# From First Idea to First Release

The DJ Crytohead Guide for Independent Artists

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An action book for writing a song, recording a demo, preparing a release, and building a direct connection with listeners.

DJ CRYTOHEAD

Artist Development and Music Business

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Build Your Sound. Grow Your Career.

# How to use this book

This book takes you through one complete music project. Start with an idea, develop the song, capture a demo, improve the recording, and prepare the materials needed for a release. Then build a repeatable system for promotion and learning.

Choose one song before you begin. Use it in every exercise. Working on the same song connects the lessons and leaves you with usable materials instead of eighteen unrelated assignments. You can use a phone, a notebook, and equipment you already own for the early stages.

Each chapter contains instructions, an example, a mistake to avoid, and a completion check. The worksheets at the back turn those instructions into a project folder. Keep your answers somewhere you can revisit and update.

The first ten chapters expand the DJ Crytohead video lessons developed for the channel. Chapters eleven through eighteen extend the curriculum into distribution, ownership, promotion, AI, opportunities, and progress. Those later chapters can stand alone until their companion videos are published. No unpublished video links or personal success stories are assumed.

The running example follows Maya, a fictional independent artist writing an original song called Morning Again. Her examples illustrate decisions; they are not income claims or accounts of the author's experience. Original lyric examples in this book are teaching material.

## What finishing means here

A completed demo is a useful first milestone. A public release requires additional preparation, including recording quality, permissions, credits, distribution, and communication with listeners. Thirty days can produce a completed demo and an organized release plan. It is not a guarantee that a distributor will deliver your music within that period.

## A note on business guidance

The ownership chapter introduces United States concepts. Agreements and laws depend on your situation and territory. Use qualified advice for contracts, disputes, or uncertain permissions. Platform requirements and AI terms change; consult the linked official sources before acting. Research checked November 21, 2026.

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# 01 Set your 30 day music goal

Your goal should describe something you can complete. A stream count depends partly on other people. Writing a chorus, recording a full demo, or preparing a distributor submission are actions you can control. Choose one main outcome and make the remaining tasks support it.

## Choose a result and protect the time

Write your current starting point honestly. Do you have lyrics, a melody, a beat, a partial recording, or only an idea? Then define the next useful finished version. If you have never completed a song, a clear demo is a better first target than a fully produced album.

Put working sessions on your calendar. A realistic starting pattern is three sessions of 30 to 45 minutes a week, adjusted to your schedule. Give each session one task. A writing session should end with new lyrics or melody choices; a recording session should end with saved takes. Browsing equipment does not complete either task.

List your available resources: phone, headphones, instrument, recording software, collaborators, quiet space, and spending limit. Use what you already have until a specific obstacle justifies an upgrade. Create a song folder with separate places for lyrics, recordings, feedback, artwork, and business records.

## Example

Maya writes: "By day 30, I will save a complete demo of Morning Again with two verses and a chorus, gather feedback from two listeners, and revise the weakest section." Her first session is to draft the chorus. Her budget is zero until she knows whether the song needs outside production.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not treat a missed session as the end of the project. Move the unfinished task to the next available session and reduce its size if needed. A missed evening may change your schedule; it does not require a new song.

## Completion check

Write your starting point, finish date, main deliverable, weekly sessions, and spending limit on the project brief. Name the first action in a sentence beginning with a verb. You are ready to continue when that action is small enough to complete in one session.

# 02 Find your sound and artist identity

Artist identity helps you make consistent creative decisions. It can evolve as you write more music. You only need enough direction to choose the mood, language, and musical setting for your current song.

## Study the parts of your influences

Choose three tracks you return to often. For each, describe one feature you enjoy: sparse drums, intimate vocals, vivid storytelling, bright guitar, or a strong rhythmic pocket. Identify the feature instead of promising to become another artist. Your references are clues about your taste.

Choose three words for the feeling you want your song to create. Then translate each word into a choice. "Intimate" might mean a close vocal and fewer instruments. "Driving" might mean a steady rhythm and shorter phrases. Test the choices by singing or playing a short section; adjectives alone do not create a sound.

Describe the listener through a situation. Someone starting over after disappointment is more useful as a writing target than "everyone who likes music." You are choosing an emotional connection, not excluding other listeners. Ask what this person might need to hear and which details would make the song feel true.

## Example

Maya chooses hopeful, reflective, and steady. Her song uses a restrained verse and a chorus with more energy. Her identity sentence is: "I make reflective pop songs with soulful vocals for people rebuilding their confidence." She tests that sentence against her demo and changes any word that misrepresents what listeners actually hear.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not lock yourself into branding before you have material. A logo cannot decide whether a melody suits your voice. Keep a small reference folder, make music, and refine the description after you hear the results.

## Completion check

Save three references with a note about each, three sound words with a musical decision attached to each, and one sentence describing your music and intended listener. Use this sheet when you make arrangement and artwork choices later.

# 03 Turn an idea into a song

Start with one emotional center. A song about rebuilding after a difficult year can contain different scenes, but its sections should connect to that idea. Write the central message in ordinary language before you try to rhyme it.

