



Audio Included

futureDJs

How to DJ

A guide to DJ-ing
and electronic music
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FABER *ff* MUSIC

Core values of a FutureDJ

Reading this book will not magically turn you into a superstar or even a competent DJ. To get there you will need to develop the following qualities. Do not underestimate their importance; being a DJ is not just about the music you play, but the person you are. Whenever you struggle, come back to this page and remind yourself of these core values:

Versatility

DJs can find themselves in all sorts of different environments. You need to be ready for any venue or event, whether it is a party, gathering, club, festival, arena or bedroom.

Knowledge

Knowledge of all genres, techniques and DJ-ing cultures will make you value and appreciate all the music you hear in a whole new way. You'll understand why tracks sound the way they do, why people dance the way they do, why songs are structured the way they are, and why people enjoy the music they do.

Modesty/humility

Every DJ experiences successes and failures. The only journey that truly matters is your own. Aspire to be the best you can be at what you are doing. Do not worry about comparing your best with that of others.

Inner confidence

Inner confidence allows a DJ to shine when on the decks; to trust their instinct and to make the right decisions in the moment. Belief in your versatility, knowledge and practice will get you through any situation. It is important to not mistake confidence for arrogance.

Health

Always put your mind and your body first. Look after your ears. Learn to read your own personal level meter and treat your body like you will treat your music — if you find yourself in the red, turn it down.

Perseverance

Do not be put off by your failures. Failure leads to learning, and learning leads to success.

Practice

It is said that to be great at anything you need to practise for at least 10,000 hours. No matter how good you get (even early on), never stop practising.

Responsibility

At its most basic level, a DJ is responsible for the music. For a FutureDJ that is the biggest responsibility of all. Remember the responsibility to your audience, to yourself, to your equipment, and to the environment you are in.

'Find your own magic and where you fit into the musical landscape — anyone can learn to play records and be technically good, but having a perfect sense of timing and a connection to what's happening on the dancefloor will make you stand out. Make sure you practise and practise and then practise some more. Take up any opportunities there are to DJ outside of the bedroom. You need to get out there — whether it be a wedding, a house party or a local bar/club. It will help you to learn your skill, play in different situations and set-ups and, most of all, how to interact with an audience. You will work out what sort of DJ you are going to become and it will make you visible to promoters out scouting — you never know who is in the audience.'

Judy Griffiths
fabric

Types of DJ

‘Follow your heart and passion, be patient, make friends, go out — don’t stay in. Be more social than social media — or at least do both.’

Severino

‘A career in music starts in your mind and will go as far as you believe you can go. So believing in yourself above anything else is the key to a successful career.’

Bec

As DJ-ing developed in different countries and cultures, it served a range of purposes and was regarded in a variety of ways. Every ecosystem has different expectations of their DJ. Here are a few:

Event DJ

An event DJ is a business person: able to organise themselves, transport themselves and their equipment, perform to a brief and provide a service. Events may include weddings, corporate occasions, and product launches. They must be flexible, amiable and reliable. Their collection must be extensive and eclectic, covering many genres, tastes and generations.

Core value: Versatility

Resident DJ

The resident DJ has a regular slot in a venue. It may be weekly, fortnightly or monthly but it will be at a consistent time. Their job is to fit seamlessly with the sound and culture of the event. A resident DJ will feel completely at home in that sound. Little deviation is allowed; these are competitive spots, and there’s always someone else willing to fit the brief. They tend to play in clubs and bars in the area where they live.

Core value: Responsibility

Guest DJ

A guest DJ is asked to play for their particular sound. They may cross many genres or specialise in a niche sub-genre known only to a few. They have the freedom to express themselves as they see fit and to do what they want with their time on the decks. That said, they have a responsibility to the audience that turned up to hear them play. They can request the equipment they would like to play on in the venue, whether in a club, festival or radio show.

