



Intro to Pro Tools®

Version 8.0.4

Welcome to Pro Tools LE

Read this guide if you are new to Pro Tools® or are just starting out making your own music. Inside, you'll find quick examples of how to record, compose, mix, and produce your own music in Pro Tools.

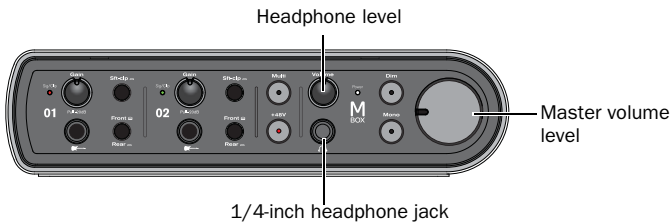
One quick question: Have you installed Pro Tools yet? If not, follow the *Quick Setup* instructions or your detailed *User Guide* to install Pro Tools LE® software. For instructions on how to install your Pro Tools LE interface, follow the instructions that came with it.

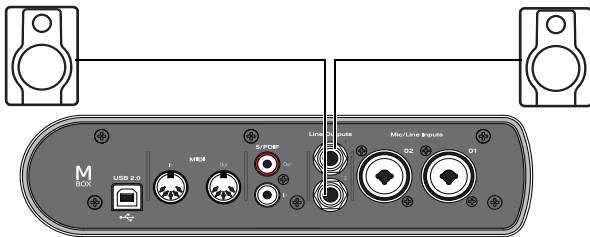


Do not connect your interface to your computer until you've installed Pro Tools from your installer DVD as described in the Quick Setup instructions.

Connect Headphones or Speakers

You have to be able to hear your music. To hear the audio from Pro Tools you will need your headphones or speakers connected to your Pro Tools LE interface (we'll use the Mbox as an example). For headphones, turn the Volume knob fully left (counterclockwise) to be sure your volume is at a low enough level. (For speakers, turn the Master volume knob fully left.)





Connecting to a pair of speakers to the Mbox

Listen to the Demo Session

To get started, you can use the Demo Session to see and hear many of the things you'll soon be doing in Pro Tools. The Demo Session also lets you test your headphones and speakers.

To install and open the Demo Session:

- 1 Put the Pro Tools LE[®] Installer disc in your DVD drive and do one of the following:
 - On a Mac, open the Additional Files folder, then open the Demo Sessions Installer folder. Double-click the Install LE Demo Session.pkg, then follow the instructions on-screen to install the Demo Session. Make a note of where you install it.
 - or –
 - On Windows, open the Additional Files folder, then open the Demo Sessions Installer folder. Double-click LE Demo Session Setup.exe, then follow the instructions on-screen to install the Demo Session. Make a note of where you install it.

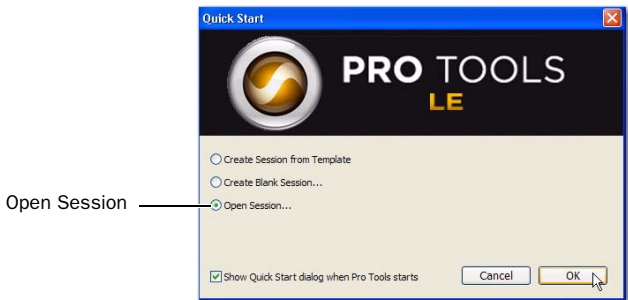


For best performance, we recommend using a separate hard drive for Pro Tools recordings. But if you don't have a secondary internal or external hard drive yet, it's OK to put the Demo Session on your system drive.

2 Launch Pro Tools LE by clicking its icon in the Dock (Mac) or double-clicking its icon on your desktop (Windows). If this is the first time you're launching Pro Tools, enter your Authorization Code (located on the back of your Pro Tools LE DVD wallet). This is only required the first time you launch Pro Tools.

3 Next, do one of the following depending on what you see on-screen:

- If the Quick Start dialog appears, click Open Session, then click OK. Navigate to the file "Filtered Dream" and select it (it's in the folder "Filtered Dream Demo Session"), then click Open.



Quick Start dialog, Open Session

- If the Quick Start dialog does not appear, choose File > Open Session (click the File menu to choose Open Session), then open the file "Filtered Dream." If you didn't install the file in a specific place, it can be found in the following default locations:

Mac Macintosh HD/Pro Tools LE Demo Session

Windows C:\Program Files\Digidesign\Pro Tools


Pro Tools opens the session, which should look similar to the following:



Play and Listen

To play the Demo Session:

1 On your Pro Tools LE interface, raise the volume by turning the Monitor/Volume knob. (For example, on Mbox turn the knob labeled Volume.)