## Build the hook and support it

Write ten possible titles or short phrases. Say them aloud. Choose one that feels natural in your voice and gives you room to develop a story. Sing several melody ideas into your phone. Keep the version you can remember after a short break, then shape a four line chorus around it.

Draft a simple structure: verse one, chorus, verse two, chorus. The first verse establishes a situation. The chorus states the central feeling. The second verse adds movement, consequence, or a new detail. You may add an introduction or bridge later if the song needs it; a section should earn its place.

Use concrete details in the verses. Replace "I felt terrible" with a scene that shows the feeling, such as an unopened letter on a kitchen table. Keep the chorus language clear enough to understand on a first listen. Read the lyrics aloud to find phrases that are awkward to sing.

## Example

Maya's message is "I can begin again even though yesterday was difficult." Her original practice hook starts: "I open the curtains / Let daylight come in / Yesterday hurt me / Today I begin." Verse one describes the morning after a setback. Verse two shows one small action she takes toward recovery.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not polish the first line for an hour while the rest of the song remains empty. Put temporary wording in a difficult spot and complete the full outline. Save every meaningful version so a useful earlier idea is easy to recover.

## Completion check

Write one central message, a working title, a four line hook, and an outline showing what each verse contributes. Record a rough melody memo. The draft is complete enough to demo when you can perform its sections in order without inventing the structure as you go.

# 04 Record your first demo at home

A demo captures the song clearly enough to evaluate its writing and performance. Begin with a voice recorder or simple recording app. Learn its record, stop, playback, and export controls before a serious take so technical uncertainty does not interrupt your performance.

## Prepare the space and test the signal

Find a quiet room with soft furnishings. A clothes filled closet can reduce some reflections, but compare it with another room because a small enclosed space can sound boxy. Stop avoidable noise, silence notifications, and listen for fans, traffic, handling noise, or a buzzing appliance.

Place the phone or microphone on a stable support. Start roughly a hand span or two away and test different positions. Sing the loudest section at performance volume. If the recording sounds crunchy, back away or lower input gain when your device offers that control. Record a short test and listen before committing to a full take.

Use headphones if you record over an instrumental, so the backing track does not spill loudly into the microphone. Leave a little silence before and after each take. Record several performances, then label them clearly. Keep the most convincing full take and note any section worth recording again.

## Example

Maya records verse one and the chorus twice in her bedroom and twice near hanging clothes. The bedroom sounds clearer. She moves farther from the phone for a loud chorus and marks the strongest performance as a demo, not a release master.

## Avoid this mistake

Adding heavy effects can hide problems while you record. Capture a usable performance first. Save an untreated version before experimenting. A cleaner recording cannot repair words that do not fit the rhythm, so return to the writing when the problem is the line itself.

## Completion check

Record one verse and chorus, listen on headphones and a phone speaker, and identify the most distracting issue. Save your audio and lyrics in two places. Use a name such as MorningAgain_demo_v01 rather than several files called final.

# 05 Get feedback you can use

Feedback works best when it answers a question you can act on. "Is it good?" invites a broad opinion. Ask what the listener understood, remembered, or stopped paying attention to. You need observations about the song before you need instructions about how to change it.

## Listen first and ask specific questions

Listen once without stopping. Write down your immediate impression. On the second listen, focus on lyric clarity, the chorus, and delivery. Mark the section and time of each concern. Separate a recording problem from a songwriting problem; a buried vocal may not need a rewritten lyric.

Share the same demo with two trusted listeners, ideally including someone who enjoys the kind of music you make. Explain that it is an unfinished recording. Ask which line stayed with them, what they think the song is about, and where their attention drifted. Let them answer without explaining every lyric first.

Record responses in their own words. Look for repeated observations. If both listeners lose interest before the chorus, examine the opening and arrangement. Their suggested fix may not suit your song, but their reaction gives you something to test. You retain responsibility for the creative choice.

## Example

One listener remembers Maya's chorus but cannot understand a line in verse two. The other marks the same line. Maya checks the recording and discovers rushed wording. She shortens the line and records another take instead of rewriting the whole song.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not collect opinions indefinitely or send each person a different version. Too many changing inputs make it difficult to identify a pattern. Avoid defending the demo during the first response. You can ask a clarifying question after the listener finishes.

## Completion check

Collect two sets of answers, identify one repeated concern or well supported observation, and choose one revision to test. Save the earlier version so you can compare. Use the questionnaire at the back to make the process consistent.

# 06 Finish your song

Finishing requires a clear stopping condition. For a songwriting demo, that might mean complete lyrics, a recognizable melody, a coherent structure, and a performance that communicates the idea. A release recording has additional technical and business requirements. Decide which version you are finishing today.

## Make a short revision plan

Choose up to three changes from your feedback notes. Describe each as an action with a result you can hear. "Improve the verse" is too broad. "Shorten the second line so it fits without rushing" gives you a specific test.

Fix unclear writing before rerecording. Say the line in conversation, identify what it needs to communicate, and remove words that add little. For a weak chorus, try simplifying the phrase or making its melody more distinct from the verse. For uncertain delivery, practice the section slowly, decide where to breathe, and record another take.

