
RN ARTIST BLUEPRINT

Make the song. Handle the release.

Real Noise Records / Free independent artist workbook

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realnoiserecords.com

How to use this workbook

Start with Songwriting 101 and Beat Making 101 to make the music. Use the twelve release modules to prepare the work, clear the rights, choose distribution, and plan the release. Use the twelve working sheets to keep the decisions and handoffs in one place.

RN exercises and schedules are recommendations, not promises or platform requirements. Linked official pages explain the changing rules. Check them before each release. Rights and royalty guidance uses a U.S. starting point; agreements and collection routes differ by country.

Educational material. Use qualified professionals for individual contracts, taxes, medical concerns, and territory-specific rights. No playlist placement, marketing result, or earnings are guaranteed.

Inside

Songwriting 101: from pocket to finished demo

Beat Making 101: from drum loop to arrangement

Twelve release modules: preparation through review

Twelve printable working sheets

Sources and further learning

Songwriting 101

Catch the feeling before the words

Play the beat once without writing. What does it feel like: pressure, relief, grief, a night out? Listen for changes and where your voice could sit. Pick one real thing you want to say. Lyrics first works too-this is one way in, not the only way.

Find the count. Find your pocket.

Most beats you'll start with use 4/4: count 1, 2, 3, 4, then start again. That is one bar. Tap the steady pulse, not every hi-hat. A beat marked 140 BPM can feel like 70 in half-time. Agree on the count with your producer.

A lyric line does not have to equal one bar. You can start late, leave space, or carry a thought across the bar line. First learn where the beat lands; then move around it.

Mumble it. Record the good bits.

Use your phone or DAW to record three rough passes: laid-back, more rhythmic, then melodic. Hum, use made-up syllables, freestyle nonsense. You're finding shape and rhythm, not pretending those are finished lyrics. Mark the moments that make you rewind.

Keep four bars that feel natural. Don't spend an hour fixing the first word while the rest of the song doesn't exist.

Put something real in that rhythm.

Say the idea in a normal sentence first. "I'm trying to move forward, but people keep pulling me back." Fit that meaning into your best pocket. Change the wording without losing the point. Let the important words land where you naturally stress them.

Find rhymes after the thought works. If a rhyme makes you say something you don't mean, throw it out. Read it out loud. Your mouth will tell you what needs fixing.

Give the hook one job.

Pick the phrase that sums up the song. Make it easy to remember and worth repeating. Try two hooks with the same idea: one with more space, one with more movement. Contrast the verse through rhythm, melody, texture, or silence-it doesn't have to mean shouting louder.

A hook can be sung, rapped, instrumental, short, or long. Eight bars is a practice option, not a law.

Make the verses go somewhere.

Verse one: show the scene. Give us a place, a detail, a problem. Verse two: what changed, what did you decide, what did it cost? If both verses say the same thing with different rhymes, push the story forward.

Build four bars at a time. Keep the lines that sound like you. Leave room for a breath and for the beat to answer.

Make a whole rough song.

Try this practice map: intro 4 bars, hook 8, verse 16, hook 8, verse 16, hook 8, outro 4. Change it whenever the song needs something else. Record a full demo before buying more gear or polishing every ad-lib.

Listen without reading. Does the first part pull you in? Does a section drag? Does the second verse earn its place? Cut what the song doesn't need.

Rewrite for your mouth. Then save it.

Perform it twice. Fix the lines you stumble over, the breathless runs, and the words that only work on paper. Record a cleaner demo. Keep the beat name, producer, BPM, key if known, dated lyrics, and demo together.

Before releasing, read the actual beat license. "Free," "lease," and "exclusive" are not enough detail. Check commercial use, usage limits, credits, songwriting splits, and Content ID restrictions. A downloaded beat is not automatically cleared.

10 minutes: three pockets

Record three 30-second passes over one beat. Choose your strongest four bars. Keep the recording before judging the words.

10 minutes: real details

Write five plain sentences about one scene. Fit the strongest into your rhythm. Find rhymes after the thought works.

15 minutes: two hooks

Record two hooks for the same idea. Listen away from the lyrics. Which feels natural and stays in your head?

Before you release it

Permission to release a beat or loop and eligibility to register it in Content ID are separate. A non-exclusive license may allow your song to be released while the shared material remains ineligible for a Content ID reference. Read the license, keep a copy, and confirm sample clearances, credits, splits, and your distributor's Content ID rules. The composition and sound recording are separate copyrights.

Beat Making 101

Start with a direction, not 200 plugins.

Pick three words for the mood and open one session. Start with sounds you already have. For this exercise, use 140 BPM in 4/4; it can feel like 70 in half-time. Make something you want to rap on before hunting the perfect snare.

Learn the grid.

A beat is the steady pulse you tap your foot to. This exercise uses 4/4: four beats make one bar. Split each beat into four small steps and you get 16 steps per bar. The main beats land on steps 1, 5, 9, and 13; the other steps fall between them. Musicians also count these as “1 e & a,” but you can start with the numbered grid below. Other time signatures and step sizes exist.

Get three drums talking.

