



# The Definitive Guide

## For New Digital DJ's

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# HEY, I GOT MY DJ SETUP *WHAT NOW?*

## 7 EASY STEPS TO GET FROM FIRST MP3 TO PLAYING A DJ SET

Typically a new digital DJ will spend weeks researching their equipment, before finally making a purchase. They post on Facebook about how excited they are and how they can't wait for their kit to arrive. And then finally, they've got it! After a couple of days you'll see a topic on your favorite dj forum that goes something like this:

*"Well, I've got the gear! I've installed the software. I have got a few MP3s from my mate and I can get two tunes running together. What should I do now? Am I missing something? I feel like there's so much more to learn!"*

In the "old days" of vinyl, a DJ would spend weeks and weeks learning to beatmatch manually. Or at least, that's what we thought we were doing. But really, learning to beatmatch was the bit that let us take the time to start to recognize everything else you needed to know too.

So assuming you've got your controller, headphones, main speakers, soundcard (if you need one) and software all set up and ready to go, let's look at what to do in that first few weeks to help you graduate smoothly from rookie to proficient digital DJ.

## 1. SET YOURSELF A GOAL

New bands do this all the time. You're sat around the rehearsal room, aimlessly jamming, and then suddenly someone says, "Come on, let's book a gig! That'll force us to really start doing something!"

Nothing makes you turn up for band practice and learn your part better than knowing that if you don't, you'll be messing up in front of a real live audience 6 weeks from now.

So decide on a DJing goal, and make it a few weeks away. It doesn't have to be a gig. It could just be that you have a housewarming party, or decide you're going to record your first mixtape.

The point is to decide you're going to do something, set the date, and tell people.

Bang - instant focus.

## 2. START COLLECTING MUSIC JUST FOR DJING

DJing with tunes you had lying around already, or your friend's "dance" MP3s, is a no-go. Music, not kits, is the start and end of DJing. You need to start collecting your DJ set.

You're not going to a record shop every Saturday, so you've got to work out how to replicate the experience. So set time aside for formal tune discovery and buying.

Set a music-buying regime - decide what online stores you're going to use, what blogs you'll keep up with, and so on. And do it - ever week.

Treat it like going to a record shop, and don't miss it.

Formal tune-finding time is essential for all DJ's.

Once you've got your DJ tunes, sort them and have them available in one place in your DJ software. Those tunes are your "fingerprint" tunes, they're what you want people to remember you by. They are tunes you need to know inside out, and want to know how to mix.

And doing this will make you think hard about that set. Have I got enough "bangers" in there? Have I gone "off on one" a bit? Will I bore people with this stuff? Is it suitable for where I want to play? Is the sound quality of those MP3's good enough? Are the BPMs close enough? And so on.

Congratulations - now you're starting to think about music the way real DJ's do. And it all comes from formally starting your DJ record collection.

Another step along the road from rookie.

## 3. LEARN THE 1,2,3 (4) OF DJING

If you're not counting, you're not doing it right.

All DJ's are constantly counting in their heads when they're DJing, if not out loud, then at subconsciously.

When you learn to meditate, they tell you to concentrate on your breathing - doing so brings you back to the present. Similar thing with DJing.

You need to concentrate on constantly counting the beats. If you lose count, you can lose where you are in a track and sometimes this is fatal for your mix.

All music is in bars - count 4 kick drums in a house track, and that's a bar (same principle goes for 99% of the music you'll ever want to DJ with, in any genre).

Count 8 bars, (8 sets of 4), and that's your standard "chunk" of music.

You'll notice things happen at each transition of these 8-blocks - basslines come in, drums notch up or down, vocals start, breaks arrive or finish, and so on.

That's why it's so important to count so you know when they're coming.



A good way to do it is to count “1,2,3,4. Then “2,2,3,4. Then “3,2,3,4. All the way up to “8,2,3,4., then back to the beginning. Most of the time, you’ll be starting the next record (which you’ve got cued up at a “1” moment) when you return to the beginning of this cycle.

For now, just start counting as suggested, and notice how the music is constructed around these mathematical building blocks. Beatmatching is easy with modern DJ kits because you have a sync button, but timing still needs to be learned.

#### **4. READ THE MANUAL CAREFULLY**

Back in the vinyl days, learning to use 2 record decks and a mixer was hard enough. All those fiddly controls on the turntable for tracking, balance and so on! Buttons and knobs on the mixer!