Compare old and new versions at similar playback volume. Keep a change because it improves the song, not because it is new. After the planned revisions, listen once from beginning to end and mark only problems that prevent understanding or interrupt the intended feeling.

## Example

Maya's revision list is to shorten one verse line, bring the chorus title phrase forward, and rerecord the final chorus. She reserves two sessions and stops when those changes work. A possible bridge goes into her ideas folder instead of delaying the completed demo.

## Avoid this mistake

Calling every export final makes it hard to know which file is approved. Use numbered working versions, then a separate approved folder. Note the date and what you approved. If a collaborator is involved, confirm that everyone is listening to the same file.

## Completion check

Save an approved demo, its lyric sheet, and a short note describing remaining production needs. Set a finish date and keep it unless you uncover a real blocker. Cosmetic preferences can wait for the next project; missing sections and unresolved writing cannot.

# 07 Understand production mixing and mastering

Production develops the recording's musical character: arrangement, instrumentation, sounds, performances, and transitions. Mixing balances the recorded parts so the song communicates clearly. Mastering evaluates and prepares the approved mix for its intended delivery. These jobs can overlap, but understanding their purpose helps you request the right help.

## Diagnose what the song needs next

If your demo needs a rhythm section, a better arrangement, or stronger recorded performances, address production first. If the parts work but compete with each other, the next task may be mixing. If a mix is approved and needs final quality control and delivery preparation, discuss mastering. Mastering cannot reliably rescue a distorted vocal or an unfinished arrangement.

Write a brief before hiring anyone. Include the current demo, intended mood, two references with specific notes, the services you need, deliverables, budget limit, and deadline. Ask what the quote includes: recording time, editing, revisions, alternate versions, session files, and usage terms. Confirm who owns the recording and whether fees include any continuing royalty participation.

Keep a lossless export and the original project when available. Ask your distributor or engineer for the current delivery specification instead of converting files repeatedly. An MP3 converted to WAV does not recover audio information already removed.

## Example

Maya has vocals and piano but wants a gentle rhythmic build. She asks a producer for drums, bass, and arrangement development. After approving those parts, she requests a mix with an intelligible vocal. Mastering follows the approved mix, with the destination's requirements checked before export.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not buy an unclear bundle called professional quality. Specify the work and files you expect, and compare proposals for the same scope. Agree on review stages so expensive changes do not appear after a stage is approved.

## Completion check

Name your next production task, explain why it is needed, and prepare a written brief. If you need outside help, obtain a scoped quote before spending. Your result is a decision and a work order, not a shopping list of plugins.

# 08 Plan your first release

A release plan connects finished assets to a realistic delivery schedule. Start with the recording and its supporting information. Announcing a date before you know what is missing creates avoidable pressure and makes corrections harder.

## Assemble the release folder

Gather the approved audio, cover artwork, artist name, song title, contributor credits, lyrics, and a contact record for collaborators. Check name spelling across every file and form. List any samples, beats, guest performances, or artwork that require permission and resolve those items before distribution.

Create a simple promotion plan around one song. Prepare an introduction to the song, a short performance clip, and a message explaining where listeners can hear it when it is live. Keep draft posts in the folder with the artwork and links they will use. A plan is useful when you can tell what is ready and what still needs work.

Ask your distributor for delivery estimates and review current store requirements. Build in time for corrections. If Spotify editorial pitching is part of your plan, its published guidance says to submit an unreleased song at least seven days before release; a pitch does not guarantee editorial placement. Allow distributor delivery time in addition to that window. [1, 2]

## Example

Maya finds that her audio is ready but artwork and a producer credit need confirmation. She completes those items before choosing a public release date. Her promotion plan has three core posts and one email, each with a distinct purpose and a single listener action.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not confuse a successful upload with verified delivery to the correct artist profile. Keep distributor confirmation messages, check the profile match, and review the release information before sharing links widely.

## Completion check

Fill in the release checklist. Give each unfinished task an owner and a due date. Identify three remaining tasks and complete the one that blocks the others first. Move the release date when a genuine dependency requires it rather than making a promise your files cannot support.

# 09 Write your artist bio

Your bio helps a new listener understand what you make and why they might care. A short bio is easier to reuse across profiles, introductions, and messages. Begin with accurate details you can support today.

## Draft three useful sentences

The first sentence states your artist name and sound. Describe what someone will hear using a genre, musical feature, or emotional quality. The second sentence gives a meaningful influence or piece of background connected to the music. The third states what you are working on or invites the reader to a current release.

Use specific details instead of claims about being the next major star. A real influence, place, or subject can help a reader remember you. Only include biographical details you are comfortable making public. You can explain your music without sharing your home address, employer, or private family history.

Read the bio aloud. Cut sentences that repeat the same point or require a reader to know your whole life story. Check that a stranger can understand every reference. Save a short one sentence version and a three sentence version, then update both when your release status changes.