 *For more information about headphone and monitor connections and volume control on your specific interface, refer to the User Guide that came with your system.*

2 To start and stop Pro Tools, press the Spacebar, or click the Play and Stop buttons on-screen. (These buttons are located at the top of the Edit window; you can also have them appear in their own Transport window by choosing Window > Transport.)



Stop and Play controls in Edit window (left) and Transport window (right)

- 3 While the session plays, gradually raise the volume on your Pro Tools LE interface.
- 4 Explore Pro Tools while the demo plays: Use the zoom and Track view controls to zero in on different tracks.

Vertical

Click to select the Zoomer tool and then drag-select to zoom in.
(Double-click the Zoomer tool to zoom back out again)

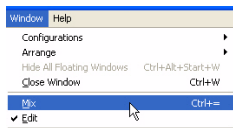
Horizontal

Click the Horizontal and Vertical Zoom buttons to adjust size and length of what is shown in tracks

Click the Track Height selector and choose a display height

micro
mini
✓ small
medium
large
jumbo
extreme

5 Next, click the Window menu and choose Mix (Window > Mix). The Mix window shows tracks in vertical channel strips.



Mix window



The Edit window and the Mix window are the two main work areas in Pro Tools. Throughout the rest of this guide, you'll see examples of both windows being used for different types of production work.

6 Press the Spacebar or click the Stop button to stop playback.

7 When you're through checking out the Demo Session, choose File > Close Session.



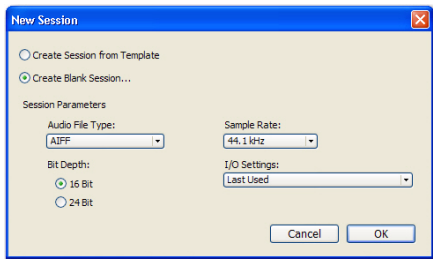
The Demo Session is a great example of a complete, finished project that has been arranged, edited, and mixed. You don't need to return to the Demo Session for anything else in this guide, but you might want to check it out again later, after you've been introduced to a few more Pro Tools features. If you want to return to the Demo Session or any recent one, click File > Recent and choose the Demo Session (if it is still one of your most recently opened sessions), or choose File > Open and open it that way.

Bring in a Song from a CD

This section lets you see how to create a new Pro Tools *session* and then *import* a song from a CD. You can create a new session after you launch or when you first launch Pro Tools.

To create a new session:

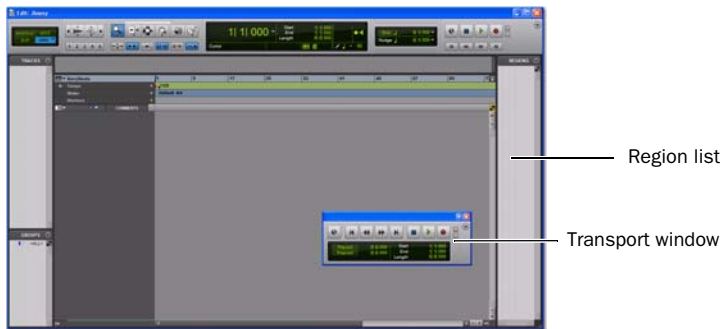
- 1 If you already have a session open, choose File > Close.
- 2 Now choose File > New Session.



New Session dialog

- 3 In the New Session dialog, choose Create a Blank Session, then click OK.
- 4 In the Name the Session dialog, choose where you want to save the session, and then name it and click Save.

5 After Pro Tools opens the new session, choose Window > Edit so the Edit window is displayed. It will look something like this:

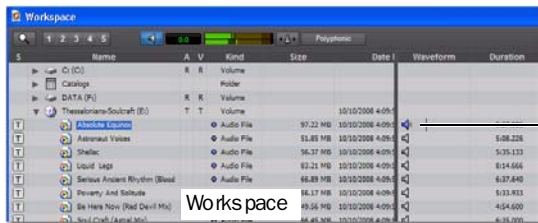


The Edit window, with the Transport window showing in the foreground

To import a song from CD:

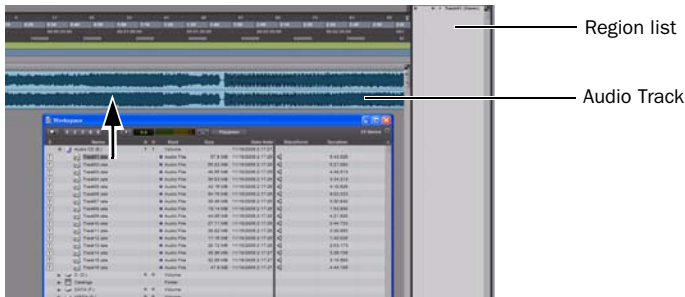
- 1** Put the source CD into your computer's CD/DVD drive.
- 2** In Pro Tools, choose Window > Workspace to open the Workspace browser.
- 3** In the Workspace browser, click the Audio CD's Expand/Collapse icon to show the files on the CD.