Nowadays you’ve got 10 controls to our every one back then. Your DJ kit can do all kinds of things. But, I bet you’re deliberately shying away from some of them right now.

It’s time to dig the manual out, get stuck into those settings and features, and switch on the “auto help” to start learning. Of course some features will mean nothing to you at this stage. But the sooner you are aware of what you don’t know or fully understand, the sooner you’ll start joining the dots and working out what your kit is capable of.

Hot cues, looping, effects, samplers - all can and will help your DJing as you get more proficient. Just having the name of a feature in your head means you’re subconsciously thinking about it, even as you’re studiously avoiding using it as you feel you’re not “good enough” yet. So work through the features list. You’ll be using them all the sooner or later.

#### **5. STUDY A HERO**

You need to know where you’re going, and your heroes will help you to get there. Nowadays, thanks to Mixcrate, SoundCloud, YouTube and so on, you can get audio and even video of great DJ’s. Many of them actually show you their tricks.

But you don’t need to learn formal “tricks” off people - that’s good but it’s not really what you should be looking for at first. Just studying their mixes, now that you’re looking at it from a DJ’s point of view, is enough.

Have you ever bought a Lonely Planet or Rough Guide to a city or country before going on holiday there? You read it and try and picture it all in your head, and plan the best you can, but it all seems so new, and so strange.

When you come back from your (hopefully excellent!) holiday there, you may pick up the same guide a few weeks later. How different it all looks now! How much more real, how much easier it is to fill out the words and maps, put real experiences and places where once there was just your imagination!

It’s exactly the same with studying your heroes by listening to their mixes or watching them in the clubs now that you’re a DJ, it is all going to be rewarding for you in a way it isn’t for people who don’t DJ - people just like you, a few weeks ago.

#### **6. FIND A “STUDY BUDDY” OR TWO**

Having someone else involved in your learning is a great help.

Once you learn something, you’ve got someone to show it to immediately.

You’ve got someone to tell you if it sounded good or not.

Someone to “high-five” with, when you get it right and to encourage you when you don’t.

If that person is learning too, you get a boost by having an instant teacher there if they “get” a skill before you, and vice versa.



But even if you just have music-loving mates, or a girlfriend or boyfriend who's happy to sit there with you while you're doing it, having someone to talk it through with, helps to cement learning. Somehow, it makes everything more real.

Get used to messing up in front of people early - it will give you the nerves to play in front of proper audiences later. Plus, DJ's play in front of audiences. It's what we do. At least this way you're used to playing to one other person!

It's a bit like practicing a new language - people are scared to speak out loud in case they sound stupid. But you have to - and it's the same with DJing. Get used to messing up in front of people early - it will give you the nerves to play in front of proper audiences later.

## **7. PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE!**

You think: "I'm not made for this, I'll never get it."

You think: "If I just put it away and go and watch TV, I can get back to it tomorrow."

There's always an easy escape. But you're only scared of it because you really want to do it! You simply have to practice.

Practice should be regular. Better to do it for a short period of time every day than once a week for a whole day. The reason is that you're thinking about in "in-between" times. You're working at it even when you're not. But it has to be fresh in your memory.

Studies have shown that if you do something every day for 3 weeks, it becomes a habit. You actually feel more natural doing it than not doing it! So that's your goal.

Try and set aside a little time every day, preferably at around the same time, and just do it.

Even if you're doing nothing special. It's putting the time aside that's the important thing. The rest will come - especially if you've taken on board these pointers.

## **FINALLY...**

Remember that DJing is simply about a passion for playing music you deeply love to people, trusting you're a good enough DJ to get them to agree with you!

Keep your mind always on the music and how you're expecting people to react to it, and on using the tools you have to help you get there, and you'll be on a road that can give you many years of joy.

And if there's one thing that's true about DJing, it's that however long you've been doing it for, there's always something new to learn.





**HEY, I'M READY**

***GET BOOKED!***

### **7 EASY STEPS TOWARDS YOUR FIRST DJ BOOKING**

DJing on your local pub or bar scene is a great way to hone your skills. Whether it's your first gig ever, a first booking in a new town, your first event for a while, or just a first play in a new venue that you've decided is for you: Getting that "first gig" is an art form in itself. And for today's digital DJ, it definitely doesn't involve sending out mix CDs or getting yourself an agent!