Start with a kick, a snare or clap, and a closed hat. At our 140 BPM half-time count, put the main snare on beat 3: step 9. Try a kick on steps 1, 7, and 13, with hats on the odd-numbered steps: 1, 3, 5, and so on. The practice pad below starts with that groove. Extend it to two or four bars, then give each bar its own twist.

Add or remove one hit at a time. If the rhythm feels good with three sounds, extra layers have a reason to be there.

Add a small musical idea.

Hum a short motif, play a few notes, or use a loop you are allowed to use. For a beginner keyboard exercise, A natural minor uses A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Try one bar of A minor (A-C-E), then one bar of F major (F-A-C), and repeat.

Those notes don't make every combination good. Listen for the mood and leave a gap for a voice. A two-note idea with feeling beats a busy melody that fights the rapper.

Tune the bass and give it room.

If you use an 808, check its pitch with a tuner or your instrument's tuning controls. Don't assume the sample starts on C because of its filename. Start with the chord roots, then listen. Shorten overlapping notes, adjust the kick placement, and lower levels if the low end turns muddy.

More bass isn't always more impact. Listen quietly and on another speaker before deciding.

Make four bars feel alive.

Duplicate the first bar, then change a little. Bar 2: move the last kick from step 13 to step 15. Bar 3: try a kick on step 5 instead of step 7. Bar 4: remove a hit, add a tiny hat fill or a low tom, or drop the melody before the loop returns. In your DAW, vary hat velocity so every tap isn't equally loud.

That is an original RN practice pattern, not a formula you have to use on every track.

Turn the loop into a song.

Try intro 4 bars, hook 8, verse 16, hook 8, outro 4. Copy your four-bar loop into those sections, then mute and bring back parts. The verse may need fewer layers; the hook may need a new texture. Transitions can be a pause, a drum fill, or a sound that announces the next section.

Hum a verse over it. If you keep fighting the beat, mute one layer and try again. The beat has to leave somewhere for the artist to live.

Finish a rough mix. Export cleanly.

Balance volume before reaching for more effects. Avoid digital clipping. Leaving peaks around -6 dBFS can be a useful working habit, but it is not a universal delivery rule. Follow the engineer's requested format and preserve the original quality.

Save the project and a listening mix. When handing off, export agreed individual tracks (multitracks) or grouped parts (stems) from the same start, retaining leading silence so they line up. Label BPM, key if known, and version. Back it up.

10 minutes: three sounds

Make two drum patterns with only a kick, snare, and hat. Change one thing and hear what it does.

30 seconds: vocal space

Hum over the loop. Mute one musical layer. Does your voice fit better? Keep the version that leaves room.

20 minutes: finish a map

Arrange intro, hook, verse, hook, and outro without adding plugins. Export a rough listen and write three changes for the next pass.

Before you release it

Permission to release a beat or loop and eligibility to register it in Content ID are separate. A non-exclusive license may allow your song to be released while the shared material remains ineligible for a Content ID reference. Read the license, keep a copy, and confirm sample clearances, credits, splits, and your distributor's Content ID rules. The composition and sound recording are separate copyrights.

Build the release brief.

Give one song one clear job. The brief keeps the studio, artwork, content, pitch, ads, and team from solving different problems.

1. Choose the primary job

A song can do several things, but a campaign needs one main win. Pick the result you will use to judge the release.

Discovery

Reach qualified new listeners and learn which creative earns attention.

Depth

Turn existing listeners into followers, subscribers, repeat listeners, or buyers.

Proof

Create a strong public example for collaborators, venues, media, or potential partners.

Revenue

Drive a specific offer: ticket, product, direct download, service, or fan membership.

Bad goal: “Go viral.” Usable goal: “Learn which performance clip sends the most qualified viewers to the song, then turn the winner into the release-day lead.”

2. Name the listener and the moment

Describe a person by what they care about-not only age or location. Use this sentence:

For listeners who feel [tension or desire], this song gives them [feeling, identity, or release] in a world that feels [recognizable reference without imitation].

Then write the simplest truthful story around the record: what changed, what it cost, or why this song had to exist now. That story becomes pitch material and content; it should not require a fake controversy.

3. Set the decision limits

Decision	Write this down	Why it matters
Release format	Single, focus track, EP, album	Changes timeline, budget, and how many assets you need.
Primary action	Listen, follow, save, buy, subscribe, attend	A person should know what to do next.
Budget ceiling	All-in cash cap, with a 10-15% contingency set aside inside it as an RN planning example	Prevents content or ads from consuming delivery money.
Release window	Target date plus last safe delivery date	Creates room for pitching, profile checks, and corrections.
Stop rule	What evidence means pause, fix, or redirect	Keeps sunk cost from deciding the next move.

Use the working tool: Release Desk calculates every milestone from the target date, tracks the six critical gates, saves on this device, and exports a team-ready plan.

Release-brief gate

The campaign has one primary job.

The intended listener and listening moment fit in one sentence.

The release story is true, short, and useful.

The primary audience action is decided.

The budget has a ceiling, reserve, and owner.

Get studio ready.