4 Click an item (track) to select a song on the CD.



Tip: Click the speaker icon to audition a selected song; press the Spacebar to stop.

5 Drag the item from the Workspace to the open area in the middle of the Edit window; Pro Tools creates a new audio track containing the song. The song appears in its new track where you let go of the mouse.



You can also drag items from the Workspace to the Region List and then later drag them into the track area. This lets you assemble a collection of audio regions and loops to use later in different tracks or even the same track.

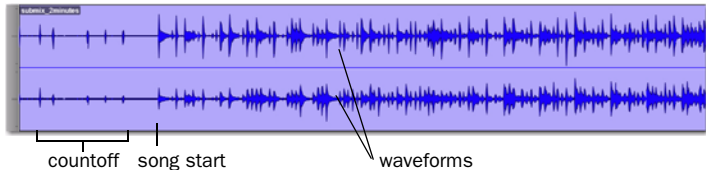
6 Close the Workspace browser, then press the Spacebar to begin playing back the song in Pro Tools (see “Play and Listen” on page 4).



The Mbox and Mbox Pro interfaces both have a “Multi” button (located on the front panel of the interface) that can be assigned to easily execute several functions in Pro Tools by pressing it two different ways (Press and Release, Press and Hold). For example, you could easily start and stop Pro Tools (as in our example) with the Multi button. For detailed instructions on how to use this feature, see “Using the Multi Button” in the User Guide that came with your system.

Make an Audio Edit

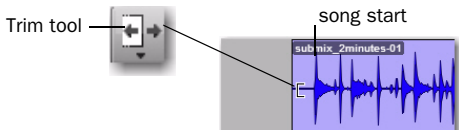
In this example we’ll show you how to do a simple edit to change where a song starts. To show this, we used a song where the drummer is heard “counting off” the tempo (“1...2...1.2.3...”) before the song starts. Here’s what this song looks like in Pro Tools.



In the picture, the two *waveforms* let you visualize the different sections. We can take advantage of this “what you see is what you hear” aspect of Pro Tools to be able to quickly silence the countoff by “trimming” the beginning of the song.

To trim:

- 1 Click to select the Trim tool (located in the toolbar).
- 2 Click in the track after the countoff and before the start of the song (you'll see the cursor display the Trimmer icon). Drag left or right to fine tune the location.



- 3 For future reference, you can “untrim” the song by dragging the song start back to the left with the Trim tool. You’ll see that the previous audio (the countoff) is still there. This is a small example of how Pro Tools lets you edit *non-destructively*.

Record Yourself

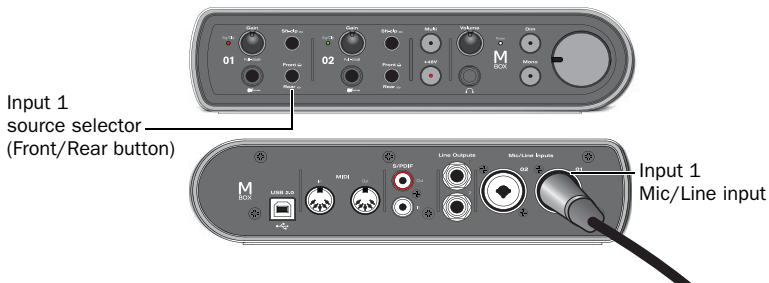
This section shows how to connect a microphone and record yourself singing or playing an instrument. In the last section, you imported a song from a CD. Once you get comfortable with a mic in this section, you can go ahead and record yourself singing over a song you like.

Connect a Mic

To hook up a microphone:

- 1 Plug a mic into one of the Mic/Line inputs (or DI inputs) of your Pro Tools LE interface.
 - If your mic has an XLR cable, plug into a Mic/Line input.

- If it has a 1/4-inch cable, plug into a DI input.



Connecting a mic to Mbox with an XLR cable

2 If you're using the XLR connector on the back, press the Front/Rear button to select the Rear (its “in” position). If your mic has a 1/4-inch cable and you’re using the 1/4-inch connector on the front (one of the two instrument inputs), press the channel’s Front/Rear button to select the Front (its “out” position). See the *User Guide* that came with your system for more information.

Create a Track

Pro Tools *tracks* are where audio, MIDI and other elements get recorded and edited within a session. Before you can record, you need to create one or more tracks.

To prepare an audio track for recording:

- 1** Create a new session, or open an existing session. (See previous sections).
- 2** Choose Track > New.

- 3** To record a single mic or instrument (as in our example), set the New Track dialog for 1 Mono Audio Track, in Samples, and click Create.