We're not talking about playing in a big club with established DJ bookings and thousands through the doors; we're talking about the kind of venue where you turn up, controller over shoulder, plug in and provide a DJ set - no fuss. The kind of place that functions fine without a DJ too. Places like your favorite music bar, beach bar, lounge bar, student venue or live music place. So here's how to land that elusive first gig and start DJing out regularly:

## 1. GET TO KNOW THE VENUE AND THE STAFF

Might sound obvious, but if you don't go somewhere a lot first, how do you know if it's right for your music? Go there on a mission, though - not just to drink!

Ask yourself: When do they have DJ's on? Do they employ DJ's like me? (Your level of experience, your type of music, your age, your look, even.) Tip the bar staff well when you drink there. Talk to them. Find out what the place has planned, and how well their nights are going. Find out the name of the owner.

Next, and all in good time, "bump into" the owner. Tell him what you think about his other DJ's. Not as in: "He's rubbish, I could do better," but: "Hey, great DJ tonight. You must be pleased!" He may just tell you something back, something that might be useful. ("Yeah, it's been OK, but he's always late," or: "His music is a bit hard for this place, the students don't really get it," or: "I only book her because she's my wife's niece!") This will help you to hone your pitch to him for later on, and put your face in his mind. Don't ask for the gig yet! You're on a research mission at the moment. So the more you can find out, the better.

## 2. THROW A PARTY THERE IF YOU CAN

If it's the kind of place that you can rent for a party, this can be a great way to prove your worth with no risk to the bar owner. Find a reason: your birthday, your friend's birthday, a leaving party, an end-of-term party, a Christmas party for your company - anything at all. Club together and pay the rental fee (or tell him you'll guarantee X people if you can have the back room, terrace or whatever for free) - then do it.

Of course, you will DJ. He gets to see your crowd, and hear your music. You're now in a much stronger position to get a regular gig. It will make you think like a promoter, too. This is definitely a good thing

## 3. SELL THEM A BRAND, NOT JUST A DJ

Having a great DJ name is not enough. The more you've thought about what you want to do, the more likely you are to sell it to someone else. So instead of saying "Erm, can I DJ here? I'm DJ Scratchmasterking", you can say "I'm DJ Scratchmasterking from...."

For instance, an event called "Sunset Rocks". It could be a party that starts in day-light and ends when the night is well and truly on us. Things like that could be a brand. The name tells you more about the night than the DJ name would, and shows I've thought about it.

## 4. GET PUBLICITY IN PLACE BEFORE YOU APPROACH THE MANAGER FORMALLY

Make a Facebook Page - that's a no-brainer. Get everyone you know to "Like it". Next, bribe a designer friend (everyone's got a designer friend) to design you a simple poster with some kind of logo; your name; your Facebook page address; and a gap for you to attach the date, time and place of your gig to it. (That way you can get them printed at the local print shop and just add the dates and times in the future.)



You can show your poster to the bar or club owner when you ask for the gig, and also show him the gap where you are going to put his venue details. Again, it will show effort and willing on your part. It also insinuates you've done this in other places. (If he asks and you haven't, say something like: "I've been doing exclusive invite-only parties till now -")

Get your designer friend to design a simple business card with your cell number, email, Facebook page, name and branding on it too, and get some printed at the same time as your posters. You'll need those later..

## 5. ASK FOR THE BOOKING

With a DJ mix posted online on somewhere like Soundcloud (just to say you've got one; 9 time out of 10 the venue owner won't even listen to it, and they will also lie and tell you they have - trust me), posters in your hand, a busy Facebook page, and the knowledge you need about the venue, you now just need to identify your night and ask for the gig.

You'll have already got the bar staff to like you and hopefully know that you've got a reasonable chance, but be prepared to be flexible: Be ready to change your tack and offer your services for a different night of the week, or around sports events, or between live acts if they have them, and so on.

The trick here is to get your foot in the door. Two things can happen: You get a gig, or you get knocked back. If you get knocked back, you politely leave your business card and return to stage 1. Keep going to the place; keep enjoying their nights; keep showing your face.

It often takes time, but if you've done the above well, your chances of success are high, and will get higher as you "repeat".

## 6. TALK MONEY

So you've been offered a slot. It's OK to say you'll do it for free the first night to show what you can do; indeed, it's advisable sometimes.