Studio time should capture and improve decisions-not become the first place anyone discovers the key, lyrics, arrangement, or beat license.

1. Lock what should already be known

- Song map: intro, verse, pre-hook, hook, bridge, outro, and intentional open sections.
- Performance map: lead, doubles, harmonies, ad-libs, stacks, punch points, and who performs each part.

- Technical map: title, BPM, key, reference bounce, lyric sheet, and any tuning or sound references.
- Rights map: producer/beat source, collaborators, samples, interpolations, and what has or has not been cleared.

A sample copies existing recorded audio and may need clearance of both the recording and composition. An interpolation newly records part of an existing composition, so it can require the composition owner's permission without using the old master. A short excerpt is not automatically exempt.

2. Bring complete files

Bring	Minimum standard	Do not rely on
Instrumental	WAV file plus tracked-out stems when available	A compressed stream rip or a link that may disappear
Demo	Current arrangement with rough vocal ideas	Explaining every section from memory
Lyrics	Final working document with versions labeled	Notes scattered across texts and screenshots
References	Two or three references with exact timestamps and reasons	"Make it sound expensive"
License	Downloaded agreement and receipt for any leased beat	The producer remembering the terms later

3. Rehearse the real session

Practice standing, with the full instrumental, at performance volume. Record one phone take without stopping. Mark every lyric stumble, breath problem, weak transition, and part that only works after ten tries. Fix those before the hourly clock starts.

Protect your voice with ordinary care: sleep, hydration, and a gradual warm-up that already works for you. Avoid trying a new extreme routine on session day. If pain or persistent vocal trouble is involved, use a qualified clinician-not internet folklore.

Studio-readiness gate

Arrangement and performance map are written.

Instrumental, stems, demo, lyrics, BPM, and key are in one folder.

Beat terms and possible samples/interpolations are flagged.

One full rehearsal take has been reviewed.

The folder exists in two separate places.

Run the session.

A good night is not the deliverable. The deliverable is an approved performance, complete credits, organized files, and an agreed path to mix and master.

1. Open with a two-minute brief

Confirm the song title/version, creative target, session end time, people in the room, engineer/producer roles, and what must be exported before anyone leaves. Agree on how feedback works: one decision-maker should collect notes so the engineer is not mixing five contradictory opinions.

2. Record in an order that protects performance

- Set levels and run a full pass. The first pass shows energy and structural problems.
- Capture the lead. Prioritize emotion and continuity before microscopic correction.
- Repair only what needs repair. Punch specific lines instead of flattening the whole performance.
- Build support vocals. Doubles, harmonies, stacks, responses, and ad-libs should each have a job.
- Capture safety options. Clean language, shorter intro, alternate phrase, or performance ending if the campaign needs them.
- Comp and rough-balance. Leave with a reference bounce that reflects the choices made.

3. Close the session like a business

Item	What “done” means
Credits	Legal names, professional names, roles, contact details, writer splits under discussion, producer terms, and session contributors recorded.
Session files	DAW session, consolidated audio from bar 1, audio files folder, and required plugins/settings noted.
Rough bounce	Clearly versioned WAV or high-quality reference named with song, version, date, and revision.
Mix brief	Two or three priorities, references with timestamps, revision count, fee, deadline, and approval owner.
Backup	Two verified copies controlled by different people or locations before cleanup.

Simple naming system: Artist_Song_Deliverable_Version_YYYY-MM-DD. Example:
DiceyRay_SongTitle_CleanMix_v03_2026-09-03.wav.

4. Ask for practical final audio

Keep a lossless final master at its original quality and a listening reference. Agree on bit depth, sample rate, and delivery format with your engineer and distributor; do not assume one specification fits every service. When useful, also request instrumental, clean, explicit, a cappella, performance/TV track, and mix stems. Stems are grouped parts such as drums or vocals; multitracks are individual recorded tracks. Ask which you are receiving, with all exports aligned to the same start. Do not up-convert a low-quality file and call it a master.

Session-close gate

Lead and required support vocals are approved.

Every contributor and role is recorded before leaving.

Session, consolidated files, and reference bounce are exported.

Mix/master owner, fee, deadline, revisions, and delivery list are agreed.

Both backups have been opened and checked.

Lock rights and money.

A recorded song can involve two separate copyrights: the underlying composition and the sound recording. They may be owned and licensed separately. If you cannot separate them, you cannot reliably split, license, register, or collect them.

1. Separate the two core rights

01 / Song

Composition

The lyrics, melody, and underlying musical work. Usually controlled by songwriters and their publishers or administrators.

02 / Recording

Master

The specific recorded performance people stream or download. Usually controlled by the artist, label, or another party named in an agreement.

A producer may have a songwriting share, master royalty (“points”), flat fee, ownership interest, or some combination. A feature may have performance, master, and/or songwriting terms. Do not guess from job titles-write the actual deal.