## Example

"Maya makes reflective pop with soulful vocals and restrained piano arrangements. Her songs explore starting over through small everyday scenes. She is preparing her debut single Morning Again." This fictional example is useful before release because it states a current activity without inventing an audience, award, or release history.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not list achievements you cannot verify, including AI generated awards, press mentions, or collaborator names. A vague superlative can sound less credible than a modest true detail. Remove expired release dates and broken calls to action when you update a profile.

## Completion check

Write the three sentences, create the shorter version, and ask someone unfamiliar with your work what music they expect after reading it. Compare that answer with your actual song. Revise the description if the expectations are far apart.

# 10 Create your visual identity

Your cover artwork introduces the song before someone presses play. Its job is to establish a mood and make the release recognizable. A consistent visual direction also reduces the work of creating promotional images later.

## Turn the song into a visual brief

Describe the song's central feeling in one sentence. Choose an image concept connected to it: a sunrise, an empty platform, an open doorway, or a scene from the lyrics. Select two or three colors that support the concept. Use one or two readable fonts and avoid placing essential text on a busy part of the image.

Test the design at a small size on a phone. Is the main image recognizable? Can you read the title if text is included? Does the artwork still communicate the mood without a written explanation? Remove details that compete with the main idea. Then adapt the concept to a promotional image rather than inventing an unrelated style.

Use imagery you created or are licensed to use. Keep permission records and check the license for the intended use. If you use AI artwork, review the service's terms and the output for accidental logos or recognizable material you did not intend. Confirm your distributor's current artwork specifications before exporting. [1, 5]

## Example

Maya chooses daylight entering an open window, warm amber and muted blue, and simple lettering. Her promotional image uses the same window detail and colors with room for a release message. She checks the smallest view before approving both.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not assume an image found through search is free to reuse. Avoid inserting social handles, store logos, or promotional claims into release artwork without checking the distributor's rules. Keep a clean source design so revisions are quick.

## Completion check

Save a visual brief, one cover concept, one matching promotional image, and the source or license information for every external element. Name the files by use and version. Keep editable originals separate from final exports.

# 11 Understand music distribution

A distributor delivers your recording and release information to participating music services. It may also collect certain recording revenue and provide reports. Distribution does not automatically create an audience or replace every rights registration. Spotify's own starting guide directs artists to use a distributor and provide lossless audio, metadata, and artwork. [1]

## Compare the service against your needs

Compare current providers using the same questions: What does it cost now and on renewal? Is there a revenue commission? Which destinations are included? What happens if you stop paying? How are collaborators paid? What are the withdrawal terms, correction process, support options, and AI policies? Read optional services carefully before selecting them.

Before upload, prepare one authoritative metadata sheet. Metadata means the information attached to a release, including artist names, title, credits, release date, and identifiers. Keep artist name spelling consistent. If you already have an artist profile, record the exact profile link to reduce the risk of a mismatch.

Record the identifiers assigned or confirmed during delivery. An ISRC identifies a recording; a UPC identifies a release product. Keep the distributor's actual identifiers in your records instead of inventing your own. Reuse or replace identifiers only according to the circumstances and provider guidance.

## Example

Maya compares two providers using total annual cost and the services she needs. She chooses only after understanding renewal and takedown terms. Her release sheet becomes the reference for the upload, collaborator review, and later corrections.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not submit duplicate releases through different distributors to solve a delay without first clarifying the existing delivery. Multiple deliveries can complicate profiles, identifiers, and reporting. Ask support about the specific release and keep the case record.

## Completion check

Complete a provider comparison, check the current upload specifications, save a copy of the terms you accept, and review the metadata with collaborators. After submission, retain the confirmation and check the destination profile and release details when they become available.

# 12 Learn music ownership basics

For United States copyright purposes, a song's composition and its sound recording are separate works. The composition covers the music and lyrics; the recording captures a particular performance. Ownership of one does not automatically establish ownership of the other. A fee, credit, or verbal understanding should not be treated as a complete explanation of the agreement. [3]

## Record who contributed and what was agreed

Before release, identify writers, performers, producers, recording owners, and anyone whose material you used. Discuss composition shares separately from recording ownership and revenue participation. A composition split record should total 100 percent, but that arithmetic alone does not settle every contractual issue.

Keep written agreements covering scope, permissions, payment, ownership, credits, and any royalty participation. Ask for qualified help if terms conflict or are unclear. A beat license may restrict uses or require extra permissions. Do not assume a short sample, a cover recording, and an original song need the same permissions.

## Know which revenue you are checking

A distributor generally handles recording revenue under its agreement. A performing rights organization handles composition public performance royalties under its rules. The MLC administers eligible United States digital audio mechanical royalties, while SoundExchange collects and distributes statutory noninteractive digital royalties for featured artists and sound recording owners. Check which rights you control and whether an administrator already handles them. These are different functions, not duplicate accounts for the same purpose. [4, 6, 7]

## Example

Maya and a cowriter agree on the composition shares. Her producer agreement separately addresses the recording and production fee. She stores those documents with the release sheet, then confirms which organizations or representatives handle the rights she controls.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not use a credit line as a substitute for permission or assume distributor delivery completes all registrations. Stop a release with unresolved ownership rather than promising shares you do not control.

