmonic content and how it changes over time.

[Stanford CCRMA — spectral audio](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Cadence

A harmonic full stop. Authentic, plagal, half and deceptive cadences are the standard ways a phrase resolves or refuses to.

[Open Music Theory — cadences](#) · [musictheory.net lessons](#)

Voice leading

How individual lines move between chords. Smooth voice leading keeps common tones and moves the rest by the smallest step available.

[Open Music Theory](#) · [musictheory.net lessons](#)

Inversion

A chord voiced with something other than the root in the bass. First inversion puts the third at the bottom, second inversion the fifth.

[musictheory.net lessons](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

Diatonic vs chromatic

Diatonic material stays inside the seven notes of the key. Chromatic material borrows the other five for colour, tension or modulation.

[Open Music Theory](#) · [musictheory.net lessons](#)

Polyrhythm

Two conflicting pulse groupings running at once — three against four being the classic. Common in West African, jazz and modern rap production.

[Open Music Theory](#) — [rhythm](#) · [MIT OpenCourseWare](#) — [music](#)

Swing and shuffle

Shifting off-beat subdivisions later in the bar so the groove leans rather than sits square. Most DAWs express it as a percentage.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Music](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

PRODUCTION AND RECORDING

Studio words: what the gear does, what the engineer is asking for, what the session sheet means.

DAW

Digital audio workstation — the software you record, arrange, edit and mix in. Ableton Live, Logic, Pro Tools, FL Studio, Reaper, plus free options.

[Reaper](#) (free trial, full featured) · [Audacity](#) (free, open source)

Sample rate

How many times per second an analogue signal is measured on the way to digital. 44.1 kHz is CD; 48 kHz is the video and streaming default.

[AES5 sampling frequency standard](#) · [Xiph.org](#) — [digital audio primer](#)

Bit depth

How finely each sample is measured. 24-bit gives you the headroom to record quietly and stay clean; 16-bit is the delivery format for CD.

[Xiph.org](#) — [24/192 explained](#) · [AES standards search](#)

Latency

The delay between playing something and hearing it back through the computer. Set by buffer size and interface drivers.

[Focusrite](#) — [buffer size and latency](#) · [Reaper user guide](#) (PDF)

Gain staging

Keeping levels sensible at every step so nothing clips and nothing is buried in noise. Roughly -18 dBFS average on the way in is a safe home base.

[EBU R128 loudness recommendation](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Headroom

The space left between your loudest peak and the point of digital clipping. Leave some for the mastering engineer.

[EBU Tech 3343 loudness guidance](#) · [ITU-R BS.1770 measurement](#)

Polar pattern

The directions a microphone hears from — cardioid, omni, figure-8. Choosing it is half of getting a clean vocal in an untreated room.

[Shure](#) — [microphone basics](#) · [Neumann](#) — [knowledge base](#)

Phantom power (48V)

DC voltage sent down a mic cable to power condenser microphones. Dynamic mics do not need it.

[Shure — what is phantom power](#) · [Neumann knowledge hub](#)

Comping

Building one keeper take out of the best pieces of several takes.

[Reaper user guide \(PDF\)](#) · [Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#)

Bounce / render / export

Writing your session out to an audio file. Bounce stems for collaborators, a 24-bit WAV master for distribution.

[Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Ableton Live manual](#)

Stem

A submix of one element or group — drums, vocals, keys — printed as its own file for mixing, remixing or live playback.

[Ableton Live manual — exporting](#) · [Reaper user guide \(PDF\)](#)

Click track

The metronome everyone plays to so parts recorded separately line up.

[Ableton — Learning Music](#) · [Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#)

Nyquist frequency

Half the sample rate — the highest frequency a digital system can represent. Above it, content folds back as aliasing, so converters filter it out.

[Xiph.org — digital show and tell](#) · [Stanford CCRMA — mathematics of the DFT](#)

Buffer size

How many samples your interface collects before handing them to the CPU. Small buffers mean low latency and more dropouts; big buffers the reverse.

[Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Steinberg ASIO information](#)

Punch-in recording

Dropping into record over a defined range so you replace only the bad bar instead of re-tracking the whole pass.

[Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Audacity manual](#)

Quantisation

Snapping recorded or programmed notes to a rhythmic grid. Partial or 'strength' quantise keeps some of the human timing.