Just make it clear that you'll expect payment if you're asked back again. You're a professional and deserve payment, even if it's only bar staff wages to start with. Try and tie the manager to a "the busier it gets, the more money I get"-type deal. It's not so hard to do: use a line like: "I'd love to do it for free this week to show you my crowd and my music, let's talk more after-wards," and then afterwards you'll say: "Great! It takes a few weeks to build my type of night, and I'll happily play for [name your lowest figure] while we're doing that; let's talk again in 6 weeks about raising payment to nearer my normal fee when we've established the night." You'll have noticed you're talking like a professional here. You're not saying "my music is the best!" or "I'll blow you away!" (The manager or owner doesn't care; he cares about an easy life and a profit). You're saying: "There's not much risk in it for you, and I've done this before."

Even if you haven't done it before - ever - you must put across this level of confidence. Coming across as not knowing what you're doing (even if you don't) will always work against you. There's a bit of bluff here, but really you're doing him a favor (as you're a great DJ), so don't feel bad about it.



## 7. PREPARE FOR THE GIG

Put your posters up in the venue (on the back of every toilet cubicle door is a belter - it's a captive audience - and by the bar, in the entrance hall and so on). Do this a couple of weeks before so the regular crowd get to see your brand, maybe hear your mix online via visiting your Facebook page, and so on.

Depending on what's at stake and how aggressively you want to market yourself, put posters up elsewhere too. I don't really do this when I'm playing a bar that has it's own crowd anyway, but it's up to you. I prefer to build the crowd "organically", and let's face it, your poster - while it may be nice - won't mean much to the general public. I'd say use a Facebook Event and Twitter, word of mouth and so on to get your crowd down instead.

Check out the technical setup with the bar owner - make sure you can plug your digital DJ kit in OK and ensure there is a table for you and so on, especially if it's somewhere that doesn't normally have a DJ (such is the joy of digital DJ controllers - pop them in your backpack and as long as the venue can plug you in, you can play just about anywhere).

For the first night, you really want to pull in favors with your friends to get a crowd down. Get everyone you know down there. Don't take "no" for an answer. If they won't come for the whole night, get them to commit to an hour! And make sure they bring their friends, too. Then it's a case of getting your tunes together, practicing your set, and getting down there - nice and early, ready to play.





## HOW TO PLAY YOUR FIRST

# *DIGITAL DJ SET*

### 7 EASY STEPS TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL FIRST GIG

Your first digital DJ set in public is going to be a nerve-racking experience. Like a good theme park ride, you'll probably hate it - till the moment it stops and you scream "again"! Here are 7 tips to help make sure you do a good job, and hopefully even manage to enjoy it (a bit)

#### 1. KNOW YOUR TUNES

This is the most important tip of all. So you're playing a 2-hour set - that's probably 25-30 tunes. I'd say have 50-60 tunes prepared that you know inside out. You should be happy mixing all of these, and ought to have thought hard about why they're in your virtual crate.

What tunes are "big" in the venue? What tunes are big right now? What other tunes complement them? What tunes are important to you, are parts of your style? What mixes have you discovered that you love?

You need a blend of new, old, known, unknown, predictable and surprising. Choosing double the tunes you'll need means you can go underground or chart, upfront or classic, safe or risky, as the crowd takes you. But make sure you know them well - that's the most important thing.

And DO take the time to prepare them - don't just turn up with 60GB of tunes unsorted on a hard drive and think you'll be OK. You won't!

## 2. KNOW YOUR KIT

It's important that you're happy with your DJ equipment; especially because as a digital DJ it's more than likely you'll be taking your own kit with you to play on. You need to know how to set it all up, pack it away again, and get everything working quickly.

You need to know what to do if you have a crash (hint: take an iPod and be ready to plug it in with a mix prepared), and how to boot up quickly and cleanly (knock out wireless / Bluetooth, don't let memory or processor-hungry apps load in your PC, disable screensavers...)

It will help if you've played with your gear in parties. If not, just take it to someone else's house and set it all up there, while catching up with them. This will prepare you for being in a venue where people may be trying to talk to you, you're unfamiliar with the surrounding, you're in "public" mode - and even for when someone says "you're on in 5!" and you've not even unpacked. (But still, get there early and set up in good time.)

## 3. HAVE A PLAN

I had a set list written out and hidden in my record box the first time I DJ'ed in public. I was that nervous - with every single mix planned!

I wouldn't tell you to go that far, but a bit of planning is a good thing.