Core values: Modesty/humility and inner confidence

Performance DJ

A performance DJ is a turntablist, a grandmaster of the decks, able to dismantle rhythms and melodies and rebuild them to their own specifications. They compete against each other in tournaments, like the DMC World Championships and Red Bull 3Style. They break boundaries, both musical and technological, searching for new sounds and techniques to push forward their craft. Their profession is online and offline, regional, national and international. They use specially designed equipment for scratching and beat-juggling.

Core values: Practice and perseverance

DJ/producer

A DJ/producer is also likely to be a guest DJ. They perform their own music, sometimes exclusively, and sometimes in combination with tracks made by others. They may also perform ‘live’ sets, where they utilise software like Ableton Live in combination with hardware like drum machines, synthesisers and samplers to compose and improvise music on the fly.

Core values: Knowledge and preparation

FutureDJ

A FutureDJ is versatile and knowledgeable. They have the knowledge and understanding to be any type of DJ or musician they want. They have respect for all types of DJ-ing and genres of music. They DJ for the music and for the thrill of expressing themselves through music. They dedicate themselves to their craft and push the boundaries of the art as well as their own. They are the DJs of the future, the pioneers of new genres, new sounds and new attitudes.

Looking after your hearing

It's worth taking a moment to reflect on your experience of sound, and particularly music, and how important that is to you. Being a FutureDJ means being able to DJ well into the future. In order to do that, protection of your ears must be at the forefront of your mind from the outset. There is nothing more debilitating for a musician than hearing-loss, and a constant buzzing or ringing in the ears, known as tinnitus, can severely affect mental health. These dangers can be subverted by taking a number of simple measures:

1. **Always wear earplugs in any concert/gig/club environment.**
2. **Take regular breaks away from the music.**
3. **Always be aware of where you are in relation to the sound sources in the room. Never stand next to speakers.**

We interviewed Jono Heale, Director at world-leading hearing protection company, ACS Custom, to find out more. Jono has over 30 years of working 'both sides of the curtain' in the entertainment industry. In his late 30s he discovered he had chronic tinnitus and Music Induced Hearing Loss caused by exposure to loud music.

How do you feel about hearing loss in the music industry?

It's no joke. Tours, sessions, studio, clubs, pubs, even BBC Radio and TV: but no one told me I could be damaging my hearing, which I feel quite angry about really. Loud music over long periods of time will damage your hearing. Fact.

How does your tinnitus affect you?

The tinnitus is a perceived ringing in my ears and seems to sound like two tones at about 4kHz and 8kHz... all the time. This is interesting, as my hearing test showed that the main damage and hearing loss is at 4kHz frequency, which is very common with noise damage. My tinnitus is more of a problem at night, especially when I'm tired or a bit stressed, or if I wake up in the night – and beeeeeep. It's there straightaway and I can't get back to sleep.

What about hearing loss itself?

The hearing loss is more of a problem in social situations, as I can't hear consonant sounds so well, like F, Th, K and S, which usually sit in the Music Induced Hearing Loss bandwidth. I'm now looking into getting a hearing aid.

How loud does music need to be to damage your hearing?

The first thing DJs need to be aware of is that sound is measured in decibels (dB), which is a logarithmic scale. So, every 3dB increase in volume is twice as loud. If it's twice as loud, you should half your exposure time: simple. Here's an example: at 85dB, your safe exposure time is approximately eight hours. At 88dB it's four hours, etc. Now, in clubs and concerts the sound level can be at least 100dB, which gives you approximately 15 minutes of safe exposure before you start to damage the sensory hair cells in your cochlea.

As a DJ, how can you protect yourself?

If you are a DJ, you are three-and-a-half times more likely to get hearing loss and one-and-a-half times more likely to suffer the effects of tinnitus than the rest of the population. But this is all 100% preventable if you take the right precautions. To still hear the music in high fidelity you need attenuating or filter-type earplugs. There are plenty on the market in both universal and custom-fit designs. If you are serious about sound, your health, your career, want to feel the music and be in the environment, you need the best quality earplugs you can afford. Best by far is to go for custom-moulded. These fit perfectly to your ears, guarantee the attenuation and protection required and there's a range of different filters to suit the environment you are working in. ACS Custom has the best hearing protection on the market. The earplugs are made from soft medical-grade silicone, which makes them incredibly comfortable to wear over long periods of time.