Creating a new mono audio track

If you want to record both inputs at once, create one or two new tracks depending on what you've got plugged in and what you plan to record:

- To record two different sources (such as one vocal mic and one electric guitar), create 2 *Mono* audio tracks. This lets the two input signals be recorded simultaneously, and be edited, processed, and balanced independently.
 - or –
 - To record a two-channel stereo source (such as a stereo keyboard, or the left and right outputs from a DJ mixer), create 1 *Stereo* audio track.
- 4** Make sure the Mix window is open by choosing Window > Mix.

5 In the middle of the new track's channel strip, notice where it says "In 1 (Mono)." This shows which Input channel (Input 1 or Input 2) is assigned to this track. (To specify a different input channel, click the Input Path selector and choose the other channel.)

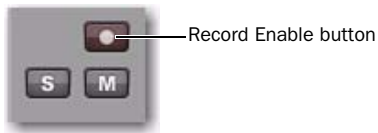
Input Path selector



Record a Performance to a Track

To record an audio track:

- 1 Click the track's Record Enable button.



Record enabling a track in the Mix window

- 2 Choose Track > Input Only Monitoring. This lets you listen to your incoming signal so you can "set your levels."

3 Sing into your mic, and watch the meter in the Pro Tools track while you raise the Gain on the Pro Tools LE interface. (Don't move the on-screen fader to try and adjust your input level because it isn't going to have any affect; It's only for adjusting your listening level.) Turn the Gain up until you see the on-screen track meter show green most of the time, or yellow for your louder passages.

Input 1 Gain



- If the track meter shows red, gain is too high; lower the Gain.
- If you barely see green in the track meter, Gain is too low.



Track meter

4 In the toolbar (or in the Transport window) click the Return to Zero button to jump back to the start of the session, then click the Record button. This tells Pro Tools that you're happy with your levels and are ready to record (think of this as a “master” record enable button).




5 Choose Window > Edit so you can watch what happens when you record.

6 When you are ready to start recording, click Play or press the Spacebar. To stop, press the Spacebar or click Stop. (You can also assign this functionality to the soft button.) Here's what Pro Tools looks like after a track has been recorded and the transport has been stopped.



Recording a vocal track

 *If you want to use a click track/metronome, see “Using a Click (Metronome)” on page 24.*

Listen to Your Work

To play back a recorded track:

- 1** Click the track's Record Enable button again to take it out of Record mode.
- 2** Click Play in the Transport window or press the Spacebar to start playback.
- 3** When you want to stop, press the Spacebar or click Stop.

Record More Tracks

To record another track:

- 1** Choose Track > New and create 1 Mono audio track. (You can also assign this functionality to the soft button.)
- 2** Choose Track > Auto Input Monitoring.
- 3** In the new audio track, click its Input path selector and choose the same input (In 1) you used before.
- 4** Next, click the track's Record Enable button, just like you did on the first track.
- 5** In the Transport window, click the Return to Zero button to jump back to the start of the session, then click the Record button (the button flashes) to arm Pro Tools for recording. When you are ready to start recording, click Play or press the Spacebar.
- 6** Press the Spacebar again to stop playback.



Hard drives are one of the most important components of your Pro Tools system. For best performance, Avid recommends using an external hard drive for Pro Tools recording. Also, hard drives cannot be formatted as "FAT32" (this format does not support the kind of performance required for audio recording and editing with Pro Tools). To learn more about hard drives for your Pro Tools system, see the User Guide that came with your system.

Make a Beat

This section shows you how to work with Xpand!², a *plug-in* you can use to build beats and compose music.

The Xpand!² Virtual Instrument Plug-in

Xpand!² is a *virtual instrument* plug-in, which means it *makes* sound. Xpand!² is part of the Pro Tools Creative Collection suite of plug-ins that comes free with Pro Tools. It's installed automatically during the install, unless you specified to not have it installed. Here's how to start utilizing its many drum kits, basses, strings, keyboards, horns, sound effects and other sounds.



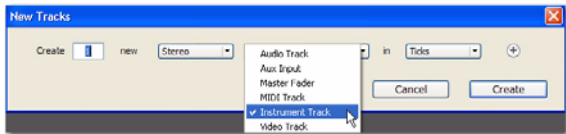
You can add all sorts of plug-ins to your system to make sounds (“instrument” plug-ins like Xpand!²) or to change your sound (“processing” plug-ins like reverb, EQ and compression). For more information on your plug-ins, see the Audio Plug-Ins Guide. This guide is installed automatically during Pro Tools installation to the Digidesign/Documentation folder. A PDF only copy is available from within Pro Tools: Help > Audio Plug-Ins Guide.

Set Up a Track

You add Xpand!² to your sessions by inserting it on a specific type of track called an *Instrument track*.

