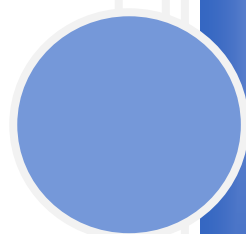




# PREPARING FOR YOUR RECORDING SESSION

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Barefoot Studios



Preparation for recording makes a lot of sense because it means you will get better value out of your recording sessions. It can save you time and avoid annoying delays and problems which eat into your creative time which you have paid for. Less problems means the audio engineer can spend more time on getting a better sound through microphone placements than worrying about other practicalities. All these small considerations can have a psychological impact on all involved in your sessions and make things progress more smoothly and calmly, and that has a value.

Firstly it almost goes without saying that your material should be well rehearsed, focus on the problem sections of any tracks that you have written and ensure that all the band members are comfortable and confident with their performance of the tracks to be recorded. Try and work through sticky sections carefully and supportively with band members who are having difficulty.

The more time you can devote to practicing your material before your actual recording session, the smoother your session will go on recording day saving you time and money!

## **INSTRUMENTS:**

1) Stringed Instruments: Consider changing your strings 2-3 weeks before recording, this often results in subjectively better tone. Although do bear in mind that the tone of an acoustic guitar for example may brighten and possibly suffer string squeak. So if you like a warmer tone you may actually wish to keep the existing ones on. Always stretch the strings out once they have been replaced and wear them in by playing daily. Checking these things in advance pays dividends and makes for a smoother, delay free session. Ensure that any pedal boards are in good order and that everything is firmly in place and that there are no squeaks or electronic / patch cabling gremlins.

Remember to tune stringed instruments often!

2) Drums: It is suggested drummers replace their drum heads some weeks before recording and ensure the drum kit is well tuned and that all hardware is firmly in place and not rattling/squeaking. (Including your kick drum pedal, lubricate if required) Take a drum tuning key with you to the session and possibly some moon gel to dampen resonances. It is important to get all

instruments sounding as good as possible as if they do not sound great to the ear they won't sound great on the recording itself.

3) Gear: Any amplifiers for keyboards and electric guitars should be checked out for hums and buzzes, if your amp has a problem get it serviced before you record. This will keep the recording noise floor down and it will sound more professional on fades, intros and quiet decaying sections. It will mean less noise reduction is required during the mixing stage. All audio leads should be of high quality and checked for crackling and intermittent connection. Guitarists should ensure they have their tuner, pedal boards, plectrums, spare leads and spare strings and any other items that help make a performance smooth and professional.

4) Keyboards: Keyboard players are not excluded, you can check for hums and buzzes emanating from your equipment and a great tip is to ensure that your keyboard is working on both the left and right outputs of the stereo pair. Make sure the engineer records your stereo keyboards in stereo, then you have options to manipulate the sounds stereo image in the mix down. If your keyboards and synths have issues, broken keys, scratchy filter pots etc. get them repaired at the service center.

### **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:**

Make sure you inform the recording engineer of your line up and kit inventory so he or she knows what to expect. Ensure you have had a chat with the engineer to discuss your musical style and requirements. This will be highly appreciated and a good engineer will make mental and practical preparation for the session. This might include microphone and DI choices, room set up and how he wishes to order the lines running into the control room. Getting the recording engineer on your side is a sure fire way to have mutual respect from the outset and ensure a smooth running and friendly recording session.

### **VOCALISTS:**

Vocalists should be keeping themselves out of harm's way in the run up to a recording session. A bad cold, throat infection or the flu is not going to do your vocal performances any favors at all so try and avoid catching a cold as much as possible. This reduces the likelihood of cancelling the session and

possibly losing deposit money. Keep your voice in tip top condition, be well rehearsed and do any voice exercises in the weeks running up to strengthen the voice. Rehearse and perfect any tricky vocal phrases.

Print off the lyrics you plan to use for your songs – even if you feel you have the lyrics memorized. Having them available for immediate reference will aid you in retakes and allow you to devote your attention to articulation and style.

### **DRESS CODE and SELF CARE:**

Ensure you wear comfortable clothing in the studio that considers likely temperature. Make sure you can strip off to just a vest if need be and also take something to keep warm. Making sure you are comfortable will likely make your performance better. Avoid noisy clothing, jewelry, bracelets or anything that might be picked up by sensitive microphones.

Also ensure you have plenty of your favorite drinks available to keep hydrated. It is well documented that dehydration will affect both mental and physical performance.

Get a good night's sleep. There's a reason we have after parties, not pre-parties. The night before your first session is not the night to stay out late with your friends. Remember, you're going to have the next few days filled with intense focus. The best way to maximize your focus is to be well rested. So, after you've changed your strings or heads go to bed and get a good night sleep.

### **DISTRACTIONS:**

Turn your phone off! Let anyone that might be contacting you that you are unavailable. Not only are you risking it ringing or vibrating, but the cell signals can actually interfere with newer wireless equipment. This is also a huge distraction. If you are anything like me you have notifications popping up every 3 minutes. Nothing can break your concentration more than seeing your Aunt Jeanne liked a photo of you on Facebook right before your killer solo. Also, you would be surprised how peaceful it is to turn it off for a couple hours

## **TIME MANAGEMENT:**

Time is money! Staying on track is the most difficult thing to do in the studio. You can ask the engineer to help manage the studio time, but it's always best to have a band member keep track of the time. Most everyone has a smart phone these days and they all come with alarms and timers, so use them. Set the alarm on vibrate and let it remind you when it's time to move on. Figure out how much time you want to spend recording each song or parts of a song and stick to it. So many times I've had musicians show up to the studio with the intent of recording 3 or 4 songs and only wind up recording 1 or 2 songs. It is very easy to get wrapped up in recording and over-dubbing tracks that time will just slip away. Figure out a way to manage your time and do your best to stay on schedule.

Insist on preparedness. To avoid needless delays, start by ensuring that all band members arrive on time for the session. While some re-tooling of material is to be expected on the job, try to discourage major structural revamps such as writing an entirely new set of lyrics from scratch during session time.

## **SCORES:**

If your group plans to use sheet music for arrangements: Please provide the studio engineer with a copy of the score. A clearly marked score saves recording time as it offers easily understandable and legible parts for the conductor and performers. Make sure that all transpositions of the instruments are correct, Horns in F, Trumpets in Bb, etc.

## **HAVE FUN!**

If the stress of recording is bringing you down, remember that you are here because you love what you do. You are creating music in a form that you can share with the entire world. Take breaks if you need to. Play a game if you need to. Go running if you can get away for 20 minutes. Stress doesn't feel good and it doesn't sound good either. You are in the studio to do what you love with people you care about. Always make sure to have fun with it!