## Completion check

Create a contributor and permissions record. Verify composition shares, recording ownership, licenses, contact details, and existing representation. This record is preparation for agreements and registrations; it is not a substitute for a contract or legal review.

# 13 Promote one song with multiple videos

One song can support several useful videos because listeners connect through different entry points. Some want to hear the hook immediately. Others connect with the story, a performance, or a glimpse of how the recording was made. Give each video a clear purpose.

## Build a small content batch

Choose the strongest short section of your song and note its timestamp. Record a direct performance clip, a brief explanation of the song's story, and a process clip showing a real creative decision. Use footage and audio you have permission to publish. Add readable captions where spoken words matter.

Open with the part that earns attention. Cut unnecessary greetings and explain the subject quickly. End with one action appropriate to the video: hear the full song, answer a question, or join your list. Use a verified destination link when the action needs one. Do not send viewers to a release that is not live without explaining what they will find.

Batch the work to reduce setup time. Film several clips with the same light and background, then make separate edits. Keep a simple content log with the topic, source file, caption, destination, publication status, and response. Reuse a concept when it produces useful engagement; change one element at a time when testing.

## Example

Maya makes a chorus performance, a story about beginning again, a before and after demo comparison, and an explanation of one lyric. They share the song's colors but give viewers different reasons to listen.

## Avoid this mistake

Posting the identical advertisement repeatedly gives people little new value. Show a different aspect of the song. Do not pay for guaranteed streams or unexplained playlist placements, and do not treat purchased engagement as evidence of a real audience.

## Completion check

Prepare three distinct clips, three captions, and one verified destination. Choose publication dates that you can maintain. Record what each clip was meant to accomplish before you measure the result, so views do not become the only definition of success.

# 14 Build your fan email list

An email list gives interested listeners a way to hear from you beyond a social feed. Offer something specific that fits their interest: release updates, a behind the scenes note, or a useful music resource. Tell people what they will receive and let them choose to subscribe.

## Make the invitation and delivery simple

Create a dedicated artist list and a signup form. Request only information you need, usually an email address and optionally a first name. Describe the content and expected frequency. Use a confirmation process where appropriate and send a welcome message that delivers what you promised.

For DJ Crytohead, this book can be the resource. For a performing artist, a song story or listening invitation may be more relevant. Keep audiences separate when their interests differ. A parent fitness subscriber should not automatically receive music business emails because the same person operates both brands.

Write a welcome message with one next step. Follow it with a practical lesson and a question that invites a reply. Use genuine permission, accurate sender information, a working unsubscribe mechanism, and the mailing information required for your situation. Review the official commercial email guidance and the provider's rules before sending. [8]

## Example

Maya invites listeners to receive release updates and occasional notes about her songs. Her welcome message introduces Morning Again and asks what kind of music helps them reset after a difficult day. She sends the next message only to the people who joined that list.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not buy a list or automatically import every contact you have. A small group that requested your emails is a stronger foundation than a large unrelated audience. Keep delivery promises realistic and remove stale links from automated messages.

## Completion check

Create the signup invitation, write the welcome email, and test the full journey with your own address. Confirm the promised resource opens, the sender looks right, replies reach you, and unsubscribing works. An automation is ready when a subscriber can complete that journey without your intervention.

# 15 Use AI in your creative process

AI can help organize work, generate alternatives, and turn your notes into drafts. It is most useful when you define a specific task and judge the result yourself. Keep the parts that serve your song and reject anything inaccurate or generic.

## Give the tool a bounded job

For brainstorming, ask for several themes or questions rather than a complete replacement for your voice. For editing, ask which lines are unclear and request reasons before accepting changes. For marketing, provide the true facts and ask the tool to avoid invented achievements, dates, and claims.

Try this prompt: "Review these lyrics for unclear meaning and awkward phrasing. Identify three issues, explain each, and suggest alternatives that preserve my message. Do not imitate a named artist." Another useful prompt is: "Turn these verified release details into three short captions, each with one listener action. Do not add facts."

For generated music, images, or voices, check the service's current terms, your plan, permitted uses, distributor rules, and any disclosure requirements. Keep records of what you supplied, generated, selected, and changed. Permission to use an output commercially is a different question from whether that output qualifies for copyright protection.

The United States Copyright Office says protectable human expression can exist in works using AI, but prompting alone does not establish the necessary human authorship of generated material. Its assessment depends on the actual human contribution. Keep an honest contribution record. [5]

## Example

Maya uses AI to compare two bio drafts and make a release checklist from her notes. She writes and performs her song herself. If she later uses generated material, she records the service, terms, inputs, and edits rather than assuming the earlier workflow answers every rights question.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not upload someone else's unreleased work without permission, invent a testimonial, or clone a person's voice without authorization. Verify factual output before publication.

## Completion check

Choose one bounded task, save the prompt and result, revise the output, and record your contribution. Keep the service terms with the project when the output becomes part of a release.

# 16 Explore music opportunities

Choose opportunities that fit the material you actually have. A local performance needs a playable set and reliable communication. A collaboration needs a clear creative role. A licensing pitch needs suitable recordings and a clear account of who can authorize their use. You can build these paths gradually.

