




Music Licensing Quick-Start Checklist



Step-by-Step Guide to Start Pitching Your Music for Licensing

1. Prepare Your Music

-  **Select Your Best Tracks:** Choose high-quality, versatile tracks suitable for various media.
-  **Master Your Tracks:** Ensure they are professionally mixed and mastered.
-  **Metadata:** Tag your tracks with relevant metadata (title, genre, mood, BPM, key, etc.).

Select Your Best Tracks:

Choosing the right tracks for music licensing is crucial. You want to select high-quality tracks that are versatile and suitable for various media contexts. This means picking songs that can fit into different genres, moods, and scenes. Tracks that have broad appeal and can evoke emotions are often preferred by music supervisors. Make sure the tracks you select represent your best work and showcase your unique sound.




Master Your Tracks:

Professionalism is key when it comes to licensing your music. Ensuring your tracks are professionally mixed and mastered will make them more appealing to potential licensors. Mastering is the final step in audio production and involves polishing the track to make it sound cohesive and sonically appealing. This step enhances the overall quality, making your music stand out in a competitive market.

Metadata:

Metadata is information embedded in your music files that helps identify and categorize them. Properly tagging your tracks with metadata such as title, genre, mood, BPM (beats per minute), and key is essential. This information helps music supervisors quickly understand the characteristics of your music and makes it easier for them to find the right track for their projects. Accurate and detailed metadata increases the chances of your music being discovered and licensed.

2. Organize Your Portfolio

-  **Create a Demo Reel:** Compile a short reel showcasing your best work.
-  **Separate Instrumentals:** Prepare instrumental versions of your tracks.
-  **Stem Files:** Have stems (individual instrument tracks) ready if requested.

Create a Demo Reel:

A demo reel is a powerful tool for showcasing your best work to potential licensors. Compile a short reel that highlights the variety and quality of your music. Aim to include a mix of styles and moods that demonstrate your versatility and ability to create music suitable for different media contexts. Keep it concise and engaging, ideally around 3-5 minutes, to capture and hold the attention of music supervisors and other industry professionals.

Separate Instrumentals:




Instrumental versions of your tracks are often in high

demand for use in various media projects, such as TV shows, films, and commercials. Many times, lyrics can interfere with dialogue or the overall message, so having instrumentals ready can increase the chances of your music being licensed. Ensure that these versions are as polished and high-quality as your original tracks.

Stem Files:

Stem files are individual tracks that isolate specific elements of your music, such as drums, bass, vocals, and other instruments. Having stems available upon request can be a significant advantage, as it allows music supervisors to remix or adjust the music to better fit their project's needs. Stems provide flexibility and can make your music more attractive to potential licensors who may need to customize the track to suit their specific requirements.

3. Prepare Your Marketing Materials

-  **Artist Bio:** Write a compelling artist bio highlighting your experience and achievements.
-  **Press Photos:** Include high-resolution, professional press photos.
-  **Website/EPK:** Ensure your website or electronic press kit (EPK) is up-to-date and professional.

Artist Bio:

A compelling artist bio is essential for making a strong first impression. Your bio should highlight your experience, achievements, and unique qualities as a

musician. It should tell your story in a way that engages and resonates with readers, providing insight into your musical journey, influences, and accomplishments. A well-crafted bio can help build your brand and make you more memorable to potential licensors and collaborators.




Press Photos:

High-resolution, professional press photos are a vital component of your marketing materials. These images will be used in various contexts, such as promotional materials, press releases, and social media posts. Investing in a professional photo shoot can make a significant difference in how you are perceived. Choose images that reflect your personality and style as an artist, and ensure they are of high quality to leave a lasting impression.

Website/EPK:

Your website or electronic press kit (EPK) serves as your online portfolio and should be up-to-date and professional. This is often the first place potential licensors will go to learn more about you and your music. Make sure your website or EPK includes your bio, press photos, music samples, contact information, and any notable achievements or press coverage. A well-designed, easy-to-navigate website or EPK can significantly enhance your credibility and make it easier for industry professionals to access your materials.

4. Legal Essentials

-  **Copyright:** Register your music with the appropriate copyright office.
-  **PRO Registration:** Register with a Performance Rights Organization (PRO) (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, etc.).
-  **Contract Templates:** Have basic licensing agreements and contract templates ready.

Copyright:

Registering your music with the appropriate copyright office is a critical step in protecting your work. This legal registration ensures that you have exclusive rights to your music and can take legal action if your work is used without permission. In the United States, you can register your music with the U.S. Copyright Office. This protection not only secures your rights but also adds a level of professionalism and security that licensors look for when choosing music.

PRO Registration:




A Performance Rights Organization (PRO) such as ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC plays a vital role in collecting royalties on your behalf when your music is performed publicly. Registering with a PRO ensures you get paid for performances of your music on TV, radio, live venues, and other platforms. This registration is essential for tracking and collecting performance royalties, which can be a significant source of income for you as a musician.

Contract Templates:

Having basic licensing agreements and contract templates ready is crucial for facilitating smooth and

professional transactions. These contracts outline the terms of use, payment, rights, and responsibilities for both parties involved in the licensing deal. Preparing templates in advance means you can quickly respond to licensing opportunities without delays. These templates should cover different scenarios, such as exclusive and non-exclusive licenses, sync licenses, and master use licenses, to ensure you are prepared for various types of deals.

5. Research and Target Music Libraries

-  **Curate a List:** Compile a list of target music libraries and supervisors.
-  **Submission Guidelines:** Review and follow submission guidelines for each library.
-  **Contact Details:** Gather contact information for submission inquiries.