You already know what time you're starting and finishing. How many people will be there? When does the venue tend to get busy? When do people start to dance? You can't make people dance too early, so have a plan - a warm-up, a transitional stage, a peak-time stage.

If you're only booked for warm-up, play warm-up; if you're coming on after a chart DJ but you're more upfront, have some chart crossover material to lead into your set. If you're between two DJ's who play different styles, how will you bridge them?

The point is, to have a plan; think about what you're going to play. Half an hour of this, then half an hour of that, then half an hour of something else - that's all you need. Just the process of planning a DJ set makes you a better DJ, especially when afterwards you compare how it went with what you were thinking.

## 4. KEEP IT SIMPLE

Your first DJ set is no time for tricks and showing off. Just plan to play records simply, and competently one after the other. Make your mixes functional; you'll probably be trembling too much to "large" it on the decks anyway!

Keep your mixing simple and make enough time to enjoy watching the dancefloor.

One of the biggest things you should take from your first few DJ sets is how the crowd behaves, but if you're too busy trying to plan and pull off DJ tricks, you won't be watching them enough. So keep it simple, take in the atmosphere and learn by looking around you - the tricks can come when you've mastered the basics. You're far less likely to mess up this way.

On a related note, don't have more than a drink or two to steady your nerves - caution goes out of the window when you're half-drunk, and you don't want to go down that road on your first (or four-hundredth) DJ set.



## 5. LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ENJOYING YOURSELF

This is where many rookie DJ's (and a few professionals) let themselves down.

Nobody wants to see a DJ with his head in his laptop 90% of the time, agonizing over every mix.

You have to have time to join in, even if it's just a little dance and a smile, shaking hands, chatting to those near to you.

Even if you feel rough, you're so nervous you could be sick, nobody's dancing, the venue owner has told you to turn it down, you keep getting inappropriate tune requests, it looks like a fight is about to kick off in the corners and your girlfriend just had a go at you for not giving her enough attention: SMILE!

It's your enthusiasm that often gets the dancefloor going. It's your love of the music that encourages other people to hear the good in it. It's your lead that starts everyone having fun. Looking happy on the outside when all manner of "performance anguish" is going on in your head and heart is difficult, but you must master this one.

How can you expect others to have a good time if you're obviously not?

## 6. RELAX – MOST PEOPLE AREN'T EVEN LISTENING!

A wise old DJ friend of mine once said: "Most people aren't really listening," and he was quite right.

Put yourself in the shoes of the average person on a night out. You go out for an evening: You are trying to get laid, get drunk, just happy you're not at work, catching up with friends, in the venue solely because it's a trendy place to be seen in, worrying that your bum looks big in this skirt, upset that your best friend hasn't come, really pleased someone you didn't think you'd see is here, bitchin' because someone never buys an drink for you - and all this time there may or may not be a DJ playing!

You see? Most people simply don't listen to the music all night long - even when dancing to it, half the time. If someone hears 2 records they love, they'll go home happy. If they don't go home happy, it probably won't have been your fault anyway (see the list above).

Point is, pick your tunes well, and relax! People really aren't here for you. Even your friends will be hard pushed to name many of your tunes after a DJ set.

Music might be your life - but most of the crowd have got more important things on their minds.

## 7. END ON A GREAT RECORD

So if most people aren't listening most of the time, your aim is to make sure everyone in the club hears just 2 or 3 records they really love.

The trick here is to make those "I love this one" tunes different for everyone, so there's always someone "backing up" your music at any given time. Save your best tune to last and send everyone home happy.

But - here's a big DJ secret. If you can save just one record that as many people as possible in the crowd adore, and play it right at the very end, you'll send them all home with that tune ringing around in their ears. And when they wake up, with a massive hangover and with hazy heads, they'll probably only remember that one tune from the night before - and hopefully your smiling face as you jumped about behind the decks while you were playing it to them. Job done!

Now go and ask the manager for a re-booking.

***And Good Luck...***



# *get down*

## MIXING LIKE A PRO

**While beat mixing music is essentially the same regardless of what genre you mix, this guide mainly focuses on how to mix dance music in a better way. It applies less to hip-hop mixers.**

**As different techniques are used in that genre.**

**This guide focuses on a better understanding of how dance music is made, and how you can take advantage of this knowledge to mix better. It will guide you as to when and where you should mix songs in a mix set.**

### **STRUCTURE OF A SONG**

Dance music is structured in a very ordered fashion, and most dance and house tracks follow this structure to the letter. Modern songs are no longer live recorded songs, but rather made at computers using different audio programs.

