

Foreword:

Hello, my name is JP, Xanny, Subsentience, hyperactive_filly, etc. This is just a compilation of guides and stuff that helped me in learning how to make music. Hopefully it will help you.

GETTING STARTED

What I'd suggest is doing some research on all the DAWs then picking one that looks the coolest to you. That's pretty much what everyone does when they start anyway. After that, make your accounts, then download some samples, I recommend the luthatron one for getting started as it has literally everything you need as far as drums go and perhaps the white noise effect pack from 99sounds as it can be useful for risers and transitory stuff. Obtain some plugins if you want. After that you can get started.

DAW - In no particular order. Obtain one of these. Note that there are many more, i just recommend these as they have the most tutorials available or are cross platform/free

- [Ableton](#) ← Used by many people. tons of youtube tuts
- [FL studio](#) ← used by many people tons of youtube tuts
- [Bitwig](#) ← works on linux
- [Reaper](#) ← free for 60 days
- [Logic](#) ← MAC
- [Ardour](#) ← for Linux and MAC, also FREE
- [Cubase](#)
- [StudioOne](#)
- [Pro Tools](#)
- <http://www.audiotool.com/> ← Browser based
- <https://lmms.io/> ← Cross platform, open source, and free

Sample Packs - Download these sample packs. Just something to get you started.

- Luthatron Sample Pack - over 1000 good drum hits - (1)(2)
- MusicRadar Acoustic Drums - 1000 drums - (1)
- [Lex Luger Sample Pack](#)
- [All Trap Music Sample Pack](#)
- [Virtual Riot Massive Presets](#)
- [Bedroom Producer Blog](#) ← a lot of different packs that are all good quality
- <http://soundmorph.com/?page=free> ← just get the universe bundle (it has all the others)
- <http://99sounds.org/free-sound-effects/> ← some really cool stuff
- <http://www.wavealchemy.co.uk/free-samples/>
- <http://store.samplephonics.com/collections/free-stuff-1> ← try before you buy
- <http://www.goldbaby.co.nz/freestuff.html> ← really good
- <https://www.samplemagic.com/product-listing/1/samples> ← High quality samples
- www.vstbuzz.com/freebies ← cool site with a bunch of deals on packs and plugins.

Individual Sample Sites - Search here.

- <http://www.looperman.com/> - a LOT of shit, but has some decent acapellas
- <http://ccmixter.org/fbcreate> - a bunch of GOOD acapella, but most are Creative commons
- <http://sampleswap.org/>
- <http://www.freesound.org/browse/>
- acapell.net ← has some good studio acapellas

My Favorite Plugins - Note: Not saying you should use these. I'm just listing what i use.

STOCK DAW PLUGINS - Learn every single one of these before you even consider looking at the list below. I highly recommend this because there is no point in getting additional plugins if you don't know the main concept behind what each plugin does and what technical terms like compression, delay, reverb, attack, release, etc mean.

Mixing/Mastering/Dynamics

- [Ozone](#) - Great mastering Suite
- [FabFilter](#) - Relatively lightweight filters, Eq, compressor, etc, also has Pro-Q which is the best soft EQ i've ever used
- [Sausage Fattener](#) - For fattening up your sausages

Synths

- [Harmor](#) - Really amazing/versatile synth
- [Sylenth1](#) - I don't think i've made a track where i haven't used this in some way
- [Massive](#) - wubwubwubwubSCREEEdeedoowubwubwubWHAuuubwuub
- [Serum](#) - Basically same as above but with a cooler interface
- [Nexus2](#) - Generic? Yes. Awesome? Still yes. It is a rompler which means individual samples are stored within the plugin, still sounds great. good for trap.
- [Sytrus](#) - Looks outdated but i promise you this is the best FM synth.
- [FM8](#) - Another FM synth. This one works for MAC's

Effects

- [Glitch 2](#) - I admit that i abuse the shit out of this. But its amazing. Note: Glitch 1 is free
- [Stutter Edit](#) - Basically a more complicated version of glitch. however its useful for playing effects in real time instead of pre programming stuff.
- [Volcano](#) - Another really cool plugin that lets you make use of a ton of modular filters.
- [Timeless](#) - if not the best, then one of the best delay plugins
- [Valhalla Room](#) - if not the best, then one of the best reverb plugins. Their other ones are amazing as well

Distortion

- [Ohmicide](#) - An amazing and slightly creepy plugin. My favorite distortion plugin
- [Trash 2](#) - Another great distortion plugin. Useful for completely destroying sounds
- [Saturn](#) - Very versatile. Can vary from simple saturation/warming, to completely mangling sounds.