2. Map the collection lanes

Lane	What it generally covers in the U.S.	Typical action
Distributor	Master revenue reported by stores and streaming services through the distribution deal	Keep statements, fees, commission terms, tax setup, and payment splits.
PRO	Public-performance income for songwriters and publishers	Affiliate with an appropriate performing-rights organization and register works accurately.
The MLC	Eligible U.S. digital audio mechanical royalties for compositions	If you control and collect your own U.S. digital audio mechanicals, join The MLC for free, register the works you control, and check recording matches. If a publisher, administrator, or CMO already collects that share for you, confirm its registration and collection rather than duplicating the claim; use the Songwriter Hub to view your catalog.
SoundExchange	U.S. statutory royalties for featured artists and sound-recording owners from non-interactive digital services	Register the artist and sound-recording owner accounts/recordings as applicable.
Direct licenses	Uses such as film, TV, games, advertising, samples, or certain brand content	Know who can approve the master and composition, and document every license.

A PRO is a performing-rights organization. A mechanical royalty relates to reproduction/distribution of a composition. Sync means pairing music with visual media. Collection rules vary by country and deal.

3. Finish paperwork before momentum

- Use legal names and consistent writer/publisher information.
- Make the agreed ownership shares for the whole composition total 100%; keep master ownership and royalty percentages separate. When registering with a PRO, follow its writer-share and publisher-share instructions rather than copying split-sheet percentages into every field.
- Attach producer, feature, beat-license, work-for-hire, and sample-clearance agreements.
- Confirm explicit credit language and any approval obligations.
- Do not upload uncleared material simply because the distributor accepts the file.

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- Store signed documents, registrations, identifiers, statements, and contact records in the release archive.

Read the beat or loop license for allowed commercial uses, video/ad uses, stream or sales caps, credits, splits, and expiry. Permission to release a song is separate from permission to place its audio in Content ID. YouTube requires exclusive rights to reference material in the claimed territories; non-exclusive third-party audio and production loops are not eligible references. Check the distributor's rules before opting in.

This guide is education, not legal or tax advice. A qualified music attorney, rights administrator, accountant, or local professional should review actual agreements and disputes.

Rights gate

Composition writers and splits total 100%.

Master owner, producer terms, features, and session obligations are written.

Samples, interpolations, beat licenses, artwork, and visual permissions are cleared or removed.

Registration and collection responsibilities have named owners.

Signed copies and confirmation numbers are in the release archive.

Choose distribution.

There is no permanent “best distributor.” There is a best fit for your current catalog, release rate, team, cash flow, support needs, and exit risk.

1. Compare the five-year operation

Start with total cost, not the first checkout screen. Count annual renewals, per-release fees, commissions, required add-ons, artist slots, royalty-split fees, withdrawals, content-ID options, and what happens if you stop paying.

Provider	Model to compare; open current plan details	Useful first question
DistroKid	Annual subscription; compare add-ons	Which needed features are add-ons, and what happens to the catalog after cancellation?
TuneCore	Unlimited annual plans or annually renewed per-release fees; compare tiers	Which plan matches the team, support, and store/social monetization needs?
CD Baby	One-time release fee plus commission	Does avoiding annual renewal outweigh the per-release cost and commission over time?
Amuse	Subscription plans; compare included services	Do its artist count, support, royalty splits, and release timing fit the operation?
Ditto	Subscription tiers; compare artist slots and service	What support, team, analytics, and label functions exist at the required tier?
UnitedMasters	DEBUT+ \$19.99/year; SELECT \$59.99/year, checked September 30, 2026	Do the plan's support, brand tools, release limits, and eligibility fit better than a basic delivery service?
SoundCloud	Distribution through eligible artist plans; verify current eligibility	Is the connected SoundCloud workflow valuable enough for this audience and catalog?

Prices and plans change. Verify the official provider page on the day you decide. A low headline price is not a recommendation from RN. UnitedMasters advertises keeping 100% of streaming royalties on these paid plans; that does not mean every songwriting royalty is collected, or that brand, sync, playlist, or label deals are guaranteed. Confirm the agreement, renewal price, withdrawal costs, and collection scope. Optional services such as Content ID can have separate fees or revenue shares. PARTNER is invitation-only.

2. Match the scenario

One single this year

Compare a one-time release model against five years of annual subscription cost and catalog-continuation terms.

Monthly releases

Start with unlimited annual plans, then score the add-ons, support, reporting, delivery speed, and catalog risk.

Multiple artists

Use a true team or label tier. Confirm artist slots, role permissions, payment splitting, ownership, and offboarding.

Human service matters

Price a service distributor or specialist against commission, term, approval rights, ownership, and actual deliverables.

RN starting point-not an endorsement: price CD Baby first for a low-volume release when avoiding an annual renewal matters; compare DistroKid, TuneCore, Amuse, Ditto, and UnitedMasters for frequent releases; include SoundCloud Artist Pro when SoundCloud is central to the audience; and examine higher team, label, support, brand, or sync tiers only when those exact features have a job in the plan.

3. Protect the catalog before delivery

Your distributor is a vendor, not your archive. Save every final master, artwork source, metadata sheet, license, contributor agreement, store URL, statement, and identifier outside its dashboard.