Hence the rhythm, structure and logics of a song are strictly followed and the beats are very accurately distributed throughout the song. A modern dance song is usually built out of the same sections: Intro, verses, chorus, bridge, breakdown and outro. The song is usually ordered in this fashion: Intro, verse 1, chorus 1, bridge, verse 2, chorus 2, breakdown, chorus 3, verse 3, chorus 4 & 5, outro.

Each of these sections of the song are made out of "building blocks" that are 4 by 4 beats. Each group of 4 beats in a dance song is called a bar; this the smallest block of a song.

And each of these building blocks starts with a beat that is called the downbeat. Play a dance track and count the beats. Counting them in fours like: 1234, 1234, 1234, 1234. Notice how the first (downbeat) of each bar is a little more noticeable. It's the beat you nod your head harder to or step your foot harder to. Identifying this beat is crucial to better mixing.

### **THE DOWNBEAT**

It is important to listen to a piece of music and identify the 1st beat in a bar (the downbeat) - and continue counting beats correctly, and mix correctly. This will come naturally to most people. If not, listen carefully to all the sounds you're hearing. Sometimes something is different about the 1st beat.

The first beat of the song is usually such a downbeat and when something about the track changes that change happens on the downbeat. The verse starts on a downbeat; the chorus starts on the downbeat, and so on.

DJ software like VirtualDJ, helps you identify this downbeat by the CGB dots under your waveform. The downbeat is marked by a bigger dot. Most of the time VirtualDJ will get this downbeat correct, but sometimes you need to adjust the downbeat manually and set the big dot to the first beat of the song.

### **PHRASE & SIGNIFICANT DOWNBEAT**

Now you know what a bar of beats is, that it is important to count bars correctly to mix two tracks together, and how to identify the correct downbeat of each song. Now keep in mind you can't just mix any bar of track one to any bar of track two. Like beats are grouped into bars, the bars themselves are grouped into phrases. Music is structured in an orderly way this is how music is made and what makes music rhythmical.

Most dance tracks have a phrase consists of 8 bars in other words 32 beats. Simplified: songs are made of blocks phrases, or blocks of 32 beats. An intro is 32 beats, a verse is 2x 32 beats, and chorus is 32 beats. What makes an outstanding DJ, is being able to identify the first beat of each phrase (32 beats), called the significant downbeat. At each first beat of a phrase something new usually happens in the song; the verse starts, the chorus starts, et cetera. The idea is that this new part of one song will be a second song being mixed in creating a mix in perfect structure and timing.

As an exercise, mark first beat of a song, then every 32 beat count, with a cue marker, and listen to how song change at each marker

## STRUCTURE AND TIMING

Mixing in the structure of the song and timing it correctly with a significant downbeat, will make an outstanding DJ. Not only will the mix feel right and flow better, and it will also make your transition less noticeable. Most of all mixing this way feels better for the people on the dance floor.

Without mixing in correct structure and timing the dance floor will hesitate not knowing what beat to follow in the mix. If you mix downbeat over downbeat - in both song one and song two, the mix will feel okay, but will feel awkward, if you don't also mix in correct structure.