[Ableton — Learning Music](#) · [MIDI Association specifications](#)

Proximity effect

Directional mics boost low frequencies as the source gets closer. Vocalists use it deliberately; it also makes plosives worse.

[Shure — microphone basics](#) · [AES standards](#)

Pop filter and plosives

Bursts of air from p and b sounds overload a capsule. A mesh or foam screen a few inches out diffuses the blast without dulling the take.

[Shure performance library](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Room treatment vs soundproofing

Treatment controls reflections inside a room. Soundproofing stops sound leaving it. Foam does the first, mass and isolation do the second.

[AES technical library](#) · [NIOSH — noise control](#)

Phase and polarity

Polarity is a flipped waveform; phase is a time offset. Two mics on one source can cancel each other if you ignore either.

[Stanford CCRMA — physical audio signal processing](#) · [AES standards](#)

Sample library vs sampler

A library is the recorded content; a sampler is the instrument that maps, loops and plays it back across a keyboard.

[MIDI Association specifications](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Take folder / playlist

A container holding every pass at a part so you can audition and combine them without cluttering the arrangement.

[Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Ableton — Learning Music](#)

MIXING AND MASTERING

The processing vocabulary, plus the loudness standards streaming services actually measure you against.

EQ (equalisation)

Turning specific frequency ranges up or down. Subtractive cuts clear space; boosts add character.

[Xiph.org — digital show and tell](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Compression

Automatic level control: above a threshold, gain is reduced by a ratio, shaped by attack and release times.

[Universal Audio — compression basics](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Sidechain

Using one signal to control processing on another — most famously ducking a bass or pad every time the kick hits.

[Ableton Live manual — compressor](#) · [Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#)

Reverb

Simulated space. Pre-delay places the source in the room, decay time sets how big the room is.

[AES technical library](#) · [Valhalla DSP — reverb writing](#)

Delay

Repeats of the signal, usually timed to the tempo. Slapback, ping-pong and dub delays are the common flavours.

[Ableton Live manual](#) · [Valhalla DSP blog](#)

Saturation and distortion

Adding harmonics by pushing a circuit or algorithm past clean. Small amounts read as loudness and warmth.

[Universal Audio — analogue tone](#) · [AES technical library](#)

LUFS

Loudness Units relative to Full Scale — the perceptual loudness measure streaming platforms normalise with, defined in ITU-R BS.1770.

[ITU-R BS.1770](#) · [Spotify — loudness normalisation](#)

True peak

The real analogue peak an inter-sample reconstruction can hit — often higher than your meter's sample peak. Leave around -1 dBTP for lossy encoding.

[ITU-R BS.1770 \(true-peak metering\)](#) · [Apple Digital Masters](#)

Dynamic range

The distance between the quietest and loudest moments. Crushing it flat is why some masters feel exhausting.

[EBU R128](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Limiter

A compressor with an extreme ratio and a brick-wall ceiling, used at the end of a master to control peaks.

[Apple Digital Masters guidelines](#) · [Ableton Live manual](#)

Mid/side

Splitting a stereo signal into what's shared (mid) and what differs (side) so you can process centre and width separately.

[AES technical library](#) · [Neumann knowledge hub](#)

Dither

Low-level noise added when reducing bit depth so quantisation error becomes hiss instead of distortion.

[Xiph.org](#) — [digital audio primer](#) · [AES standards](#)

Panning and stereo image

Where a source sits between the speakers, and how wide the whole mix reads. Mono compatibility is still the test that catches mistakes.

[EBU](#) — [audio publications](#) · [AES standards](#)

Bus and aux send

A bus collects several tracks for shared processing. An aux send feeds a copy of a signal to an effect so the dry track stays intact.

[Apple](#) — [Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Ableton](#) — [Learning Music](#)

Parallel compression

Blending a heavily compressed copy under the untouched signal. You get density without flattening the transients.

[AES technical library](#) · [Stanford CCRMA](#) — [audio effects](#)

Transient

The short, loud attack at the front of a sound. Compressor attack times and transient designers exist to shape exactly this part.

[Stanford CCRMA](#) — [spectral audio](#) · [AES standards](#)

Q and filter slope

Q sets how narrow an EQ band is; slope (dB per octave) sets how hard a high- or low-pass cuts past its corner frequency.