Where and how to get your music

'The idea of sharing your music collection with people on a large scale is great. It holds a level of responsibility to the people you're sharing it with to play the best music you have at your disposal. We prefer not to plan our sets and both avidly collect and produce music between gigs, so being able to surprise one another with new music in a club environment is an added bonus.'

Dense & Pika

Your own personal collection is the bedrock of the art form. Where do you get hold of it? Where do you start?

Whether you have a preference for a genre or are starting from scratch, turn to the genre pages at the back of this book and read about each one. Listen to the suggested tracks and see what appeals to you. Make a conscious effort to listen to each genre, especially if you think you won't like it. If you come across a genre or track that you particularly dislike, think hard about why that is. Is it the vocals, the beat, the groove, the timbre or the structure? There's always something that you can appreciate. Try to put the track in context; think about the origins of the track's components; imagine a setting where you may enjoy it more; imagine why other people may like it. Listen to it again, and again. Does it grow on you? Music is subjective. No one genre has more value than another. They have all derived from different places and cultures and have subtly differing priorities and purposes. Think about your own priorities when it comes to music, and why your preferences developed in the way they have.

Places to discover music

It can all start from one track. The web that you create will be completely personal to you. Every track you like gives you a lead into others. From one track, you know:

The genre: knowing the genre will lead you to playlists, charts, more artists, more record labels.

The artist: the artist will instantly lead you to similar sounding tracks, but also record labels and charts.

The record label: exploring the label opens up more artists, charts, releases and tracks.

The release/EP/single: check the other tracks on the release. They may be from the same artist or others. It may be an EP, an album or a compilation.

The DJ charts: charts can come in various forms. There are charts by genre, record label and curated by artists and DJs. Ever wondered what tracks your favourite artist is listening to?

The mixes: mixes are great for discovering music. Whether they're part of a podcast series, a recording of a live set, or self-released, they showcase a DJ's particular sound. If you find a DJ whose sound you like, the odds are you will discover music you like by listening to their mixes. Find mixes on Soundcloud or Mixcloud, and use Shazam or find track listings to discover the name of a track in a mix. Remember, individuality is key; be sure to find your own sound, rather than mimic others.

Places to buy music

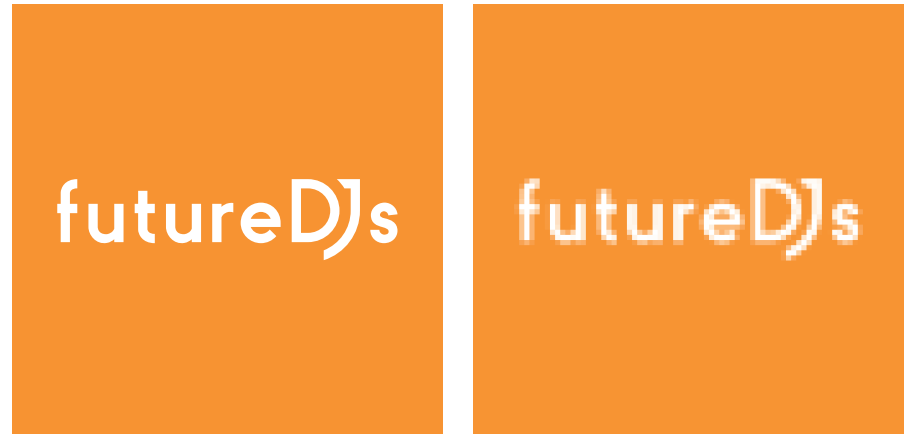
Digital: many online stores offer short previews of tracks. This can be a great way to browse and discover — you will know after 30 seconds whether you like a track or not. Try: Beatport / Bandcamp / Traxsource.