To create a track for beats and composition:

1 Choose Track > New. In the New Track dialog, click the pop-up menu that says Mono and choose Stereo, then click the pop-up menu that says Audio Track and choose Instrument Track. Leave the other settings as they are and click Create.



Creating a stereo Instrument track

2 Choose Window > Mix to display the Mix window.

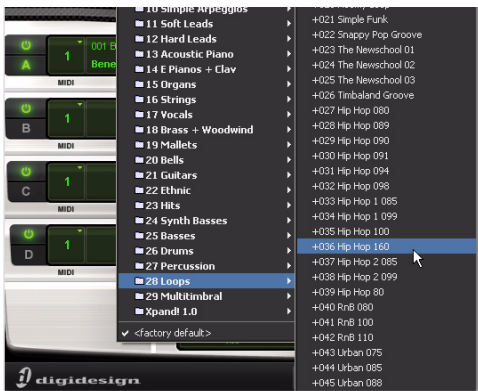
3 Click the track Insert selector near the top of the Instrument track and choose Xpand!2 from the Instrument sub-menu.



4 Now let's load a sound. Click the Librarian menu (<factory default>) and choose a preset from the Loops sub-menu. Presets are pre-configured settings files, and they're a great way to see examples of what a plug-in can do.



Click the Librarian menu to see the list of presets, then choose an item from a sub-menu.



5 Make music by doing one of the following:

- If you have a MIDI controller already connected, you can record yourself playing Xpand!². For more information see “Composing with a MIDI Controller/Keyboard” on page 27.
- or –
- Create MIDI notes using the mouse. To see an example of how you can compose without a MIDI controller, see the next section.

Compose Without a MIDI Controller

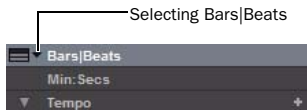
You can make beats and compose in Pro Tools using just the mouse.

To create a note:

- 1 Close or move the Xpand!² plug-in window, then choose Window > Edit so you can see the Instrument track in the Edit window.
- 2 Click to select the Pencil tool (it's in the toolbar).



- 3 Select View > Rulers > Bars:Beats to add the Bars|Beats ruler.
- 4 Click the Ruler View selector to select Bars|Beats.



Ruler View selector in the Edit window

- 5 In the Edit window, select Grid from the Edit mode buttons.

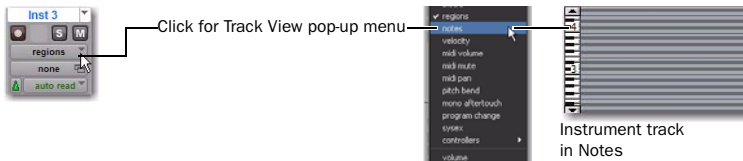


Grid mode enabled



Make sure you have the Grid mode enabled. When you draw in your drum (and other) notes in Grid mode, they are in time.

6 Click the Track View selector for the track and select the Notes format from the menu.



7 Now click in the main Instrument track to “pencil in” a note.



The small horizontal bar created with each mouse click is a *MIDI note*. The location and length of each note determines when, and for how long, you'll hear the sound. Since we're using a Loop preset in this example, we need to edit this note so we can hear the complete loop of the Xpand!2 preset.

Edit a Note

To edit a MIDI note:

1 Click to select the Trim tool (located in the toolbar across the top of the Edit window), and then use it in your Instrument track to drag the right edge of the MIDI note out to the right to make it longer. This leaves the note selected (highlighted).

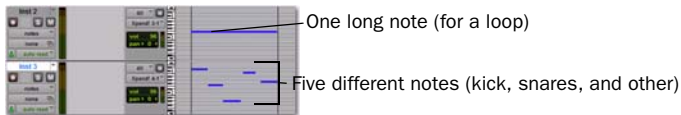


2 Press the Spacebar to start playback, which will start from the current selection (in this case, the MIDI note we lengthened). You should hear the drum loop play for the duration of the MIDI note.

Using a loop is one fast way to get a beat going, but you can use the same basic techniques to quickly build a beat piece-by-piece too.

To compose a beat from scratch:

- 1 Repeat the previous steps to create a stereo Instrument track and insert Xpand!² on it.
- 2 Instead of choosing a Loop preset, choose something from the Drums sub-menu.
- 3 Now, pencil some notes in on the new drums track. Here's what our example session looks like after we added another Xpand!² track to the loop track we set up previously.



4 To add a bass line, create another track, insert Xpand!², then load up a bass tone.

One more thing: This example showed how to manually enter and edit notes. For a more musical way to compose, lots of people use an external MIDI controller such as a MIDI keyboard to let them play and perform instead of only writing and editing with the mouse. If you want learn how to do this, see “Composing with a MIDI Controller/Keyboard” on page 27

Using a Click (Metronome)

A *click track* (also known as a metronome) gives you a steady time reference while recording tracks. Pro Tools lets you create a specialized click track that comes with a the Click plug-in already inserted on it.