Curate a List:

Compiling a list of target music libraries and supervisors is a foundational step in your music licensing journey. Start by identifying reputable music libraries that align with the style and genre of your music. Research these libraries to understand their catalog and what types of music they typically license. Include contact information, submission preferences, and any relevant notes about each library. This curated list will serve as your roadmap for pitching your music effectively.

Submission Guidelines:




Each music library will have its own submission guidelines that you must follow to be considered.

These guidelines can include specifics about file formats, metadata requirements, and the submission process itself. Carefully review and adhere to these guidelines to ensure your submissions are professional and meet the library's standards. Ignoring these guidelines can result in your music being overlooked, regardless of its quality.

Contact Details:

Gathering contact information for submission inquiries is essential for personalized and direct communication. While some libraries may have a general submission portal, others may prefer direct emails to specific contacts. Make sure you have the correct email addresses, names, and roles of the people you are submitting to. Personalizing your submission with a contact's name and referencing their specific requirements or recent projects can significantly improve your chances of getting noticed. This approach demonstrates your professionalism and attention to detail, setting you apart from generic submissions.

6. Create and Send Your Pitches

-  **Personalized Emails:** Write personalized pitch emails for each target.
-  **Subject Line:** Craft attention-grabbing subject lines.
-  **Follow-Up:** Plan a follow-up schedule for your pitches.

Personalized Emails:

Writing personalized pitch emails for each target is crucial to making a strong connection with potential licensors. Tailor each email to the recipient by addressing them by name and mentioning specific details about their work or the music library. Highlight why your music would be a good fit for their needs and include a brief introduction of yourself.

Personalization shows that you have done your research and are genuinely interested in working with them, which increases the likelihood of a positive response.



Subject Line:

Crafting attention-grabbing subject lines is an essential part of getting your email opened. Your subject line should be concise, clear, and intriguing, giving the recipient a reason to read further. Avoid generic phrases and instead use specific, engaging language that hints at the value of your music. For example, "Upbeat Instrumentals Perfect for Your Next Project" is more likely to catch attention than "Music Submission."

Follow-Up:

Planning a follow-up schedule for your pitches ensures that your efforts do not go unnoticed. After sending your initial email, wait a reasonable amount of time (typically one to two weeks) before following up. In your follow-up, politely remind the recipient of your initial email and express your continued interest in working with them. Following up demonstrates your persistence and dedication, which can make a positive impression. Keep track of all follow-up communications to avoid sending repetitive messages and to stay organized.

7. Monitor and Track Your Submissions

-  **Submission Tracker:** Keep a spreadsheet or tracker of all your submissions, responses, and follow-ups.
-  **Networking:** Engage with industry contacts and network regularly.

Submission Tracker:




Keeping a detailed submission tracker is essential for managing your music licensing efforts effectively. Use a spreadsheet or a dedicated tracking tool to log all your submissions, including the date of submission, the name of the music library or supervisor, the tracks you submitted, and any responses received. This tracker helps you stay organized and ensures you follow up on submissions in a timely manner. By maintaining this record, you can identify patterns in your submissions and adjust your strategies based on what works best.

Networking:

Engaging with industry contacts and networking regularly is a vital part of building your music licensing business. Attend industry events, join relevant online forums and groups, and connect with other musicians, music supervisors, and industry professionals. Networking helps you stay informed about new opportunities and trends in the music licensing world. Building relationships with key players can open doors to new licensing deals and collaborations, providing valuable insights and advice to enhance your career. Regularly update your network on your

latest projects and successes to keep your connections strong and engaged.

8. Build Relationships and Stay Informed

-  **Follow Up:** Send polite follow-up emails to maintain relationships.
-  **Industry News:** Stay updated with the latest trends and opportunities in music licensing.
-  **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly update your portfolio and improve your tracks based on feedback.

Follow Up:

Sending polite follow-up emails is essential for maintaining and nurturing professional relationships. After your initial submission or introduction, follow up if you haven't received a response within a reasonable time frame, typically one to two weeks. Your follow-up email should be courteous and concise, reminding the recipient of your previous message and expressing your continued interest. Regular follow-ups can help keep you on their radar and demonstrate your persistence and professionalism.

Industry News:

Staying updated with the latest trends and opportunities in music licensing is crucial for staying competitive. Subscribe to industry newsletters, follow relevant blogs, and participate in online forums to keep abreast of new developments, technologies, and market shifts. Understanding the current landscape helps you tailor your music and marketing strategies

to meet the evolving needs of music supervisors and other licensors.

Continuous Improvement:

Regularly updating your portfolio and improving your tracks based on feedback is key to long-term success. Review feedback from music supervisors and industry professionals to identify areas for improvement. Continuously refine your music to ensure it meets industry standards and resonates with your target audience. Updating your portfolio with new and improved tracks showcases your growth as an artist and keeps your offerings fresh and relevant to potential licensors.

Additional Resources

Forums/Groups:

- **Taxi A&R Community:** forums.taxi.com
- **Gearslutz Music Business Forum:**
gearslutz.com/board/music-business
- **Music Library Report:** musiclibraryreport.com

Books:

- "The Musician's Guide to Licensing Music" by Darren Wilsey: [Amazon Link](#)
- "Hey! That's My Song!" by Tracey and Vance Marino: [Amazon Link](#)
- "Making Music Make Money: An Insider's Guide to Becoming Your Own Music Publisher" by Eric Beall: [Amazon Link](#)

Webinars/Courses:

- **Aaron Davison's Free 4-Hour Video Course:**
[How to License Your Music Premium](#)
- **Berklee Online Course on Music Licensing:**
Berklee Online

Industry Blogs:

- **Music Business Worldwide:**
musicbusinessworldwide.com
- **Synchblog:** synchblog.com
- **Aaron Davison's Blog:** [How to License Your Music](#)

These resources will provide you with valuable information, support, and continuous learning opportunities as you navigate the music licensing landscape!