## Match the opportunity to your readiness

List three possible routes: a local event, a collaborator whose music complements yours, or a relevant music library or brief. Research each route's submission rules and recent work before reaching out. Keep a record of the source, contact method, materials requested, and follow up date.

For live work, prepare a short introduction, a performance link, set length, and technical needs. For a collaboration, propose one specific contribution and discuss credit and ownership before release. For licensing to picture, learn the permission structure and submission requirements before making promises. Synchronization and composition public performance rights are distinct; an ordinary performance license does not automatically clear audiovisual use or a particular recording. [7]

Prepare only the versions that a legitimate request needs. These may include an instrumental, clean version, lyric sheet, or contact and ownership information. Do not claim that you control every right if a cowriter, label, sample owner, or license limits your authority. Ask qualified help when a proposed deal is unclear.

## Example

Maya starts by approaching a local acoustic event with a recent performance link and a clear set length. She also prepares a brief collaboration proposal for one musician. Licensing remains a later option until her recording and permissions are organized.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not mass send large attachments or promise placement in exchange for a fee you do not understand. Read exclusivity, term, territory, payment, and termination conditions before agreeing to a deal.

## Completion check

Choose one suitable opportunity, confirm its requirements, and prepare a short tailored message. Track the response. Your first goal is a credible submission or conversation, not a guaranteed booking, placement, or payment.

# 17 Track your progress

Progress has several parts: work completed, listener response, and resources spent. Track them separately. A finished demo is a meaningful result even before you have release data. A video with many views may still produce few interested listeners.

## Use a short weekly review

Record the sessions you completed and the assets you finished. Then record the responses relevant to your current goal: useful feedback, replies, link clicks, email signups, or listening activity available in your platform reports. Write down the date range and source for each number so comparisons mean something.

Use simple calculations when they answer a decision. If a tracked signup page has 80 visits and 8 signups over the same period, the observed signup rate is 8 divided by 80, or 10 percent. This is a fictional example, not a target or promise. Small samples fluctuate, so avoid declaring a winner from a handful of actions.

Track spending and time alongside results. Include subscriptions, artwork, recording help, distribution, and promotion. A small project can become expensive through repeated optional purchases. Compare what you spent with the task each purchase helped complete.

## Example

Maya finishes four clips, completes two recording sessions, and gets six replies to a song story. One clip gets more views, but the story produces more meaningful conversations. For the next batch she tests another story clip with a clearer invitation to listen.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not compare a week of one platform's views with a month of another platform's unique listeners. Metrics have different definitions. Avoid treating a temporary spike as durable growth or a quiet week as proof that your music has no audience.

## Completion check

Complete one weekly tracker and answer three questions: What did I finish? What did people respond to? What will I change next week? Choose one change supported by the evidence. Keep the rest of the workflow stable enough to learn whether that change helped.

# 18 Build your next 30 day plan

The first cycle teaches you how you work. Use that information to choose the next project. You may need another demo, a stronger recording, a release correction, or a more consistent way to connect with listeners. Pick the next result from your actual starting point.

## Review the folder before setting a new goal

Open your approved audio, lyrics, feedback, credits, visuals, and promotion log. Mark what is complete and what is missing. Decide whether the current song should move forward, receive one defined revision, or be parked while you develop a stronger idea. Parking a song is a deliberate decision when you keep its files and record the reason.

Choose one main outcome for the next cycle and two supporting habits. For example, finish a new demo while maintaining two writing sessions and one audience message each week. Use the tasks that caused delays to improve your process. If file confusion wasted time, standardize names. If feedback arrived too late, arrange listeners earlier.

## Example

Maya has a complete demo and a release folder but needs production help. Her next goal is to approve a produced version within her budget. She schedules a brief, quote comparison, agreement review, production session, and revision window. She does not promise a release date until the dependencies are understood.

## Share your journey accurately

If you document the process publicly, describe what you did, what happened, and what you will test next. Keep dated notes and examples. A useful story can be a small improvement, such as learning to record a clearer chorus. You do not need to invent authority or turn every experiment into a success claim.

## Avoid this mistake

Do not add every unfinished idea to the next month. Choose a main project, keep a separate ideas list, and make room for the work that matters. A plan must fit the hours you actually have.

## Completion check

Write the new outcome, first action, schedule, resource limit, and review date. Carry forward the templates that helped you. Start the next cycle with a project you can describe and a session you can complete.

# Project brief and recording checklist

## Project brief

Artist name: _____

Working song title: _____

Current starting point: _____

Main result for this cycle: _____

Finish date: _____

Available sessions each week: _____

Spending limit and currency: _____

Intended listener and situation: _____

Central message of the song: _____

Three words for the sound: _____

References and what I hear in them: _____

_____

First action and session date: _____

## Before recording

- Quiet space compared with an alternative location.
- Avoidable noise and notifications reduced.
- Phone or microphone supported securely.
- Loudest section tested for distortion.
- Headphones used when recording over backing audio.
- Lyric sheet available and breathing points practiced.