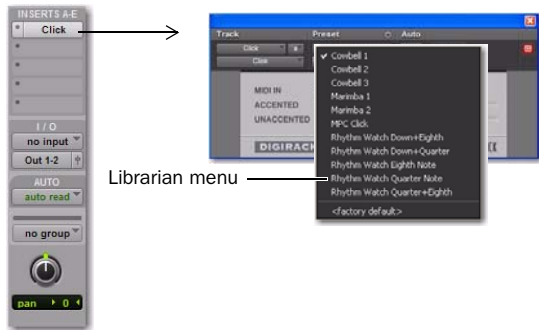


To create a click track in a new session, you can quickly add one by choosing Track > Create Click Track. Pro Tools creates a new Auxiliary Input track named “Click” with the Click plug-in already inserted.

To use a click track:

- 1** Choose View > Mix Window to display the Mix window.
- 2** At the top of the track, select the Click plug-in.

3 In the Click plug-in window, click the Librarian menu and pick a sound. You can pick a cowbell, sidestick, and other common click sounds.



Creating a Click Track

- 4** Select View > Transport > MIDI Controls to view the MIDI controls in the Transport Window.
- 5** Click the Metronome Click button so it's highlighted blue.



- 6** Now click Play in the Transport window or press the Spacebar to listen to the click.

To silence the click track:

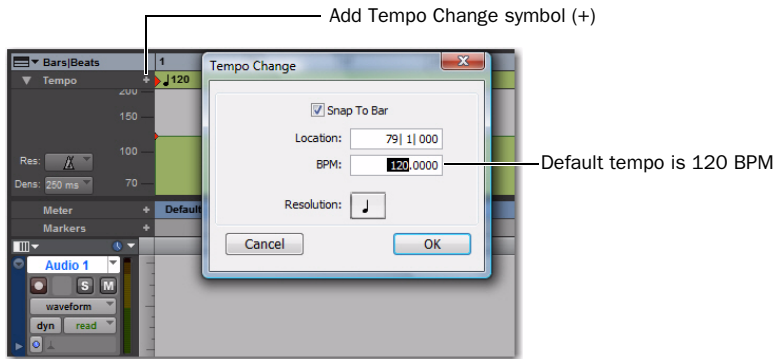
- Do one of the following:
 - Mute the Click track by clicking the M (Mute) button on the Click track.
 - or –
 - In the Transport window, deselect the Metronome Click button so it's not highlighted blue. Then deselect the Count Off button so it's not highlighted. (Doing both silences the click track and turns off the Count Off.)

Setting the Tempo

You can specify the session *tempo* to speed up or slow down your song.

To adjust the tempo do the following:

- 1 Choose View > Rulers > Tempo. See where it says “Tempo” in the Edit window? Click on the plus symbol (+) that appears next to it. Then type the tempo you want in the Tempo Change window and click OK.



- 2 Press the Spacebar or click the Play button to listen to your click play back at a different speed. Repeat the previous steps if you need to enter a different tempo.
- 3 Press the Spacebar again or click Stop when you're done.

Composing with a MIDI Controller/Keyboard

What's MIDI?

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) data isn't audio, and it has no sound of its own. MIDI is just a way for musical devices like virtual instrument plug-ins, MIDI controllers, and MIDI sequencers to talk to one another.

Hardware MIDI instruments connect via MIDI cables to the MIDI inputs and outputs on your audio interface or MIDI interface. Virtual instruments are inserted as plug-ins on Instrument tracks in Pro Tools and accessed directly from within Pro Tools.

Make Beats and Compose With a MIDI Controller

Here we'll show you how to compose with a MIDI controller/keyboard instead of a mouse.

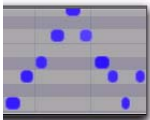
To record MIDI on an Instrument Track:

- 1 Make sure your MIDI controller/keyboard is connected either to a Pro Tools LE interface with MIDI cables or directly to your computer with a USB cable. (See the *User Guide* that came with your system for detailed information on connecting the interface to your computer.)
- 2 Repeat the steps to create a stereo Instrument track and insert Xpand!² on it (see "Make a Beat" on page 18).
- 3 Choose a bass preset (also known as a "patch").
- 4 Select Options > MIDI Thru. (Verify that MIDI Thru is checked; if not, select it.)
- 5 Click the Record Enable button to enable the Instrument track for MIDI recording.
- 6 In the Transport window, click Return to Zero to start recording from the beginning of the session. You can also record to a selection in a track or from the cursor location in the Edit window.

