

Studio Recording Tips

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Top 10 Studio Recording Tips for a Successful Recording

The first time you make a recording can be a confusing and daunting process. But it's something that has been done many, many times before.

So, with history as our guide, we've compiled a list of the **top 10 recording to tips** to help you have a smooth recording session that yields a great final product.

1. Do your homework

Unless you are a professional artist with a multi-million-dollar budget, you won't have the luxury of being able to do much songwriting in the studio. So, it's important to have the song perfectly memorized before arriving to record. If you are a singer/songwriter, this just means that you need to be prepared to perform the song as you would in a live setting.

If you have a band, all members of the band need to know the song backward and forward prior to going in the studio. Practice, as they say, makes perfect.

2. Bring spares

It may sound obvious, but you need to bring extra strings, picks, cables, and even backup instruments when you go to a studio to record. What can happen, will happen when you're watching the clock. Guitar strings will break, picks will disappear into thin air, and cables will fail.

Never count on a studio to have everything you need, although many do have some spare gear laying around. Try to be prepared with everything that you need to complete the session.

3. There's no such thing as "fix it in the mix."

Despite popular belief, you can't just cover up blatant mistakes with software or "tricks." The old saying is garbage in, garbage out. Even in the digital recording age, the same is true. If you sing out of tune, it can be "tuned" with Autotune, but even casual listeners can hear the difference.

Always strive for performance excellence. The wealth of plug-ins and studio "tricks" offered in most studios can work wonders, but you have to start with stellar source material.

4. Keep it simple

With all the options available in DAWs these days, it's easy to get caught in the trap of going too far. You can easily get carried away with adding layers of guitars, multi-part vocals, and creating elaborate routing schemes for side-chain compression and reverb.

The best advice is to hone in on those elements which are essential to the song, and to not be tempted into squandering time with unneeded symphonies of guitars and the like. Keep in mind, each track you add introduces frequencies that can compete with other instruments in your mix – which can make your recording suffer if those sounds are cancelling each other out.

5. Back it up

Many great songs have been lost to failed hard drives, power surges, and other electrical mishaps. Don't let this happen to your recordings. Regular backups are the best way to prevent the loss of valuable takes. Save your session files to external drives or other media as often as is practical and remember to save updated versions every day.

6. Stay out of the red!

While analog clipping yields desirable "tape saturation," digital clipping just creates distorted "blips" that don't sound good at all. Watch the meters as you are tracking sources, any time the signal passes "0dB," you're clipping the input.

A limiting compressor can be into the signal chain before the input to tame those excessively dynamic sources (like vocals and bass guitar) so that digital clipping does not occur.

Now with modern technology, in the digital age we have plugins, DAW software to better control those dynamics.

7. Less is more

If you're a guitarist or bassist, you may use a huge, 100-watt stack to perform live. In the studio though, it may be preferable to use a smaller, 1 x 12" (or even smaller) speaker cabinet. Big cabs have more wood and screws in their construction, which have a tendency to rattle.

You might not notice the unwanted noise in a live setting with other sound sources going on, but in the sterile environment of the recording studio, the mic captures everything. Many tube amps get their "sound" from being cranked – you can use a "power brake" or governor to crank the amp for tonality, while sparing studio speakers by tracking at lower volume levels.

8. Tune and return

Virtually all live instruments require tuning. Drums, guitars, and acoustic pianos can go out of tune over the course of a recording session. It's advisable to retune between takes so that every take is perfectly in tune. Slight variations in tuning can occur after each performance, so always check tuning before hitting "record."

9. Don't be discouraged by what you hear

When musicians first start to record themselves performing, many are struck by something surprising: they make lots of mistakes – lots and lots of mistakes. Listening back to the inconsistencies in your timing, weak projection, or blatant bum notes that might occur actually helps you overcome those issues to become a better performer. Don't think you've got no hope – everyone starts out making tons of mistakes.

10. Eliminate stressful distractions

It's very tempting to invite friends (read girlfriends) to the studio to show off what you're doing, but this is typically ill-advised. Distractions tend to introduce tension and stress. Your recording sessions should be all about getting the song right, not about socializing in a studio.

In most cases, you are paying for studio time, so it's best to keep it professional and eliminate stress-inducing factors. Added stress will compromise your performance and can affect those around you. Keeping it stress free may just be the best advice of all!

Thanks, I hope this gives you some insight on the recording process and tips.

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Backwoods Recording Studio

"Dream- Create - Record"

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