Vinyl: a record shop can offer a unique buying and listening environment, with personal service. They will often specialise in particular genres and the selection can represent the taste of the buyer. Walk in, ask for help, put a record on the platter and, with headphones on, listen.

Streaming: streaming services are a great way to effortlessly browse through music. Related artists, curated playlists, charts and radio are all at your fingertips. Try: Spotify / Soundcloud / Tidal / Apple Music.

Quality: when watching videos on Youtube, we always search for the highest quality videos possible, in fact, anyone used to watching vlogs would argue that good sound is more important than good video quality. When we are on social media we tend to prefer to look at pictures in the highest quality; pixelated photos just don't cut it. Music is the same, so start to think of it in the same way.

You will come across various file types: MP3 (128kbps–320kbps) / WAVs / AIFFs / Flac.



Think about music quality like you understand image quality. A low-quality file will produce a low-quality result.

'When selecting music to play it's important to make sure it's music that means something to you, regardless of whether it's popular. This way, you create a musical fingerprint that's unique to you. Don't restrict yourself by the style of music you play, if you like it and think you can make it work in a set, try it. No one will stand out by playing it safe.'

Audiojack



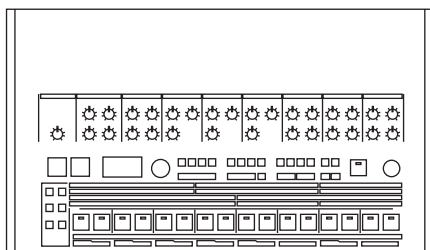
FutureDJs	Stage: 2
Set up	

Components of electronic music

Whether it's software on a computer, laptop or tablet, or hardware instruments, there are a few popular tools for creating electronic music. A good DJ can split a track into its constituent parts and then piece it back together again in their mind. It is vital you know what electronic music is made of, before you start to mix and manipulate it. You will find audio examples of each instrument in the FutureDJs music folder 'Components of electronic music'.

Components of electronic music

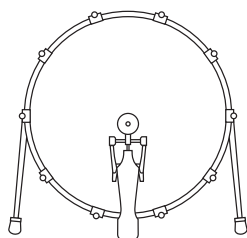
Electronic instruments



Drum machine

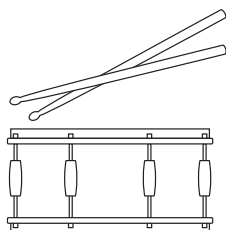
In electronic music, the drum machine is the primary source of rhythm. It is responsible for the beat of a track and is broken down into these percussive instruments:

i The Roland TR-909 is now considered one of the most influential instruments in electronic music history. When it was released in 1983, however, it completely flopped and was discontinued two years later.



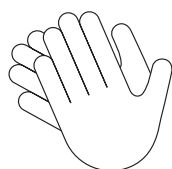
Kick drum

The kick drum is the largest drum in a kit and produces the lowest pitch. It is the source of the thud you hear in your favourite track. An acoustic kick drum is played with a drummer's foot by pressing on a pedal attached to a beater. Electronic kick drums replicate this sound with a very distinct timbre, like the popular Roland TR-808 and TR-909 drum machines.



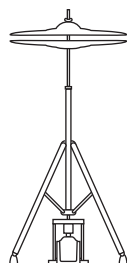
Snare

The snare drum produces a short, snappy sound with its famous rattle, created by metal wires held against the underside of the drum. Typically, it is used in House music on the 2nd and 4th beats of the bar, aka the backbeat.



Clap

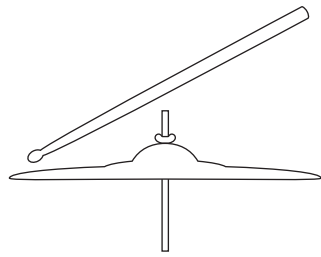
Snare and claps are used interchangeably in drum patterns. A clap sounds like two hands clapping.