7 Click the Record button.

8 Now play your MIDI controller/keyboard and hear the bass sound.

9 When you are ready to start recording, click Play or press the Spacebar. To stop, click Stop or press the Spacebar.



MIDI data in the Instrument track

10 Click the track Record button again to take it out of record enable and play back what you just recorded.

If this sort of composition interests you, see the *Pro Tools Reference Guide* (Help > Pro Tools Reference Guide) to learn more about Loop Playback, and how you can apply all sorts of other musical treatments to your rhythms, sounds, and patterns.

Mix and Change Your Sounds

Your Pro Tools LE system comes supplied with a wealth of plug-ins that you can use to change the sounds you've recorded. This section shows two examples of how to use plug-ins to *process* your sound. (The plug-ins used in this section are part of the DigiRack suite of plug-ins). We're going to show you how to use compression on one track, then we'll apply reverb to a bunch of tracks.

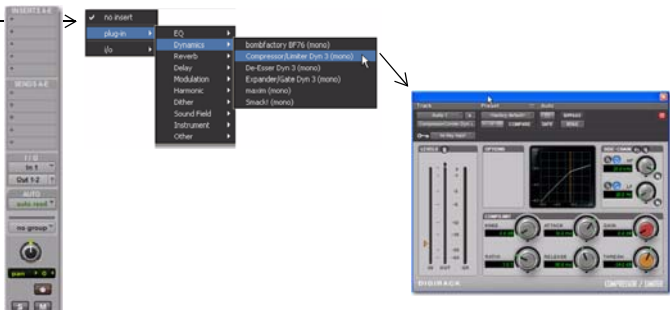
Compression

Compression is a way to smooth the dynamics of a track (make your soft and loud parts sound less uneven). It's one way to make a vocal sound more intimate.

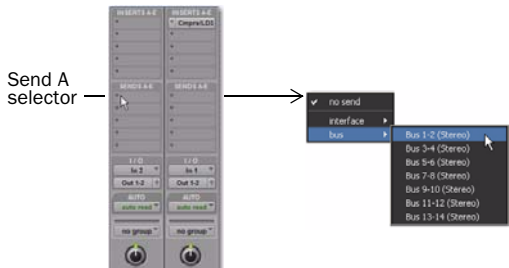
To apply compression to a track:

- 1 Choose Window > Mix.
- 2 In the top part of the track, click the first Track Insert selector and choose Compressor/Limiter Dyn 3 (mono) from the Dynamics sub-menu. Pro Tools inserts the Dynamics 3 Compressor/Limiter plug-in on your track and opens its plug-in window.

Insert selector



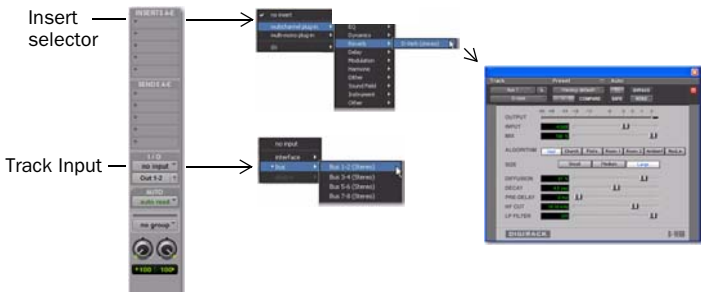
2 Click the Send selector on your vocal track as shown below and choose Bus 1-2.



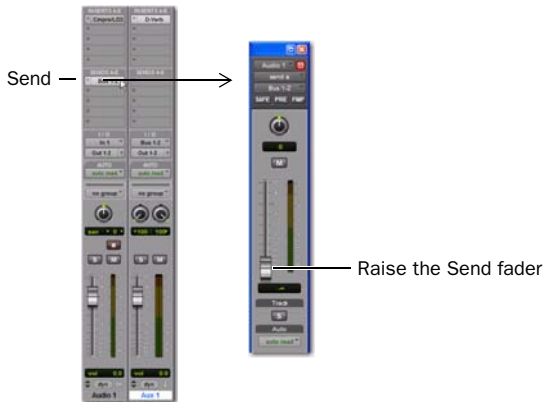
3 Choose Track > New, and set it to create 1 stereo Auxiliary Input track, then click Create.

4 On the new Auxiliary Input track you just added, do the following:

- Click the Track Insert selector and choose D-Verb from the Reverb sub-menu.
- Click the Track Input selector and choose Bus 1-2.



5 Click the Send assignment on your vocal track to open the Send Output window.



6 Press the Spacebar and slowly raise the small fader in the Send Output window. This adjusts how much of the vocal track you are sending to D-Verb.

7 Keep playing and listening, and check out different D-Verb settings. Repeat this section's basic instructions to try out a delay (echo), chorus, flanger, or other types of effects plug-ins.

