

# 10 Steps to Producing and Releasing Your First Song

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First off, congratulations! I'm pumped that you've decided to look into how to produce music. Learning how to produce music is a rewarding, challenging, frustrating, and liberating endeavor. This article will give you everything you need to get started on your journey in music production.

You are responsible for coming up with your own musical ideas, creating the sounds you need for a song, and executing the technical steps to make your song sound commercially polished and radio-ready.

## **Step One: Choose Your DAW**

A DAW (**D**igital **A**udio **W**orkstation) is the program on your computer needed to create music. Many programs on the market allow you to create music in a digital space, but only a few are deemed industry standard. Don't assume that you need one specific DAW to make the genre of music you want; hit records can be produced in any of them.

## **Step Two: Get Production Equipment**

The most essential piece of gear is a MIDI keyboard. This is a little USB keyboard that you can plug into your computer to play melodies. Having a tactile instrument to play helps facilitate creativity more fluidly than merely clicking in the notes with your mouse. And yes, you should still get one even if you don't play the piano!

The best part about making a midi keyboard your first purchase is that they have a wide range of price points, meaning entry-level ones are very easy to find.

A common misconception is that you need an expensive pair of studio monitors to make great music. This is false. A pair of production headphones will allow you to accurately hear the music you are producing at a fraction of the price.

## **Step Three: Songwriting and Idea Generation**

Now comes the fun part, where we start putting that DAW to good use. Now is when you grab your new MIDI keyboard, plug in your headphones, and start playing out some ideas (again, it's okay if you don't play the piano!). Don't stress if the music doesn't "fit" together.

Finally, the last piece of the compositional puzzle is the arrangement, which is the process where you decide which parts of your song will contain a particular sound.

## **Step Four: Sound Design**

The next step of producing music is *sound design*, where you can start shaping what a certain melody actually sounds like (also called a sound's 'timbre'). Most sound design takes place using a *synthesizer* — and good news, these exist in every DAW!

You don't need to be a professional sound designer to get professional-sounding results. By layering presets found in these banks, we can quickly come up with professional-sounding patches that are just as unique as if we had spent hours dialing in just one synth by itself.

## **Step Five: Finding Great Samples**

Another way you will create sounds in your DAW is by using samples. Whereas synthesizers create brand new sounds from scratch, samples are audio clips (think of a regular mp3 or WAV file) of prerecorded sounds. A sample could be a recording of a clap or snare drum, a guitar lick, or a person singing “Oh yeah!”.

The conventional way to obtain these samples would be to purchase sample packs. These are large libraries of professionally recorded samples that you can instantly drop into your DAW.

### **Step Six: Recording Your Own Audio**

Do you play an instrument? Are you a singer (or do you know one)? Do you hear a cool sound in the real world that you want to add to your track? In a world where everyone has access to the same synths and samples, recording your own audio ensures your music's individuality.

### **Step Seven: Processing and Mixing**

This step is essential for producing great-sounding music. You've now created your musical idea and added all the sounds you want into your DAW, but they sound MESSY and lack the proper definition you hear in professionally-produced music.

To do this, we use little tools inside your DAW called plugins. Some plugins control how loud audio is (ex: Compressors), others control the frequencies that exist in a certain sound (ex: Equalizers), and some plugins control when you hear a sound (ex: Delays).

### **Step Eight: Getting Your Music Online**

Release your music with a record label – Record labels will handle your “distribution,” which is the process of *distributing* your music out to various streaming and purchase platforms. The upside is that they do the work for you, and they have networks of contacts to help you get more exposure. The downside? They take a percentage of the revenue – almost always greater than 50%!

If you choose to self-release, you should sign up with a *distributor*, like [Distrokid](#) and [Tunecore](#). These sites charge a small fee to send your music to streaming services and stores: Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, Amazon Music, Tidal, and more. It can get complicated, but this [video](#) breaks it down.

A handful of websites like Soundcloud and Youtube allow you to directly upload your music. While you should absolutely be doing this, don't forget to release your music on all the other sites as well.

### **Step Nine: Building a Brand**

Once you make your first track, you undoubtedly will want to start on your second. The process of building your artist brand is fun, exciting, and admittedly a little complicated. This is where music begins to collide with the business end of the industry.

Start by picking an artist's name. You want something that is *searchable*. Open up an Incognito window, and type the name idea into Google — what comes up?

Next, build out your visual identity. Ask a photographer friend to shoot some professional photos of you. Add them to your social media pages. Write a short bio. Pick a few of your favorite artists and use them as examples.

## Final Thoughts on Everything You Need to Get Started

It's important for newer producers to understand that music production is playing the long game. Overnight successes just don't happen, despite the low barrier of entry required to get started. It takes commitment, dedication, and a lot of passion for your art.

I hope that this has been a valuable resource to learn where to get started in this rewarding process, but soon you will be wondering where to go next...

Now get out there and go make that first song!