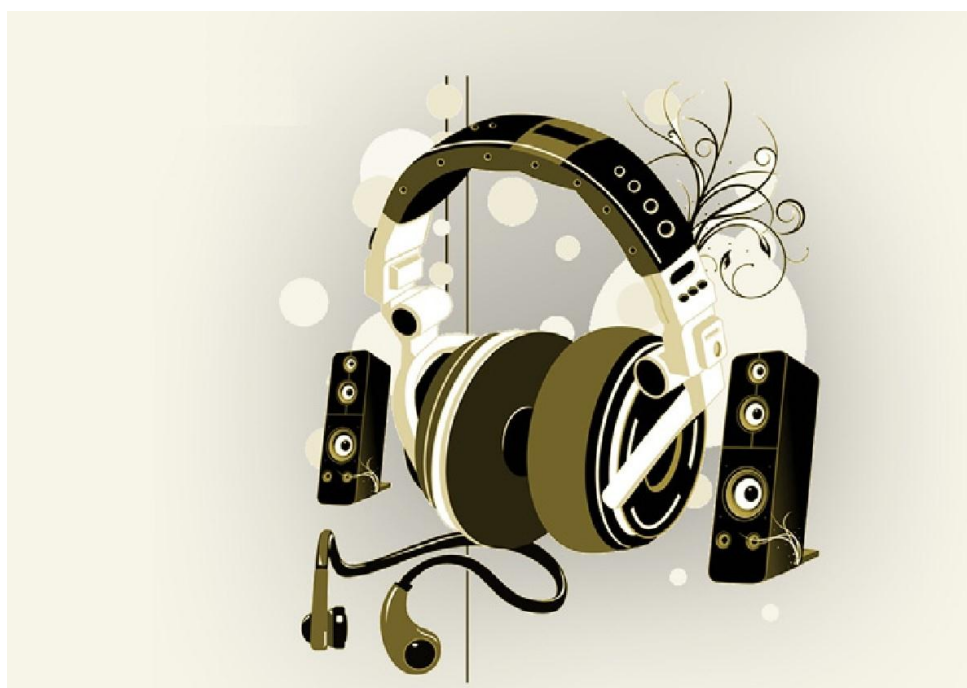
As this guide points out; at each significant downbeat of the song (start of each phrase), something new happens in the song. More instruments are added, verse and chorus starts, all structural changes of a song start at this significant downbeat.

The challenge now is to make this "new" thing that happens in the song be the new song mixed in at one of these phrase starts. The simplest way to mix is mix the outro (32 beats) of song one with the intro (32 beats) of song two. Starting the mix by matching the first beat of song two's intro, with the first beat of song ones outro. This would then be in perfect structure and would feel like a good mix.

Mixing intro to outro can be a bit boring after a while with dance songs that tend to be very long. For a mixed tape it can work fine, but for a dance floor a DJ might want the mix to be shorter to keep the dance floor pumping.

This can be done by mixing in song two's intro at the first beat of the breakdown (the quiet part after 2nd chorus), of song one. Avoiding both the quieter breakdown of song one and keeping the energy on the floor as well as being in correct structure and timing of the songs.

Mixing in structure and timing will be felt as a rhythmically correct mix, as it follows the structure of how music is made. Making you a more professional mix DJ. Remember, practice and patience makes perfect. And patience makes champ.



# *come Together* IN PERFECT HARMONY

Harmonic mixing is an advanced technique adapted by top DJ's worldwide. It is essential to any top level DJ or mashup artist. The goal is to make the smoothest mixes by avoiding sour clashes between the songs in the mix. It's the natural evolution from beatmixing. The DJ won't only take the BPM of the song into account, but also the songs key.

Harmonic mixing theory gives DJ's and remixers the knowledge to select songs and samples intelligently by utilizing music theory to find harmonically compatible songs. It enables DJ's to be more creative by artistically combining melodies and harmonies by creating entirely new compositions or super smooth mixes.

There are 12 major keys and 12 minor keys in which most Western music is written. Of the 24 possible keys, only 6 keys are compatible with any given key (4 are in perfect harmony, 2 are in reasonable harmony). This means that only 25% of all possible choices of songs are harmonically compatible, (in reality, probably less). A beatmixing DJ would have to test at least four melody overlays to find one that is harmonically compatible. 75% of their time is wasted!

By applying harmonic mixing theory a DJ can make more intelligent selections of songs that will make good mixes.

## **AUTOMATIC KEY DETECTION**

Software like VirtualDJ offers automatically key detection. You can choose to show this as a column in the music browser area. You can select to show the key itself, or a key code (utilize the circle of 5th to make it easier to select compatible songs).

Pro DJ's avoid sour mixes by using percussion breaks or free beats from one of the songs being mixed, and then mixing songs that are harmonically compatible.

It is a technique of mixing different keys artistically, instead of randomly, in order to create pleasing musical blends rather than bland or sour mixes. It is a skill that separates the true artists, from the average DJ's.