Hi-hat

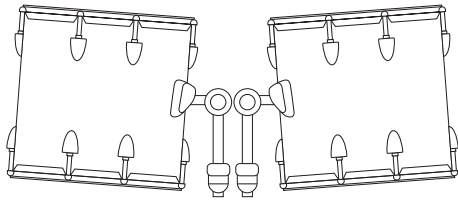
A Hi-hat cymbal is operated with a pedal that opens or closes the two cymbals. As such it can produce two fundamental sounds: open and closed. The open sound is a bright, sustained sizzle, while the closed sound is a short, crisp 'Tss'.

i The use of Hi-hats in Trap music is an unmistakable feature of the genre.



Ride/Crash

These cymbals create a sound with a long sustain. The crash cymbal is used often with a single strike to accent moments like the beginning of a phrase, while the ride cymbal is often played continually to create momentum.

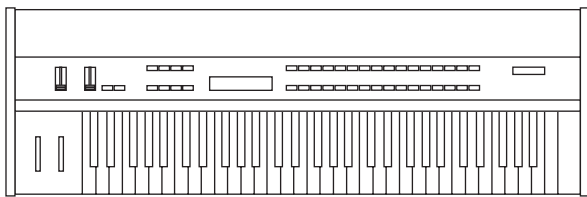


Toms/tom-toms

There are three toms: high, mid and low. They produce a clear, articulate tone with a long or short sustain. They are often used in fills, marking the end of a phrase or section, or in-between the beats, creating syncopation and groove.

Other percussion

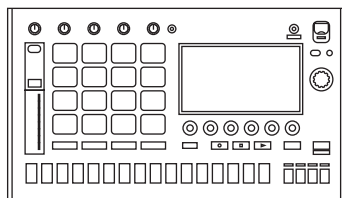
Shakers are often used with a sustained rolling rhythm that adds a layer of texture to any groove. Tambourines can articulate a beat with a sharp, high 'tap' but can also fill the high frequencies of a track with a shimmering jingle. The unique, hollow, open sound of the cow bell can cut through a mix and add clarity and precision to any beat.



Synthesizer (synths)

A synthesizer is an electronic musical instrument. It produces an analogue or digital waveform that can be added to, distorted, modulated, amplified and filtered to create unique original sounds or imitate acoustic instruments. It is usually played using a keyboard.

i Soft synths are synthesisers that are built into a computer programme, or DAW (Digital Audio Workstation), like Ableton Live.



Sampler

A sampler is one of the key components in electronic music and was pivotal for genres like Jungle, which sampled Reggae and Dancehall. A sampler allows you to load pre-recorded sounds and play with them at different pitches or rhythms.

Effects

Effects can be applied to any components to change and 'affect' the sound. You will learn how to add effects to a track as you DJ. It's important to understand that effects are also used in the production of the tracks you are DJ-ing with. Listen out for delay, reverb, flanger, echo and bear in mind that if you can already hear an effect being used in a track, you may not want to add any more.

Other components

Bass

The bass is a DJ's best friend: from sound system culture to EDM, people want to hear bass. There is something primal about it. The bass is the sound that you feel in your gut — it is the BOOM. It can be produced by many components, like the kick drum, pads, synths and toms.

Pads

A synth pad is a sustained chord, note or tone created by a synthesizer. The timbre can vary dramatically, depending on the synthesizer used and the effects applied to it. Its purpose is often to carry background harmony.

Melody

Melodies in electronic music normally give us the hooks, the sounds that everyone remembers.

Vocals

The vocals are any sounds produced by the voice. This might be a rap, a choir, the lead melody or a one-shot sample like 'Fresh'.

'Electronic music wouldn't be so successful without bass. If you think about it, we've really only had amplified bass for around 50 years. Big bass is only a couple of generations old. Before the invention of speakers that could project true bass frequencies, humans only really came across bass in hazardous situations — when thunder struck, for example, or an earthquake shook, or explosions caused by dynamite or gunpowder. That is probably why it is by far the most adrenaline-inducing frequency that we have. Bass gets humans excited.'

