

Home Mastering Checklist

BeatSync

12 mistakes that ruin beginner masters, and the fix for each. Tick them before every bounce.

- ☐ **1. Mix finished, nothing on the master bus**
Kick/bass fight, buried vocal, sibilance, clicks or a bus limiter are mix notes. Mastering can't fix them.
- ☐ **2. Peaks around -6 dBFS going in**
Headroom you can check on any DAW meter. No limiter or clipper on the mix bus.
- ☐ **3. Limiter pushed until the first tell, then back 1 dB**
The two tells: pumping on sustained parts, and snare or kick transients going flat.
- ☐ **4. Ceiling at -0.3 dB, true peak checked once**
Encoders overshoot. Look at a true-peak meter after the limiter and decide; -1 dBTP if you want to be safe.
- ☐ **5. Destination decided, loudness benchmarked**
Platforms play back near -14 LUFS, but real releases are denser and louder. Benchmark against them, not the number.
- ☐ **6. Mono check passed**
Lows under ~120 Hz mono. Widen the mids if you must, never the lows.
- ☐ **7. Four playback systems, including the phone**
Monitors, headphones, car, phone. Listen for what changes, not for quality.
- ☐ **8. Every A/B level-matched**
Louder always sounds better. Match the level, then judge.
- ☐ **9. Chain built from a diagnosis, not a video**
What is wrong with this mix? Corrective EQ first, then only the tools that answer the question.
- ☐ **10. No single move over 2 dB**
EQ in 0.5 to 2 dB steps, compression at 1 to 2 dB of gain reduction. Bigger moves belong in the mix.
- ☐ **11. 24-bit WAV at session rate, dither only to 16-bit**
Never master an MP3. Dither when you reduce bit depth, not otherwise.
- ☐ **12. The bounce played start to finish**
Clicks, cut-off tails, wrong version, missing plugin. Listen before you upload.