FREE

- http://illformed.org/downloads/illformed_old_vst_plugins.zip - illformed glitch, crusher (bitcrusher), tape stop, and stretch. Note: these are 32 bit ONLY
- [Dimension Expander](#) - Stereo Widener. I always use this
- [Pancake](#) - panning controller. pretty cool
- [Camel Crusher](#) ← awesome and free Distortion plugin
- [OTT](#) ← Multiband compressor
- [Ambience Reverb](#) ← pretty decent reverb

OTHER/Tools

- [LFO TOOL](#) ← Hella useful. I cant even explain just watch a youtube video
- [Smexoscope](#) ← Free oscilloscope for viewing waveforms

Sharing Sound - Post stuff for the world to hear. Make accounts here, or don't. You're probably better off practicing for now. The first 2 are useful for getting quick feedback.

- <https://instaud.io/>
- <http://clyp.it/>
- <http://soundcloud.com/>
- <https://splice.com/>
- <http://www.justbeamit.com/>
- <http://drive.google.com/>

LEARNING

Okay, now that you have “bought” everything that you need to get started, I recommend actually learning how to use the stuff you just got. Step 1 should always be **READ THE MANUAL**. Trust me, this will make you look like much less of a noob to everyone else as it will prevent you from asking really really simple questions such as how to change a wavetable in massive, or how to add an effect, etc, etc.

NOTE: THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF WOULD BE TO LEARN WHATEVER DAW YOU PICKED INSIDE AND OUT. This means learning what the stock effects are, and how to use them. Learning the layout, workflow, and hotkeys. Learning the stock synths and how to use them. Etc. Don't be afraid to ask questions or try to look up videos but again, read the manual first.

Books - Read these things. Or don't

[Music Theory: The TL;DR Version](#) - Exactly what it sounds like

[Music Theory For the Computer Musician](#) - Basically the Long version of the previous book and specifically aimed at those making music with their computers. Unfortunately it doesn't teach you how to wob.

[Izotope Mixing Guide](#) - Incredibly good mixing guide by the folks over at izotope. Big ups to them

Pages/Cheat Sheets - Use these pages. Or don't

[Ultimate Guide to Drum Programming](#) - Not really ultimate, but a good guide to drum programming nonetheless. It also goes over some generic beats in various genres. Basically a good way to program good drum loops and make them not sounds too stale.

[Ultimate Guide to Writing Better and More Memorable Melodies](#) - Goes over what makes a melody good, and how to make an effective melody

[3 ways to build off of an 8 bar loop](#) - 3 different ways to make the 8 bar loop a 16 bar and beyond

[A Bunch of Music Theory PDF's](#) - Exactly what it sounds like. Basically just cheat sheets for music theory. Circle of fifths is a good one

[Writing an entire song cheat sheet](#) ← really good mini guide on how to build generic songs. with this knowledge you can go far.

<https://autochords.com/> ← chord progression generator. the only downside is that it is incredibly cookie cutter.

[Chord Analyzer](#) ← Shows the chord progressions for popular songs.

Theory Tutorials - Watch these guides. Or don't

[Very Basic Music Theory](#)

[Circle of Fifths](#)

[Varien Music Theory Week Playlist](#)

[Subtractive Workflow](#) -

[Teaching Theory using piano roll](#)

PRODUCING

If you have made it here, I assume you have at least opened up your daw and its various plugins and figured out how they work. Without that basic knowledge, going forward and making an actual song will be pretty much impossible.

Analyze

I would recommend starting by picking a track that you would like to emulate, and analyze it over and over again. Ableton made a really good [guide](#) for this. I recommend picking up the whole book if you can afford it, but the tips they have available for free are gold as well.

They say start by making a catalog of attributes for the reference track. Simple things to note would be bpm, sound elements, melody and harmony, rhythm, and composition.

They then say to go into active listening which means listening to a song multiple times focusing on a single element each time. To make this easier you may plug the song into your daw and listen in 8-16 bar chunks to see what is going on. Another good thing would be listening and trying to identify what emotions the song may make you feel.

They then offer the idea of applying constraints to yourself. I would recommend opening the book to see what they are talking about (the page is free anyway) but the basic idea is that by limiting yourself in some way, it helps cut down on the overwhelmingness of having infinite possibilities to work with.

Structure

For the sake of not wanting to teach time signatures, it might be easiest to start with 4/4. This just means you have 4 beats per bar/measure. This makes it very easy to structure dance songs.