An ISRC identifies a particular sound recording. A UPC/EAN identifies the release product. When moving the exact same recording, preserving the original metadata and ISRC can help stores match it; follow both providers' migration instructions and verify store pages before taking down the old delivery.

Distributor gate

Five-year total cost and commission have been compared.

Required artist slots, splits, territories, support, and platform delivery are confirmed.

Cancellation, takedown, migration, and catalog-continuation terms are understood.

The distributor receives only the rights needed to provide the service.

RN archive rule is met: files, IDs, metadata, licenses, and statements stay under artist control.

Set up every platform.

Distribution sends audio and metadata to services. It does not finish every profile, pitch, lyric, channel, link, direct-sale, or audience setup.

1. Build one metadata master

Field	Control it once	Common failure
Artist names	Exact spelling, capitalization, roles, and existing profile links	Creating a second artist page or mis-crediting a feature
Titles + versions	Song/release title and valid version label such as “Acoustic” or “Live”	Stuffing promo text, collaborators, or dates into titles
Credits	Writers, producers, performers, engineers, label, publisher data	Leaving contributors out because a storefront hides some fields
Rights lines	® sound-recording owner and © release/copyright information	Copying a previous release without checking ownership
Identifiers	ISRC per recording; UPC/EAN per release; retain existing IDs when appropriate	Generating duplicates during a move or remixing versions under one ID
Territory + date	Release date/time, territories, language, genre, explicit status	Picking a date before files and rights are ready

2. Know what happens where

Surface	Distributor usually handles	Artist still finishes
Spotify	Audio, artwork, core metadata; labels/distributors remain the main music-video delivery route	Claim Spotify for Artists, map the right profile, update image/bio/Artist Pick, pitch one unreleased song, add Canvas and, when eligible, Countdown Pages and countdown videos, and use direct music-video upload only if the current beta is available to the account.
Apple Music	Audio, artwork, core metadata	Request Apple Music for Artists access when eligible: Apple requires your music to be live for at least five business days before claiming. Artists/managers claim the page; label teammates join through the artist's admin. Then update the profile, monitor analytics, and request mapping corrections through the proper route.
YouTube Music	Art tracks and catalog delivery when included	Operate the main channel, meet Official Artist Channel requirements, organize videos/Shorts, credits, descriptions, links, and rights tools.
SoundCloud	Distribution through eligible artist plans; verify current eligibility	Upload the track to SoundCloud first, then start its distribution workflow; set metadata, permissions, artwork, private links, profile, comments, and monetization options.
Direct-to-fan	Often nothing	Set up Bandcamp/store/email/SMS/tickets, pricing, fulfillment, fan data, and a clear offer.
Social audio	Music-library delivery if the plan supports it	Confirm the correct sound is searchable, connect the artist account where supported, post natively, and keep rights/usage rules straight.

Spotify video update: New Clips uploads are no longer available. Existing Clips remain live; countdown videos are available within eligible Countdown Pages. Check Spotify's current video guidance.

SoundCloud workflow change: since May 13, 2025, a track must already be uploaded on SoundCloud before it can be submitted through SoundCloud distribution. Do not plan around the retired upload-inside-distribution flow.

3. Run a live-page inspection

On release day, open the release as a listener on phone and desktop. Test every track, title, credit, explicit flag, artwork crop, artist mapping, lyric display, smart link, profile link, and call to action. Screenshot errors and file correction requests immediately.

Do not send every audience to a generic homepage. Use one campaign URL that opens quickly, identifies the song, offers relevant destinations, and carries tracking tags when you are running measured promotion.

Platform gate

The metadata master is approved against the audio and rights documents.

Existing artist pages were supplied and new pages checked.

Eligible profiles are claimed or assigned; any first-release access wait has an owner and follow-up date.

Smart link and campaign destinations work on phone and desktop.

A named person owns release-day platform QA and corrections.

Build the campaign.

Release day is the midpoint. The work before it makes the launch clean; the work after it turns real audience behavior into a stronger second wave.

1. Use an eight-week operating calendar

Week	Primary job	Proof before moving on
-8	Decide song, goal, listener, story, budget, owners, and target date	Approved release brief
-7	Finish master/alternates, credits, splits, clearances, artwork direction	Release-ready asset folder
-6	Deliver to distributor; verify metadata, profiles, lyrics, and links	Accepted delivery and mapped pages
-5	Capture hero visual plus performance, story, and world content	Edited content library with owners/dates
-4	Open direct-fan plan; start warm outreach and controlled creative tests	Working destination and first response data
-3	Submit Spotify editorial pitch at least seven days before release; pitch other earned channels appropriately	Submitted pitches and outreach tracker
-2	Build variations from organic winners; test small paid spend; QA profiles and links	Named lead creative and stop rule
-1	Run go/no-go; schedule owned content; confirm team actions and reporting	Every critical red flag closed or date moved
0	Verify the live release, communicate one action, capture response	Clean release and issue log
+1 to +4	Release fresh angles, retarget qualified people, deepen the story, review results	28-day scorecard and one next bet

2. Give every task an owner and a gate

“Team” is not an owner. Name one person for each deliverable, one due date, and the person who approves it. Mark dependencies: the music video cannot be finalized before the approved master; the editorial pitch cannot be completed before delivery appears in Spotify for Artists.