Fade Out the End of the Song

To put the finishing touch on a song it's sometimes nice to go with the classic fade out. Here's an example of how to use *mix automation* to fade out a track. (There are many other ways to create fades described in the *Pro Tools Reference Guide*.)

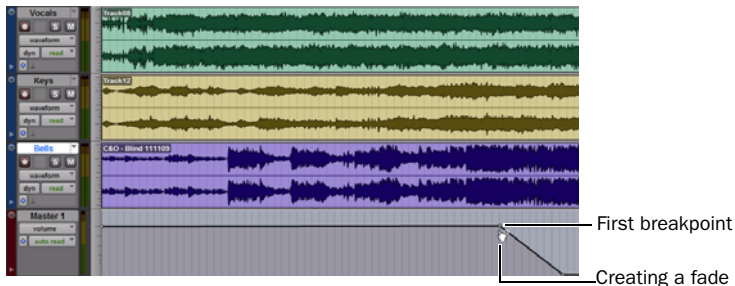
To do a fade out:

- 1 In order to do a fade out, add a Master Fader track.
- 2 In the Master Fader track, click with the Grabber tool (it's in the toolbar) at the place you'd like the fade to start. This creates a white dot or "breakpoint."



Grabber tool

- 3 Drag down with the Grabber at some point later in time (after the first breakpoint).



4 Now click in the Master Fader track to place the cursor where you want to audition your fade.

5 Press the Spacebar to hear the section and the results of your fade.

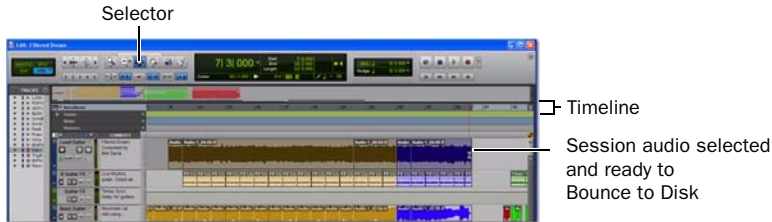
You can also edit breakpoint automation with many of the same tools we use to edit audio such as the Pencil, the Grabber, and the Trimmer. You can learn more about how to record and edit your control moves in the *Pro Tools Reference Guide*.

Get Your Music Out to the World

After you've finished recording and editing tracks in a Pro Tools session you're ready to *mix down*. In these last few pages you'll see how to do this using the Pro Tools Bounce to Disk feature to combine all the tracks that make up a session into a single "master" audio file. After the new audio file has been bounced to disk, you can burn it to a CD or convert it to MP3 using a CD burning application, like iTunes.

To create a stereo master from a session:

1 Use the Selector to select the length of the session in the Timeline (or on a track).



2 Choose File > Bounce to > Disk.

3 In the Bounce Options dialog, do the following to create a CD-compatible 2-track mixdown of your audio:

- Choose Out 1–2 (Stereo) as the Bounce Source.
- Choose BWF (.WAV) for the File Type.
- Choose Stereo Interleaved for the Format.
- Choose 16 for the Resolution and 44100 for the Sample Rate.



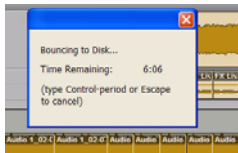
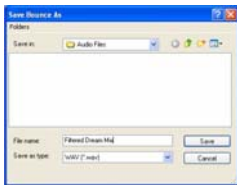
Avid also offers an MP3 Option that lets you bounce directly to MP3 format. Check the Avid Store on our website (www.avid.com), or contact your Avid dealer if you'd like more information. To learn more about the other options in the Bounce to Disk dialog, see the Pro Tools Reference Guide.

4 Choose Convert after Bounce, and click Bounce. (If you didn't make a selection, your entire session will bounce from start to finish.)



Bounce options (shown set to create audio CD burnable tracks)

5 In the Save Bounce As dialog, name your bounce and pick where it should be saved, then click Save. Pro Tools begins bouncing to disk. Pro Tools bounces are done in real time, so you hear audio playback of your mix during the bounce process (you cannot adjust any Pro Tools controls during a bounce).



After Mixdown, Mastering

After the bounce is completed, you will have an audio file that you can convert to MP3 using most common CD burning software. Converting to MP3 lets you listen to it on your iPod, post on your site, or send via email. Or, use the burner software to write the file to an audio CD that can be played on standard CD players. Listening to a reference CD in an environment other than your studio is a time-tested way to see how your mix translates to other systems or listening environments.

Learn More

We hope this quick introduction has inspired you to make music with Pro Tools. To learn more about any of the topics presented, check the *Pro Tools Reference Guide*. Search for any terms you're curious about. You can also watch any of the video tutorials included with your package or online at the Avid website (www.avid.com).

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