Tony Andrews

Founder of Funktion One

Music management

Being a DJ is being a great selector. Start by getting organised.

Your music is your identity as a DJ. You will need to be able to locate the right track at the right time if you are to take your audience in the direction you desire. Discipline and consistency from the outset may save your neck further down the line. A programme like Rekordbox will enable you to access instantly and arrange thousands of tracks using a number of techniques to suit your personal preference. For a vinyl DJ, a box is sufficient. Remember not to overcomplicate this process — the key is consistency, the simpler the better.

Where to save your music

The first decision to make is where your music files are stored.

Media software

A programme like iTunes provides you with a framework, easy access to metadata and offers good integration with DJ-ing software like Rekordbox.

Local files

You can achieve the same organization simply by using the filing system on your computer, but you may miss the playback, metadata and user interface.

Streaming

With a streaming service like Soundcloud, you don't have to worry about storing the files themselves. Beware of being reliant on an internet connection.

DJ software

DJ software enables a DJ to organise their collection and prepare for a performance. Within the software, you can access your music (wherever it is saved) and create new folders and playlists. Your tracks' metadata can be edited and added to, including the title, artist, release, genre, rating, key, bpm, etc. By analysing your tracks, the software can tell you the key, bpm and show you a waveform of each track. You can then add cue points, hot cues, loops and alter beat-grids to make sure your music is reliable and easily accessible.

How to organize your music

Wherever your files are kept, the next step is to create a system that helps you navigate quickly and effectively through your collection. Start with playlist folders.

Playlist folders

Genre

If you are interested in more than one genre or style of music, then set up a folder for each genre.

Event

If you are performing at a number of different venues or events, create a folder for each one.



History

For the occasions when you lose yourself in an improvisation and forget the order of tracks you played, you can create a playlist from your playing history, even from your USB stick.

'To be a great DJ you have to be a great selector. The records chosen and the order they are played in is crucial to coherent storytelling. The best DJs create musical journeys which reflect their own musical taste and knowledge. The trick is to successfully communicate one's own enthusiasm and understanding of the music. It's all about trusting your instincts and knowing what's in your record collection. Having the tunes is the first step but playing them with character and personality is the only way to truly shine.'

Craig Richards

Playlists

Within each folder come your playlists. A playlist is a list of tracks in a specific order.

Date/session

A quick and easy method of labelling your playlists is by date. If you are looking for a track, you will have a good idea of when you found it. Alternatively, give your playlist a descriptive title such as 'Mix session 1'. You will know the highest number contains your latest tracks.

Energy/position in a mix

If you are preparing for a performance, you could create a playlist for each section of your set, using titles like 'Warm up' and 'Peak', or a simple numbering system from 1 to 5, where 1 is low energy and 5 is high.

Track order

Within your playlists are your tracks. There are a number of ways to order your tracks within a playlist, the choice is yours.

Alphabetical

If you know your track names like the back of your hand or you are likely to receive requests for specific tracks, alphabetical order may be for you. By artist or track name.

Set order

If you have planned your performance from start to end, then put your tracks in the order you intend to play them.

BPM

If your playlist is full of many different genres and styles, ordering by BPM will help group similar genres together.

Key

If your tracks contain vocals or a clear sense of harmony, sorting by key will help you see your options quickly.

Extras

Tags

Use tags to help you group tracks by your own custom criteria: 'Groovy' or 'Dark', for example.

Comments

As your collection grows, adding comments about the structure, components or sound will help remind you of a track.

Rating

All your tracks should be 5-star tracks in your eyes. But the stars could be used to describe the energy or set position of your tracks.

Colour

Colours mean different things, musically, to different people. You can devise your own system to visually denote energy levels, sound, genre or set positions.

How to organize your music