A go/no-go gate is the final check before committing the date. Move the release if the master, ownership, distribution acceptance, core artwork, or critical destination is not ready. A quiet postponement costs less than a public correction with broken rights or audio.

3. Reserve the second half

Do not publish every good asset before release day. Hold at least one strong performance, one story angle, one visual development, and budget reserve. Once listeners show which lyric, feeling, format, or audience responds, the post-release wave can answer evidence instead of guessing.

Campaign gate

The calendar starts with dependencies, not just post dates.

Every critical asset has one owner, due date, and approver.

Platform and earned-media deadlines are scheduled from official rules.

Strong creative and cash remain for post-release learning.

The final go/no-go date and non-negotiables are written.

Shoot the content system.

Content is not random proof that you posted. It gives different people a clear way into the same song while building a recognizable world around the artist.

1. Build four content lanes

Performance

The song proving itself: live take, close-up delivery, rehearsal, car/street/room performance, alternate arrangement.

Story

The human reason to care: origin, lyric meaning, tension, process, failure, decision, collaborator perspective.

World

The recognizable context: styling, places, objects, recurring framing, color, movement, community, humor, point of view.

Response

Evidence and conversation: comments answered, fan use, reaction, performance proof, remix, behind-the-result follow-up.

Every piece needs one opening, one idea, and one next action. Put the value on screen immediately; do not spend three seconds announcing that a video is about to begin.

2. Scale the music video to the song's job

Tier	Use it when	Minimum plan
Performance visual	The artist's presence and song carry the idea	One controlled location, intentional lighting/frame, planned coverage, clean playback, vertical and horizontal capture.
Concept visual	A simple image or action can own the memory	One-sentence concept, shot list, schedule, props/wardrobe, location permission, edit rhythm, thumbnail frame.
Narrative production	The story needs cast, multiple scenes, or production design	Treatment, budget, producer, releases, safety, locations, call sheet, continuity, post schedule, deliverables.

A larger video is not automatically a stronger campaign. Fund the concept only when it gives the song a clearer identity or durable asset-not to imitate a budget you do not have.

3. Turn one capture day into a library

- Choose two song sections and three different openings for each.
- Capture full-body, medium, and close frames; clean plates; detail shots; stills; and a thumbnail frame.
- Record vertical natively instead of assuming every horizontal frame will crop well.
- Get clean audio playback and a genuine live/performance take when possible.
- Write platform-safe captions, readable on-screen text, and accurate subtitles.
- Log the file, hook, format, status, owner, publish date, and result.

Why multi-format: YouTube for Artists recommends using Shorts, video, and live across a release cycle because each format can reach people differently. Keep the same song world recognizable while adapting the edit to the format.

Content gate

The release has one visual rule and a plan across performance, story, world, and response.

At least two song sections and three openings are planned.

Shot list includes horizontal, vertical, still, cover, and thumbnail needs.

Locations, cast, artwork, footage, fonts, and other assets are licensed or cleared.

Final exports are named, captioned, and logged in a content library.

Test for breakout.

No one can guarantee viral reach. You can create more qualified attempts, compare them fairly, and build from the response instead of changing everything after every post.

1. Run the twelve-test board

2 song sections

3 openings each

2 formats

12 tests

Change one major variable at a time. Keep the artist, song, and campaign consistent. An opening might be a lyric on screen, a surprising visual action, or a direct tension statement. A format might be performance versus story. Twelve planned variations make the results easier to compare than twelve unrelated posts. Organic posts are not randomized A/B tests: timing, audience and algorithmic delivery can change too. Treat an apparent winner as a lead to repeat, not proof that one edit caused the result.

2. Read the funnel, not only views

Signal	What it may tell you	Next test
Low early hold	The opening, first frame, or audience match is weak	Keep the section; replace the first second and on-screen promise.
Good hold, weak completion	The middle loses tension or the clip is too long	Shorten, change the reveal point, or use a stronger song section.
Good watch, few actions	Entertaining but weak artist/song connection	Make identity, title, or next action clearer without overloading it.
Shares/saves above baseline	The idea has meaning or repeat value	Create close variations and a deeper follow-up.
Profile visits, few follows	The post creates curiosity; the profile does not close it	Fix bio, pinned posts, visual continuity, and destination.
Clicks, little listening	The landing page, platform choice, or promise does not match	Test a faster route and confirm the creative accurately represents the song.

Compare posts at the same age-such as after 24 hours-not one after 20 minutes against another after a week. Use each account's normal range as the first baseline; cross-account benchmarks often hide differences in audience and distribution.

Working tool: Take this method into the RN Signal Decision Lab to compare two to four variants with your own targets and results.

3. Use a winner protocol

- Confirm the result on more than raw views: retention plus at least one intent signal.
- Make three close variations within 24-72 hours while the lesson is current.
- Extend the winning idea into another platform-appropriate format.
- Only then consider paid spend to reach more qualified people.
- Document what you believe caused the win and test that belief.