[16 bar intro] [16 bar build/hook] [16 bar Drop half 1] [4 bar break] [16 bar drop half 2] [16 bar bridge] [16 bar Drop half 1] [4 bar break] [16 bar drop half 2] [16 bar outro]

This is very cookie cutter but it makes stuff easy. This is also why you always see dubstep songs dropping at :55 or trance dropping at 1:00.

Seamless covered this pretty well in his [video](#)

WORKFLOW

Workflow is extremely hard to teach (in my opinion it's impossible). However, what helped me was watching those "track from scratch" type videos to see some other people's workflows and try to modify that into one that works for me.

[Subtractive Workflow](#) - This is most widely used in dance music. Basically you make your drop then copy and paste till it's as long as your song, then subtract elements for the respective sections. For example, the intro might have just drums or something.. Unfortunately this makes songs sound very derivative/repetitive/boring after a while.

[Split sound design/ composition](#) - Some people like to do sound design separate from their composition of their tracks. It's not what i choose to do, simply because i like to hear sounds in context rather than on their own, but it works amazingly for some people. This is especially recommended if you like to use and abuse presets.

[Drums first/ Melody first/ Chords first](#) - Basically what it sounds like. You start with either your drum beat, your melody, your chords, or whatever else would be in the final track and build your track around that.

[Seamless Track from Scratch Playlist](#) - I feel like he has an odd workflow, but it gets stuff done which is nice

[Sadowick Minimal Start to finish](#) - I enjoy this workflow more, but he's less interesting than seamless

[Sadowick Let's Remix Lorde](#) - Pretty enjoyable to watch. Shows a quick remix process

Sound Design

The first thing you should do when learning sound design is to just play around with whatever synths you have handy. You never know what kind of cool or fucked up stuff you can make just messing around with knobs and things. Also by reading the manual you should be able to get a grasp on what most things do in their respective plugins. When you get bored of that...

[How to Bass](#) - Seamless is an incredibly good teacher, especially so for sound design. I like that he actually explains what the knobs do and why they change the sound the way that they do. If you are looking to understand, and not copy definitely check it out.

[FM Synthesis](#) - Seamless teaches everything you need to know about FM synthesis.

[Additive/Subtractive Synthesis](#) - This is a playlist on harmor, but almost everything seen here can be transferred to another synth in some way. Esp the sections on filters (which can be applied to any subtractive or wavetable synth).

[Massive Mega Guide](#) ← Mega guide to one of the most widely used synths in bass heavy music.

Mixing/Mastering

Aight, so your track is done! YAY! Now time to make it not sound like garbage. I recommend referring to the book i [linked](#) earlier as it should help you. If you still need more help then here are some useful resources.

[Frequency Cheat Sheet](#) - Figure out what frequencies your instruments should hit at
[General EQ guide](#)

[Using Panning and Volume to create a space for your instruments](#)

[The Art of Mixing](#) - basically a 2.5 hour Tim and Eric sketch about mixing (its amazing)

[Pink Noise mixing Trick](#)

[Giant guide to mixing](#)

Once you have finished mixing, take a look at the [Izotope Mastering Guide](#). It was made for their plugin, Ozone, however the techniques can be applied to any plugin equivalent to the respective modules.

Random Tutorials - how to make certain sounds or other random stuff. Watch it or dont

- [Sidechain Synth](#) - Culture Code talks about sidechain synth really common in chillstep/melodic dubstep
- [Benefits to Chord Layering](#) - How to make the drop from “universe” by xilent. It showed me some cool tricks specifically related to chord layering
- [How to find notes using EQ](#) - How to use an EQ to figure out what note is being played.
- [Keytracking with Massive Filters](#) - Bass similar to the Crush on you by nero bass. Also shows a cool trick related to key tracking
- [How to WOB](#) - Typical dubstep growl m808. Sample and Hold method (which is probably the best talking bass without making use of FM synthesis. Play around with it)

Let me end this by saying that i encourage you to do whatever you think sounds good. Music is your creation. Theory and knowledge can certainly help QUITE A BIT, however you are still free to do whatever you want.

I hope this guide ends up helping some of you. Happy broducing.

Added note: please use the chat thingy at the top to message me and let me know if anything should be added

UPDATE TIMELINE

May 7 - V1 Release complete

May 8 - V1.01 - Cleaned up some stuff, added the analyzation section and a few free plugins

May 9 - Added the Guide to massive in the sound design section. Also added 2 more sample packs