## After recording

- Verse and chorus captured clearly.
- Strongest take labeled and saved.
- One issue marked with section or timestamp.
- Untreated original preserved.
- Audio and lyrics backed up in a second location.

Suggested file pattern: SongTitle_stage_v01_YYYYMMDD

Approved version: _____

Next recording change: _____

# Feedback questionnaire and revision log

## Message to your listeners

"This is an unfinished demo. Please listen once without reading my explanation, then answer these questions honestly. Specific moments are more helpful than a general score."

Listener and date: _____

Demo filename: _____

What do you think the song is about? _____

_____

Which line or melody stayed with you? _____

_____

Where did your attention drift? Include a section or timestamp.

_____

Which words were difficult to understand? _____

_____

What feeling did the performance communicate? _____

_____

## Turn an observation into a revision

Observation from listener one: _____

Observation from listener two: _____

Repeated issue or strongest evidence: _____

My interpretation of the issue: _____

One change to test: _____

New filename and test date: _____

What improved or became worse: _____

Decision to keep or reverse the change: _____

## Final revision plan

Change one and completion condition: _____

Change two and completion condition: _____

Change three and completion condition: _____

Demo approval date: _____

Remaining production needs: _____

# Release checklist and asset register

## Before distributor submission

- Approved recording and delivery format checked.
- Final title and artist spelling confirmed.
- Songwriters, performers, producer, and other credits verified.
- Composition shares and recording ownership documented.
- Beat, sample, feature, artwork, and other permissions resolved.
- Artwork checked against current distributor specifications.
- Explicit content and version information reviewed.
- Correct artist profile link recorded when available.
- Distributor cost, terms, and timeline checked.
- Optional services reviewed before purchase.

## Before announcing the date

- Delivery progress and any corrections reviewed.
- Release date and destinations confirmed as far as available.
- Editorial pitch timing considered if relevant.
- Bio, promotional images, captions, and links prepared.
- Listener signup and welcome journey tested if used.

## After release

- Live audio, artwork, credits, and artist profile checked.
- Verified listening links added to planned messages.
- Errors reported with exact release information.
- Identifiers, reports, receipts, and permissions stored together.

## Asset register

Approved audio filename: _____

Artwork export and editable source: _____

Lyric sheet: _____

Contributor record location: _____

Distributor confirmation location: _____

Actual ISRC and release identifier: _____

Live release links: _____

Three unfinished tasks with owners and dates: _____

_____

_____

# Artist bio and visual identity worksheet

## Write your bio

Sentence one introduces my artist name and sound.

_____

_____

Sentence two explains a meaningful influence or background detail.

_____

_____

Sentence three describes my current project or next step.

_____

_____

One sentence version for short introductions:

_____

_____

Facts checked and update date: _____

## Plan the visuals

Song mood and central image: _____

Two or three colors: _____

Font choices and text placement: _____

Imagery source or license location: _____

Cover concept described in one sentence: _____

_____

Matching promotional image concept: _____

_____

## Review before export

- Artwork matches the song's mood and identity.
- Main idea is recognizable at a small size.
- Text is readable where used.
- Permissions and current delivery specifications checked.
- Clean editable source preserved.

# Promotion planner and progress tracker

## Plan each piece of content

Song and current release status: _____

Clip one topic and source footage: _____

Opening line or musical moment: _____

Listener action and verified destination: _____

Clip two topic and source footage: _____

Opening line or musical moment: _____

Listener action and verified destination: _____

Clip three topic and source footage: _____

Opening line or musical moment: _____

Listener action and verified destination: _____

Filming session date: _____

Editing and publication dates: _____

## Review the week

Date range: _____

Sessions planned and completed: _____

Assets finished: _____

Metric name, platform, and period: _____

Value and comparison period: _____

Useful replies or repeated listener observations: _____

_____

Money spent and what it helped finish: _____

Time spent and main obstacle: _____

One change to test next week: _____

## Keep the comparison honest

Use the same definition and time period when comparing results. Record the denominator for a rate. Separate views, unique listeners, clicks, and signups. Treat small samples as clues for another test instead of proof that a result will continue.

# AI contribution and permissions record

## Record a tool assisted task

Tool, version if known, and date: _____

Purpose of the task: _____

Material I supplied and authority to use it: _____

_____

Prompt or saved prompt location: _____

Output file or conversation record: _____

What I selected and why: _____

Human writing, performance, arrangement, or editing I contributed:

_____

_____

Current terms and plan checked on: _____

Terms or license record location: _____

Distributor and destination requirements checked: _____

Disclosure needed and how handled: _____

## Record external contributions

Contributor name and contact: _____

Role or material supplied: _____

Composition share if applicable: _____

Recording ownership or participation if applicable: _____

Permission or agreement location: _____

Limits on use or unresolved questions: _____

_____

## Before public use

- Factual claims checked.
- No invented biography, credits, testimonials, or achievements.
- Third party material reviewed for permission.
- Human contribution described accurately.
- Unresolved ownership or use questions addressed.

This is a recordkeeping worksheet. It does not establish ownership, replace an agreement, or certify copyright eligibility.