[Stanford CCRMA](#) — [introduction to digital filters](#) · [AES standards](#)

High-pass filter

Removes low frequencies below a set point. The fastest way to clear rumble, handling noise and mud out of a crowded mix.

[Stanford CCRMA](#) — [digital filters](#) · [EBU technical publications](#)

Automation

Recorded changes to any parameter over time. Volume rides do more for a vocal than most plugins.

[Apple](#) — [Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Ableton](#) — [Learning Music](#)

Reference track

A commercially released song you A/B against, level-matched, to check tonal balance and loudness decisions against something known.

[EBU R 128 loudness](#) · [ITU-R BS.1770](#)

Intersample peak

A peak that appears between samples after conversion back to analogue. It is why true-peak metering exists and why -1 dBTP ceilings are common.

[ITU-R BS.1770](#) · [EBU](#) — [loudness](#)

Mastering

The final stage: tonal balance, loudness, sequencing, spacing and delivery formats for a whole release rather than one track.

[EBU R 128](#) · [AES standards](#)

SYNTHESIS AND SOUND DESIGN

How synths make sound, in the order the signal actually travels.

Oscillator (VCO/DCO)

The sound source. It generates a repeating waveform — saw, square, triangle, sine — at a chosen pitch.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Synths](#) · [Moog](#) — [synth basics](#)

Filter (VCF)

Removes or emphasises frequencies. Low-pass filters are the classic; resonance boosts the band right at the cutoff.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Synths](#) · [Korg](#) — [product manuals](#)

Envelope (ADSR)

Attack, decay, sustain, release — how a parameter moves over the life of a note. Applied to volume, filter, pitch, anything.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Synths \(envelopes\)](#) · [Sequential](#) — [product manuals](#)

LFO

Low-frequency oscillator: a slow wave used as modulation rather than sound. Vibrato, tremolo and wobble bass all start here.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Synths](#) · [Korg manuals](#)

Subtractive synthesis

Start with a harmonically rich waveform and filter material away. The architecture behind most classic analogue synths.

[Ableton](#) — [Learning Synths](#) · [Moog Music](#)

FM synthesis

One oscillator modulates another's frequency, generating sidebands. Bells, electric pianos and aggressive digital basses.

[Yamaha](#) — [synth history and FM](#) · [Stanford CCRMA](#) — [FM synthesis](#)

Wavetable synthesis

Scanning through a table of single-cycle waveforms so the timbre morphs over time.

[Stanford CCRMA research](#) · [Ableton Live manual](#) — [Wavetable](#)

Granular synthesis

Chopping audio into tiny grains and replaying them at varying rate, pitch and density to make clouds and textures.

[Stanford CCRMA](#) — [granular](#) · [Ableton Live manual](#)

Polyphony / paraphony / monophony

How many notes a synth can play at once, and whether each note gets its own full voice path or shares a filter.

[Sequential support and manuals](#) · [Korg manuals](#)

Modulation matrix

A routing grid that connects sources (LFOs, envelopes, velocity) to destinations (cutoff, pitch, pan) with an amount for each.

[Sequential manuals](#) · [Arturia](#) — [manuals and resources](#)

CV/Gate

Control voltage sets pitch or parameter value; gate says note-on/note-off. The pre-MIDI way modular gear still talks.

[MIDI Association](#) — [MIDI and CV](#) · [Moog Music](#)

Aliasing

Digital artefacts created when harmonics go above half the sample rate and fold back down as inharmonic junk.

[Xiph.org](#) — [digital audio primer](#) · [Stanford CCRMA](#) — [DSP texts](#)

Additive synthesis

Building a sound by stacking sine waves at chosen frequencies and levels — the inverse of subtractive, and the basis of spectral resynthesis.

[Stanford CCRMA — spectral audio signal processing](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Physical modelling

Synthesis by simulating the physics of a string, tube or membrane instead of replaying a recording of one.

[Stanford CCRMA — physical audio signal processing](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT research](#)

Ring modulation

Multiplying two signals so you hear only their sum and difference frequencies. Instantly metallic, clangorous and inharmonic.

[Stanford CCRMA — audio DSP texts](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Pulse width modulation

Sweeping the duty cycle of a square wave. The harmonic content shifts as it moves, which is why one oscillator can sound like two.

