

8 tips to help you record in your home studio.

Always try to get the best gear you can

Like any chain, your audio chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Always try to ensure that you get the best quality components for your signal chain. It's often worth saving a little longer to get some better equipment and you'll hear the results in your recordings.

Get a good microphone



There are two kinds of microphone generally in use - dynamic and condenser microphones. Dynamic mics (like the Shure SM58) are generally used for live performances as they. Condenser microphones are used in studios and offer value for money and good quality as they are able to pick up great detail, which is what you want in your recordings.

Models to consider:

- Samson C01
- Rode NT1-A
- Studio Projects B1

Get a good sound card

Your sound card (also called an audio interface) is the digital gateway to your computer. It captures the analogue sound received from the microphone and converts it so that your computer can store it in a digital format.



The more better your sound card, the better the analogue to digital conversion process usually is. Each sound card also adds it's on 'flavour' to your sound, so you'll need to listen to a couple and trust your ears.

Brands to consider

- Edirol
- Presonus
- Roland

Record as loud as you safely can (but not too loud)



When you record, try and get a good, average level. Too soft and you'll need to boost your recording, which amplifies little sounds that you might not want and might distort the voice you're recording. Too loud and you'll lose the dynamics of your recording which might make it sound 'lifeless.' There's also a chance that the voice you recording will distort if the singer goes for a really loud passage.

Preamps can make all the difference



Microphones actually record at a very low level. A preamp's job is to take a low level signal and amplify it to a workable level. If your sound card has input for a microphone then it will have a preamp built in to handle this job.

You can also get a dedicated mic pre amp which can do a better job than your sound card's built in pre. A preamp will also impart it's own sonic character to a recording, which can be good or bad depending on what you're after - so if you want warm sounding recording or one that's very clear, the preamp can influence this. Many people choose to bypass the pre amp on their sound card and use a stand alone preamp.

Mixing Desks



Mixing desks are great because they allow to record multiple inputs at the same time. A limited number of inputs on the desk will usually have preamps built in.

Usually however, the more affordable mixers only have one output, so all the sounds that you're tracking will be recorded together and you won't be able to split them out.

So, let's say that you plug in a guitar and a bass at the same time and hit record: you'll get one sound wave with both instruments so you won't be able to split the signal or change the levels of just the guitar if you wanted to.

Digital mixers offer you the ability to record multiple inputs to your computer, so they're a great option if need to record a band but still want control of the individual instruments. This flexibility does however come at a higher price

Cables



Cables are often an afterthought for project studios, but your cables are an important part of your signal chain. They carry your audio between components, like from your mic to your preamp, so if your cables are bad quality, your sound will be degraded on the way to the preamp. Be sure to include cables in your budget when specing your recording setup. Start with getting the the best cables going in to your mixing desk/ sound card/ computer, as this is the path of the recorded sound.

Your Room

Something that many forget to consider is that your room plays a part in your recording. The way that sound bounces around and off your walls affects how it gets recorded by your mic. There are small ways that you can tweak your room so that it sounds a little better, like adding a big couch to absorb some of the bass, or you can add some diffusors or reflection panels. Acoustic treatment is something of an art form, but something that you can add right away is a reflection filter to go behind your microphone, which will really help your recordings.