# Your 30 day action calendar

Use this as a suggested schedule for completing a demo and preparing a release. Move the public release beyond day 30 when production, permissions, delivery, or other dependencies need more time.

## Days 1 through 15

Day 1 Choose one song project and define the finished result.

Day 2 Reserve working sessions and set your spending limit.

Day 3 Study three references and describe your sound.

Day 4 Write the central message and intended listener.

Day 5 List ten title or hook ideas and choose one.

Day 6 Draft a four line chorus and record melody options.

Day 7 Review the hook after a break and choose a version.

Day 8 Draft verse one using a concrete scene.

Day 9 Draft verse two with a new detail or movement.

Day 10 Perform the song in order and revise awkward phrases.

Day 11 Compare recording spaces and test the loudest section.

Day 12 Record complete demo takes.

Day 13 Choose the clearest convincing take and save a backup.

Day 14 Ask two trusted listeners the same questions.

Day 15 Compare responses and identify repeated issues.

## Midpoint review

What is complete: _____

What blocks the next task: _____

What can be simplified: _____

Next session date and task: _____

If you fall behind, protect the central deliverable. Shorten optional tasks or move them to the next cycle. Keep a clear lyric sheet, understandable recording, honest feedback, and organized files as the core outcome.

# Your 30 day action calendar continued

## Days 16 through 30

Day 16 Choose up to three revisions with completion conditions.

Day 17 Revise unclear lyrics and test the chorus.

Day 18 Rerecord the sections that need better delivery.

Day 19 Compare versions and approve the songwriting demo.

Day 20 Write your production brief and next technical task.

Day 21 Record contributor roles and review permissions.

Day 22 Draft a three sentence bio and short introduction.

Day 23 Create your visual brief and cover concept.

Day 24 Make a matching promotional image and check small views.

Day 25 Compare distributor terms and delivery requirements.

Day 26 Complete the release checklist and assign missing tasks.

Day 27 Plan three short videos with different purposes.

Day 28 Draft and test your signup invitation and welcome email.

Day 29 Review completed assets, listener response, and spending.

Day 30 Save the approved project and write the next cycle's goal.

## End of cycle review

Main deliverable and file location: _____

Most useful lesson from this cycle: _____

One process I will repeat: _____

One problem I will address next: _____

Next outcome and review date: _____

## Release timing decision

My recording is ready for distribution: Yes / No

My permissions and credits are ready: Yes / No

My artwork and metadata meet current requirements: Yes / No

My delivery and promotion timeline has been checked: Yes / No

If any answer is no, record the missing task and complete it before promising a public release date.

# Official sources and further reading

Research checked November 21, 2026. These sources support the platform, rights, AI, royalty, and email distinctions in the text. They do not endorse this book. Exercises, schedules, and fictional examples are instructional recommendations, not platform requirements.


### 1 Spotify artist onboarding

Chapters 8, 10, and 11. Distributor delivery, lossless audio, metadata, artwork, and artist profiles.

https://artists.spotify.com/get-started

### 2 Spotify editorial pitching

Chapter 8. Timing for pitching unreleased music and the distinction between submission and selection. Check the page for current eligibility and rules.

https://support.spotify.com/us/artists/article/pitching-music-and-videos-to-playlist-editors/

### 3 United States Copyright Office

Chapter 12. Musical compositions and sound recordings are separate works.

https://www.copyright.gov/register/pa-sr.html

### 4 The Mechanical Licensing Collective

Chapter 12. Administration of digital audio mechanical royalties in the United States.

https://www.themlc.com/how-it-works

### 5 Copyright Office AI report announcement

Chapters 10 and 15. Human authorship, AI assistance, and the limits of prompting as authorship.

https://copyright.gov/newsnet/2025/1060.html

https://www.copyright.gov/ai/


Read current provider terms alongside these sources when selecting services. This edition does not assume specific subscription prices, universal audio specifications, guaranteed delivery dates, or guaranteed income.

# Official sources continued

## 6 SoundExchange

Chapter 12. Statutory noninteractive digital royalties for featured artists and sound recording owners.

https://www.soundexchange.com/faq/what-does-soundexchange-do/

## 7 ASCAP statement on music rights

Chapters 12 and 16. Composition public performance licensing distinguished from mechanical, synchronization, and sound recording rights. ASCAP filing hosted by Regulations.gov.

https://downloads.regulations.gov/COLC-2023-0006-9112/attachment_1.pdf

## 8 Federal Trade Commission commercial email guide

Chapter 14. Accurate sender information, unsubscribe mechanisms, and mailing address requirements for United States commercial email.

https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business

## Companion video guide

Find the matching numbered lesson on the DJ Crytohead channel. The first ten chapters follow the lesson topics created for the series: music goals, artist identity, songwriting, home demos, feedback, finishing, production, release planning, artist bios, and visual identity. Later chapters extend the learning path and do not imply that additional videos are already published.

## About this guide

Prepared for DJ Crytohead under the authorship name Joseph Paul. The purpose is practical artist development and music business education. No professional credentials, personal results, subscriber totals, or commercial partnerships are claimed.

Use the templates again for your next song. Keep the version history so you can see what changed and which decisions helped you finish.