[Stanford CCRMA — DSP texts](#) · [Open Music Theory](#)

Portamento / glide

A continuous slide in pitch between two notes rather than a jump. Time-based on most synths, and the core of a 303 line.

[MIDI Association specifications](#) · [Stanford CCRMA](#)

Unison and detune

Stacking several voices on one note and detuning them slightly. Beating between the copies produces the wide supersaw sound.

[Stanford CCRMA — spectral audio](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Velocity sensitivity

How hard a key is struck, sent as a MIDI value and usually mapped to level and filter brightness so playing dynamics survive.

[MIDI Association specifications](#) · [MIDI 2.0 overview](#)

Arpeggiator

A sequencer that plays a held chord one note at a time in a pattern, locked to tempo. Rate, order and octave range are the usual controls.

[Ableton — Learning Music](#) · [MIDI Association](#)

Sequencer

A pattern recorder that fires notes or CV at set steps. Step sequencers stay central to techno, acid and modular practice.

[MIDI Association specifications](#) · [UC Berkeley CNMAT](#)

Oversampling

Running a process at a multiple of the project sample rate so distortion products land above the audible band before being filtered out.

[Xiph.org — digital audio primer](#) · [Stanford CCRMA — DSP](#)

MIDI, FORMATS AND STANDARDS

The plumbing — the specs your gear, files and delivery pipeline agree on.

MIDI

A control protocol, not audio. It sends note, velocity, timing and controller data between instruments and software.

[MIDI Association — specifications](#) · [MIDI Association — MIDI 2.0](#)

MIDI 2.0

The 2020-era update: bidirectional, higher resolution, per-note controllers and profile-based auto-configuration.

[MIDI Association — MIDI 2.0 overview](#) · [MIDI Association specs](#)

MPE

MIDI Polyphonic Expression — each note gets its own channel so pitch bend, pressure and slide are per-note.

[MIDI Association — MPE spec](#) · [MIDI Association specifications](#)

WAV vs FLAC vs MP3/AAC

WAV is uncompressed PCM; FLAC is lossless compression; MP3 and AAC are lossy. Deliver lossless masters and let platforms encode.

[Xiph.org — FLAC](#) · [Library of Congress — sustainable audio formats](#)

Plugin formats (VST/AU/AAX/CLAP)

The interfaces that let third-party processors run inside a DAW. Which ones you can use depends on host and platform.

[CLAP — open plugin standard](#) · [Steinberg — VST developer info](#)

ASIO / Core Audio

Low-latency audio driver systems on Windows and macOS respectively. They decide how fast your interface can talk to the DAW.

[Apple — Core Audio](#) · [Steinberg developer resources](#)

Sync: MIDI clock, MTC, Ableton Link

Different ways to keep devices in time — clock pulses, timecode, or peer-to-peer tempo sharing over a network.

[MIDI Association specifications](#) · [Ableton Link](#)

Metadata (ISRC, UPC, ISWC)

The identifiers that route money and credits: recordings get ISRCs, releases get UPCs, compositions get ISWCs.

[IFPI — ISRC handbook](#) · [CISAC — ISWC](#)

DDEX

The messaging standards distributors, labels and DSPs use to exchange release and royalty data.

[DDEX standards](#) · [DDEX knowledge base](#)

C2PA / content credentials

An open provenance standard for signing how a piece of media was made — increasingly relevant to AI disclosure.

[C2PA specifications](#) · [Content Authenticity Initiative](#)

Sample-accurate automation

Parameter changes calculated per audio sample rather than per processing block, so sweeps stay smooth and click-free.

[Steinberg developer docs](#) · [CLAP standard](#)

Loudness normalisation

Platforms play everything back at a target loudness, so a louder master mostly just gets turned down.

[Spotify — loudness normalisation](#) · [Apple Digital Masters](#)

Buffer underrun / dropout

The CPU misses its deadline and the audio device plays empty samples, heard as a click or gap. Larger buffers and fewer live plugins fix it.

[Apple — Logic Pro User Guide](#) · [Steinberg developer resources](#)

Sample rate conversion

Resampling audio between rates. Quality varies a lot between algorithms, so convert once, at the end, with a good one.

[Xiph.org](#) — [digital show and tell](#) · [AES standards](#)

Lossy vs lossless

Lossless coding reconstructs the original samples exactly; lossy coding discards detail the model predicts you will not hear, and cannot be undone.