Fraud firewall

Never buy guaranteed streams, guaranteed playlist placement, bots, account farms, forced traffic, or unexplained "promo packages." They can corrupt your data, withhold royalties, trigger removals, and damage distributor/platform relationships.

Testing gate

Twelve planned variations are mapped before posting.

The account's normal hold, completion, and intent ranges are recorded.

Results are compared at the same post age.

Winner threshold and variation protocol are written.

Everyone with budget authority understands the fraud firewall.

Pitch without begging.

A useful pitch is not "support me." It gives the right person enough specific, truthful context to decide whether the song fits their audience or format.

1. Use the official Spotify route correctly

Deliver early enough for the release to appear under Music Upcoming in Spotify for Artists. An Admin or Editor can pitch one eligible unreleased song at a time; compilations and songs where you are only a featured artist cannot be pitched. Submit at least seven days before release so editors have time to consider it and to select that eligible song for followers' Release Radar. Without a pitch, Spotify can choose a song from the release for Release Radar. Editorial placement is never guaranteed.

Fill every relevant field accurately: genres/cultures, moods, styles, instruments, recording location, artist context, and campaign story. Explain what is distinct about the record and what is already happening around it. Do not invent traction or pay anyone claiming they can sell Spotify editorial placement.

2. Match the pitch to the recipient

Recipient	Lead with	Avoid
Independent curator	Specific playlist fit, clean listening link, release date, one proof point	Mass mail, hidden paid placement, or pretending you listened when you did not
Writer / outlet	A timely story, local/cultural relevance, angle, assets, availability	A biography with no story or an embargo they never accepted
Creator	Why the song fits their actual format and what creative freedom/terms exist	Copy-paste flattery or demanding unpaid labor
DJ / radio	Correct edit/format, intro/outro details, clean metadata, local proof	Wrong genre, giant attachments, unclear rights, or repeated pressure
Venue / booker	Audience fit, live proof, location, draw evidence, clean offer	Streaming totals with no local or live context

3. Build the five-sentence pitch

Subject: [Specific fit] - [Artist], “[Song]” - [release date or city]

Hi [name]-I’m reaching out because [specific recent work/format] makes “[Song]” a real fit for [their audience].

It is a [plain-language sound/feeling] record about [one-sentence human story].

[One relevant proof point or campaign detail-no inflated numbers.]

Private/clean link: [URL]. Release: [date]. Assets/credits: [EPK URL].

If it fits, [one clear ask]. Either way, thank you for listening.

Follow up once with new information after a reasonable interval. Track recipient, fit, contact route, send date, reply, next action, and do-not-contact status. A relationship is worth more than forcing one release into the wrong outlet.

Pitch gate

Spotify editorial pitch is complete at least seven days before release when eligible.

Every recipient was selected for a documented fit.

Listening link is fast, permission-safe, and tested without login.

EPK has short bio, release story, approved images, credits, links, and contact.

Outreach and one useful follow-up are logged.

Run ads with guardrails.

An ad buys distribution toward an objective. It does not repair a weak song, unclear creative, broken profile, slow destination, fake audience, or missing measurement.

1. Start with the business action

If you need...	Optimize toward...	Watch beyond the platform result
Creative learning	Qualified video views or engagement	Retention, profile visits, comments that show understanding, and downstream listening
Site action	Landing-page view or tracked conversion	Page speed, destination choice, completion rate, and cost per meaningful action
Ticket/product sale	Purchase when enough conversion data exists	Revenue, fees, refund/fulfillment cost, and contribution margin
Warm follow-up	Retarget people who watched, visited, or engaged	Frequency, audience size, message fatigue, and incremental action

Choose the closest available objective to the real outcome. A cheap video view is not a cheap fan. Track the handoff from ad to landing page to platform or purchase as far as your tools and privacy obligations allow.

2. Run a small learning sprint

Example-not a promise

One question. A capped budget.

Choose a budget that meets the platform's current minimums and that you can afford to lose. Test one variable with comparable audiences and timing; use a platform experiment when available. Unequal algorithmic delivery is not a controlled A/B test. Stop broken links or tracking immediately. Small samples can suggest a next test; they do not prove a winner.

If you pay a creator or give something of value for an endorsement, agree on a clear disclosure of that relationship in the post or video itself. Use plain words such as 'ad' or 'sponsored', make it hard to miss, and use the platform's paid-partnership tools where required. A caption buried after 'more' or a platform label alone may not be enough; check the rules where the campaign runs.

Use the platform's current campaign setup and advertising policies. On Meta, select the objective that matches the result and verify tracking. On TikTok, Spark Ads can use authorized organic posts, preserving native engagement context. On YouTube, match the video format and campaign goal to the audience action. Features, minimums, and optimization options change-check official documentation during setup.

3. Write the rules before launch

- Budget cap: total test money you can lose without harming the release.
- Learning question: the single thing this campaign is supposed to teach.
- Success metric: action closest to the goal, with a reasonable quality check.
- Stop rule: technical failure, cost ceiling, or minimum quality threshold.
- Scale rule: how much budget may increase and what must remain true.
- Tracking: unique URLs/UTM tags, pixel/event checks where appropriate, and an owner for reporting.