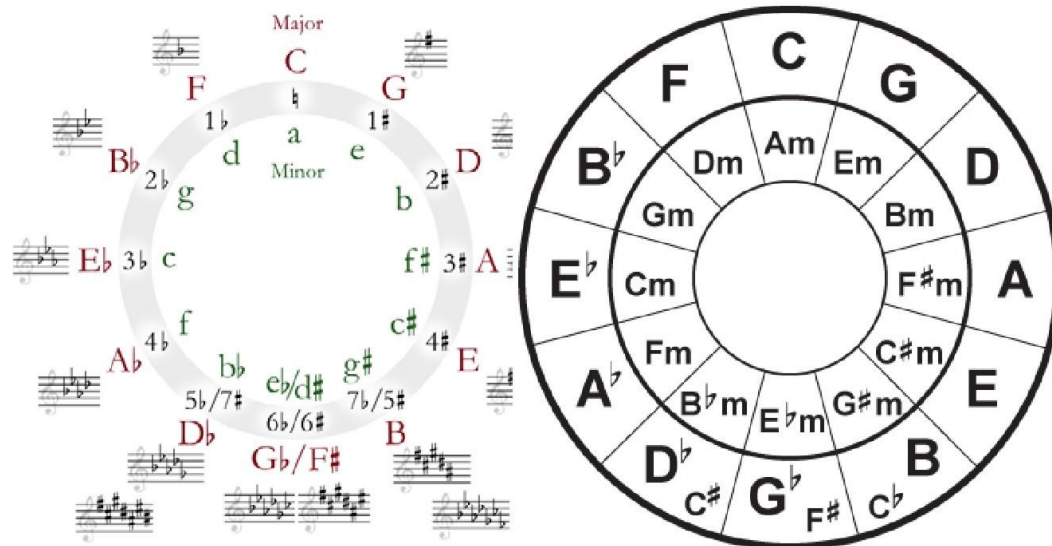
## **CIRCLE OF 5th AND MUSIC THEORY**

In music theory, the circle of 5th (or circle of fourths) shows the relationships among the twelve tones of the chromatic scale. DJ's, producers, and music software have adapted this circle in different forms by applying key codes to each key.

This makes harmonic mixing easier because compatible keys are adjacent to each other on the wheel. While this makes remembering harmonic theory easier, keep in mind this is a simplified system and does not capture all of the details. One difficulty the wheel introduces is how the key code of a song changes as it's speed is altered.

Again, software like VirtualDJ will aid you with this. You can see live the changes on the skin in the keycode as you move the pitch. Alternatively, applying keylock when the pitch is at a given keycode/key can be a great way of preserving key, despite changes in pitch.





## Harmonic Mixing

In music theory, a song will be harmonically compatible with songs of many different keys. Using keycodes makes harmonic mixing easier to remember. Compatible keys will always be +/- one key number or same number, as the current track played. For example, a song in 6A will be compatible with 7A, 5A and 6A/6B. Making it even easier, VirtualDJ detects all keys as minor keys, so a 6B will show as 6A.

## Advanced Techniques

Normal harmonic mixing stays in same key, or goes up/down one keycode on the keycode scale. It is recommended to randomly apply some advanced techniques at intervals through your DJ set. A region shifting mix would be to gradually and slowly change the pitch about 5-6% without having keylock enabled. This moves a song, 7 steps up on the keycode scale taking your mix into a different region of the scale. The song can then be mixed from there with songs that are compatible with the songs new key code.

Modulation mix is an alternative way to produce an exciting feel. This is achieved by mixing songs that are half a step or a whole step up on the chromatic scale. In keycodes this is equal to 2 steps or 7 steps on up the keycode scale. This kind of mixing should only be done at percussion and clean segments of the songs otherwise melodies & vocals might clash and sound sour.

Modulation mix is also often referred to as energy boost mixing. It can give the feel of a large amount of energy to the dance floor.

## Tips

Remember that harmonic mixing is best done in areas of the song where there is the least amount of melodies that can clash. I.e. intro/outro parts of song, or breakdowns/bridge.

The frequencies that produce the biggest clashes are the "bass" frequencies. To improve the outcome of harmonic mixing, it's strongly recommended to use EQ's in the transitions, especially the bass EQ.

Also lower the levels in intelligent ways. Using a headset to "pre-listen" is essential. Pre-listening allows the DJ to determine what amount of EQ needs to be applied to avoid the mix from having harmonically clashes. The low frequencies of songs are the most likely to cause phase cancellations in a mix.

Therefore; using EQ in a mix transition is almost essential. Simply using the crossfader just won't cut it for advanced professional harmonic mixing!

## Source list

All the content in this manual can be found on the internet.

Made by DJ Peter Perfect – [www.djpp.dk](http://www.djpp.dk)