[Xiph.org](#) — [FLAC](#) · [Xiph.org](#) — [Opus codec](#)

Opus

An open, royalty-free codec standardised as RFC 6716. It is what most real-time voice and streaming stacks use today.

[Opus codec](#) · [RFC 6716](#)

Broadcast WAV (BWF)

A WAV file with an embedded metadata chunk carrying timecode, originator and coding history. The standard delivery format for post.

[EBU Tech 3285 \(BWF\)](#) · [AES standards](#)

Timecode (SMPTE/LTC)

A frame-accurate clock stamped onto audio or video so separately recorded media can be aligned later.

[EBU technical publications](#) · [MIDI Association specifications](#)

Dante and AES67

Networked audio over standard Ethernet. AES67 is the interoperability standard that lets different vendors' systems exchange streams.

[AES67 standard](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Sample-rate clock and jitter

Digital devices need one master clock. Timing error in that clock — jitter — smears conversion, which is why one device is set as master.

[AES standards](#) · [Stanford CCRMA](#) — [DSP](#)

Open-source audio tooling

Audacity, Ardour, Surge XT and the Xiph codecs are all free to use and inspect, which makes them dependable teaching references.

[Ardour manual](#) · [Audacity manual](#)

RIGHTS, ROYALTIES AND THE BUSINESS

The words on your split sheet, your distribution dashboard and your royalty statement.

Copyright

Two separate rights in every track: the composition (song) and the sound recording (master). They can be owned by different people.

[U.S. Copyright Office](#) — [Circular 56A](#) · [WIPO](#) — [copyright basics](#)

Master vs publishing

Master income comes from the recording (streams, syncs, sales). Publishing income comes from the underlying song.

[U.S. Copyright Office](#) — [music modernization](#) · [WIPO](#) — [creative industries](#)

PRO

Performing rights organisation. In the US: ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, GMR. They license public performance and pay songwriters.

[ASCAP](#) · [BMI](#)

Mechanical royalty

Paid to songwriters and publishers for reproductions, including interactive streams. In the US, the MLC administers the blanket licence.

[The MLC](#) · [U.S. Copyright Royalty Board](#)

Neighbouring rights

Performer and label rights in the recording itself. In the US, SoundExchange collects for non-interactive digital radio.

[SoundExchange](#) · [WIPO — Rome Convention](#)

Sync licence

Permission to pair music with visuals. You typically need clearance from both the master owner and the publisher.

[U.S. Copyright Office — licensing](#) · [ASCAP — licensing](#)

Sample clearance

Getting written permission to use part of an existing recording and composition. Two clearances, two negotiations.

[U.S. Copyright Office — Circular 1](#) · [Copyright.gov — fair use index](#)

Split sheet

A signed document recording who wrote what percentage of a song, made in the room before anyone leaves.

[The MLC — songwriter resources](#) · [U.S. Copyright Office — registration](#)

Work for hire

An arrangement where the commissioning party is treated as the author. Narrowly defined in US law — read before signing.

[U.S. Copyright Office — Circular 30](#) · [Copyright.gov — law text](#)

Distributor vs label

A distributor puts your files on DSPs and collects. A label typically invests, markets and takes a share of rights or income.

[IFPI — global industry data](#) · [RIAA — resources](#)

Advance and recoupment

Money paid up front against future royalties. You don't see further income until the advance is earned back.

[IFPI resources](#) · [U.S. Copyright Office](#)

Termination rights

Under US law, authors can reclaim certain transferred rights after a set period by filing notice in a specific window.

[U.S. Copyright Office — Circular 12](#) · [Title 17 §203](#)

Public domain

Work whose copyright term has expired or never applied. In the U.S. this is a moving line, so check the term rules before you sample.

[U.S. Copyright Office — Circular 15a](#) · [WIPO — copyright](#)

Fair use

A U.S. defence weighed on four factors, decided case by case. It is not a checkbox, and it is not a substitute for clearance.

[U.S. Copyright Office — fair use index](#) · [Title 17 §107](#)

Registration vs copyright

Copyright exists the moment a work is fixed. Registration is what gives you statutory damages and the right to sue in the U.S.

[U.S. Copyright Office — Circular 1](#) · [Registering music](#)

Performance royalty vs mechanical

Performance royalties pay for a work being played publicly; mechanicals pay for it being reproduced or streamed. Different collectors, different money.

