

Soundfont loops

Sample data (sdta-list)

This is an extract from the Soundfont 2.4 specification.

Within each sample, one or more loop point pairs may exist. The locations of these points are defined within the pdta-list chunk, but the sample data points themselves must comply with certain practices in order for the loop to be compatible across multiple platforms.

The loops are defined by “equivalent points” in the sample. This means that there are two sample data points which are logically equivalent, and a loop occurs when these points are spliced atop one another. In concept, the loop end point is never actually played during looping; instead the loop start point follows the point just prior to the loop end point. Because of the band limited nature of digital audio sampling, an artefact free loop will exhibit virtually identical data surrounding the equivalent points.

In actuality, because of the various interpolation algorithms used by wavetable synthesizers, the data surrounding both the loop start and end points may affect the sound of the loop. Hence both the loop start and end points must be surrounded by continuous audio data. For example, even if the sound is programmed to continue to loop throughout the decay, sample data points must be provided beyond the loop end point. This data will typically be identical to the data at the start of the loop. A minimum of eight valid data points are required to be present before the loop start and after the loop end.

The eight data points (four on each side) surrounding the two equivalent loop points should also be forced to be identical. By forcing the data to be identical, all interpolation algorithms are guaranteed to properly reproduce an artefact free loop.

Each sample is followed by a minimum of forty-six zero valued sample data points. These zero valued data points are necessary to guarantee that any reasonable upward pitch shift using any reasonable interpolator can loop on zero data at the end of the sound.

Sample header (SHDR)

The values of dwStart, dwEnd, dwStartloop, and dwEndloop must all be within the range of the sample data field included in the SoundFont compatible bank or referenced in the sound ROM. Also, to allow a variety of hardware platforms to be able to reproduce the data, the samples have a minimum length of 48 data points, a minimum loop size of 32 data points and a minimum of 8 valid points prior to dwStartloop and after dwEndloop. Thus dwStart must be less than dwStartloop-7, dwStartloop must be less than dwEndloop-31, and dwEndloop must be less than dwEnd-7. If these constraints are not met, the sound may optionally not be played if the hardware cannot support artifact-free playback for the parameters given.