



STEP 1: Optimize your listening space. Mastering in an untreated room will make your song fall apart in any other space.



STEP 2: Finish your mix. You can't master until the mix is done!



STEP 3: Check the levels. Make sure none of your faders are clipping. Also, the loudest part of the song should be peaking between -4 dB and -6 dB on the mixbus.



STEP 4: Bounce down your stereo track. Make sure it's exported at the same bit and sample rate as the session. It needs to be a .wav or .aiff file.



STEP 5: Take a break. Give your ears a break. Wait at least a day.



STEP 6: Create a new project and import your references. Using reference tracks will make a huge difference in the quality of your master.



STEP 7: Listen for the first time (and take notes). You'll hear 80% of the problems in this first listen.



STEP 8: Make a full analysis. Listen to your references, then listen to the mix again. Check your mix in several different spaces. Write down what you hear.



STEP 9: Control the dynamics. Use a compressor to lightly compress the mix. 1-2 dBs of gain reduction is fine.



STEP 10: Fix the tone. Use an EQ and multiband compressor to match the tone of your references.



STEP 11: Enhance the mix. Use tools like saturation and stereo widening to color the mix. This is optional.



STEP 12: Limit the mix. Use a limiter to increase the loudness of your mix. Shoot for 2-4 dBs of gain reduction at the loudest points.



STEP 13: Make your final checks. Use a meter like LUFS or Dynameter to make sure your dynamic range is adequate.



STEP 14: Bounce it. Export your mix at 16 bits and 44.1 kHz. Don't forget to dither!