[The MLC](#) · [SoundExchange](#)

Digital performance royalty

Non-interactive digital plays of a sound recording in the U.S. are collected by SoundExchange and split with the featured artist directly.

[SoundExchange](#) · [U.S. Copyright Office](#) — §114

Blanket licence

One licence covering a whole repertoire rather than a song at a time. It is how radio, venues and streaming services clear performances at scale.

[U.S. Copyright Office](#) — music licensing · [WIPO](#) — collective management

Music Modernization Act

The 2018 U.S. law that created the blanket mechanical licence and the MLC to administer streaming mechanicals and unmatched royalties.

[U.S. Copyright Office](#) — MMA · [The MLC](#)

Controlled composition clause

A record deal term capping the mechanicals payable when the artist also wrote the song. It quietly reduces songwriter income.

[U.S. Copyright Office](#) — Circular 73 · [The MLC](#)

Moral rights

Rights of attribution and integrity, strong in many countries and narrow in the U.S. They can survive a transfer of the economic rights.

[WIPO](#) — copyright · [Berne Convention text](#)

Neighbouring rights vs master royalties

Neighbouring rights pay performers and labels for broadcast and public performance of a recording; master royalties come from sales and streams.

[WIPO](#) — related rights · [SoundExchange](#)

Disclosure of paid endorsement

If a post about gear is paid, gifted or affiliate-linked, U.S. rules require the connection to be disclosed clearly and near the claim.

[FTC endorsement guides](#) · [FTC](#) — disclosures

LIVE SOUND AND PERFORMANCE

The stage vocabulary: what the engineer means when they wave at you.

FOH

Front of house — the main mix the audience hears, and the desk it's mixed from.

[Shure](#) — live sound resources · [Yamaha](#) — live sound guides

Monitor mix / IEMs

What the performer hears — wedges on stage or in-ear monitors, mixed separately from FOH.

[Shure](#) — in-ear monitors 101 · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Feedback

The howl when a mic hears its own amplified output. Fixed with placement, pattern choice and narrow EQ cuts.

[Shure](#) — feedback control · [AES technical library](#)

DI box

Converts an unbalanced instrument-level signal to a balanced mic-level one so it can run long cable to the desk.

[Shure — DI basics](#) · [AES standards](#)

Line check vs soundcheck

A line check confirms every input is arriving. A soundcheck actually balances the show.

[Shure live sound library](#) · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Stage plot and input list

A diagram of where everyone stands and a numbered list of what plugs in where. Send both ahead of the show.

[Shure live sound resources](#) · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Backline

The amps, drums and keyboards provided at the venue rather than carried by the artist.

[Yamaha Pro Audio](#) · [Shure performance library](#)

Hearing protection and exposure limits

Sound exposure is cumulative. Occupational limits exist for a reason — musicians' filtered plugs preserve tone while cutting level.

[NIOSH — noise and hearing loss](#) · [WHO — safe listening](#)

Gain before feedback

How much level a mic can take before the room starts ringing. Mic choice, placement and monitor position matter more than any EQ trick.

[Shure live sound resources](#) · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Line array

Vertically stacked speaker elements that behave as one tall source, giving even coverage front to back in larger rooms.

[AES technical library](#) · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Splitter and multicore

A split feeds one mic signal to both FOH and monitors; a multicore carries all the channels back to the desk in one run.

[Shure performance library](#) · [Yamaha Pro Audio](#)

Wireless frequency coordination

Radio mics and IEMs must be assigned clear, non-intermodulating frequencies within the legally usable spectrum for that country and venue.

[Shure — wireless resources](#) · [FCC — wireless microphones](#)

Ringling out a room

Pushing monitors to the edge of feedback and notching the frequencies that ring first, so you get usable stage level.

[Shure live sound resources](#) · [AES technical library](#)

Advance (touring)

The pre-show paperwork and calls that confirm load-in, power, backline, tech spec and curfew before the truck ever moves.

[Yamaha Pro Audio](#) · [Shure performance library](#)

Occupational noise exposure limits

In the U.S., OSHA sets a 90 dBA eight-hour limit and NIOSH recommends 85 dBA. Every 3 dB above halves the safe exposure time.

[OSHA — occupational noise exposure](#) · [NIOSH — noise and hearing loss](#)