

LOOP TRAP CHEAT SHEET

How to avoid & get out of the 8-bar
loop trap



BY SAM MATLA

Single-instrument composition

Good for:

- Starting new projects
- Genres that rely heavily on songwriting (pop, trance, future bass, etc.)
- Focusing on the important stuff while avoiding the unnecessary

- ☐ Choose a single instrument (piano is recommended)
- ☐ Write a chord progression
- ☐ Write a bassline underneath (same clip, still using piano)
- ☐ Write a melody on top (same clip, still using piano)
- ☐ Duplicate clip and create one variant (different melody or chord prog)
- ☐ Duplicate original clip and simplify/remove some notes/change rhythm
- ☐ Use simplified clip in different location (i.e., verse) to build into orig. clip
- ☐ Continue arranging + editing clips to create full arrangement
- ☐ Split clips into different instruments
- ☐ Fill in the rest of the arrangement, mix, and export

[Watch video explanation](#)

Linear workflow

Good for:

- Newer producers
- Feeling overwhelmed with all that's involved in making a song
- Producers who struggle with generating good ideas right away

☐ Loop 4 to 8 bars at the very start of your arrangement view

☐ Add in a minimal amount of elements to form your intro

☐ Once you're satisfied with the 4-8 bar section, force yourself to move on

☐ Work on the next section until you're happy, force yourself to move on

☐ Repeat this until you've finished your full arrangement

☐ Mix & export

[Watch video explanation](#)

Skeleton arrangement

Good for:

- Newer producers
- Producers who struggle immensely with structure & arrangement
- Producers who don't know where and when to use certain sounds/instruments

☐ Find a professionally-produced song in the same style you want to make

☐ Copy out the basic structure with markers/MIDI clips (verse, chorus, etc.)

☐ Add tracks/channels for all the instruments you hear (kick, bass, etc.)

☐ Add in MIDI clips to signify when these instruments are active

☐ Delete the reference track

☐ Fill in all the blank MIDI clips with your own instruments & composition

☐ Mix & export

[Watch video explanation](#)

Subtractive arrangement

Good for:

- Escaping the loop trap once you're in it
- Producers who make loop-centric music (techno, house, tech-house)

- ☐ Make a loop that sounds as full and complete as possible
- ☐ Duplicate it until you reach your desired length (e.g., 5 minutes)
- ☐ Wide brush strokes: remove instruments and sections to form a structure
- ☐ Zoom in and perform minor removals to create interest
- ☐ Add in other instruments if needed
- ☐ Work on automation and transitions between sections
- ☐ Mix & export

[Watch video explanation](#)

Same idea, different instruments

Good for:

- Escaping the loop trap once you're in it
- Producers who find it hard to create a cohesive "B" section or bridge/breakdown that has chemistry with their chorus/drop.

☐ Take a core idea from your existing loop (i.e., chord prog or melody)

☐ Duplicate the track and move the clip outside of the loop

☐ Change the instrument & rhythm (if needed) to create something different

☐ Add in other instruments & sounds to build out the new section

☐ Finish arrangement

☐ Mix & export

[Watch video explanation](#)