Never optimize to fraud

Do not run traffic to stream farms, incentivized listening, bots, or services promising guaranteed royalties or placements. Paid media should reach potential listeners-not manufacture plays.

Ad gate

Campaign objective matches the real audience or business action.

Destination is fast, mobile-tested, rights-safe, and measurable.

Creative already has organic evidence or tests a clear hypothesis.

Budget, stop, scale, and reporting rules are written before launch.

Current platform policy, permissions, disclosure, and privacy requirements are checked.

Read the data and repeat.

A report is not a pile of screenshots. It connects attention, intent, consumption, and business value to one decision the next release can use.

1. Read four layers

Layer	Examples	Question
Attention	Reach, impressions, views, early hold, completion	Did qualified people stop and stay?
Intent	Shares, saves, comments, profile visits, follows, clicks	Did they choose to move closer?
Consumption	Listeners, streams per listener, skips, saves, playlist adds, repeat behavior	Did the song satisfy the promise?
Business	Email/SMS growth, sales, tickets, inquiries, collaborator/press opportunities, net revenue	Did attention build an owned relationship or asset?

No single number tells the whole story. A high-reach clip with no artist interest may be a format win but campaign loss. A small local audience producing ticket sales may be more valuable than broad, shallow reach.

2. Diagnose the break in the chain

Low reach + strong response

The idea may need more attempts, distribution, collaboration, or paid amplification.

High reach + weak intent

The post reached people, but relevance, artist connection, or the next action may be weak. Check retention before deciding whether the opening held attention.

Clicks + weak listening

Creative promise, landing route, audience, or song section may be mismatched.

Listening + weak follow

Profile, catalog, release consistency, or next-step value needs work.

Strong fans + weak revenue

The offer, timing, price, trust, checkout, or audience size may be the constraint.

One channel dominates

Document why it works, then reduce dependency by translating-not blindly reposting-the lesson elsewhere.

3. Hold three reviews

- Day 7 / Fix: correct mapping, links, credits, content pacing, audience mismatch, and technical failures. Do not overread tiny samples.
- Day 28 / Decide: compare creative, sources, listening quality, audience growth, spend, earned response, and business action. Name the strongest repeatable lesson.
- Day 90 / Compound: close royalty/admin tasks, archive final numbers/assets, evaluate catalog lift, and commit the next release's budget, format, and hypothesis.

Write one next-bet sentence:

Because [evidence], the next release will [specific change] for [audience], measured by [primary signal], while keeping [constraint] fixed.

Review gate

Results are compared with a relevant baseline and equal time windows.

Attention, intent, consumption, and business value are separated.

Spend, fees, revenue, and unresolved admin tasks are included.

Day 7, 28, and 90 reviews have owners and dates.

One evidence-based next-bet sentence is written.

Quick reference

Master

The specific sound recording-the exact recorded performance.

Composition

The underlying song: melody, lyrics, and musical work.

Metadata

The structured information attached to a release: names, titles, credits, rights lines, dates, IDs, and more.

ISRC

An identifier assigned to a particular sound recording. A distinct remix or new recording generally needs a distinct ISRC.

UPC / EAN

A product identifier for the release package, such as a single or album.

PRO

A performing-rights organization that licenses and distributes certain public-performance royalties for writers/publishers.

Mechanical

A composition royalty tied to reproduction/distribution, including eligible interactive streaming uses.

Sync

A license to pair music with visual media; both composition and master approval may be required.

Split sheet

A written record of who wrote what share of the composition; it is not a substitute for every needed agreement.

Stems

Mixed groups of related tracks, such as drums or vocals, exported for mixing, performance, edits, or licensing. Individual track exports are multitracks.

Smart link

One campaign page that routes listeners to relevant music services or offers.

UGC

User-generated content. Rights and platform policies still apply when fans or creators use music.

DSP

A digital service provider: a streaming or download platform such as Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, or YouTube Music.

℗ / ©

℗ identifies the sound-recording rightsholder and year; © identifies the copyright notice for packaging, artwork, notes, or the release product as applicable.

IPI / CAE

A creator or publisher identification number used by performing-rights organizations. Use the exact number attached to the legal name.

ISWC

An identifier for the underlying composition. It is different from the ISRC assigned to a particular recording.

EPK

An electronic press kit: approved bio, story, photos, artwork, credits, links, contact information, and any relevant proof in one easy place.

Content ID

A platform matching system that can identify uses of eligible sound recordings and apply the rightsholder's chosen policy or monetization.

Pixel / event

Tracking used to record a useful action-such as a page view or purchase-so an ad platform can report what happened after a click.

Retargeting

Showing a follow-up message to a defined group that already watched, visited, clicked, or took another tracked action.

Conversion

The action the campaign is trying to produce and measure, such as a ticket purchase, email signup, or completed landing-page visit.

Baseline

The relevant earlier result or comparison point used to decide whether a new result is meaningfully better, worse, or simply different.

Release brief

Song / version:

Primary job:

Listener + moment:

One-sentence story:

Primary audience action:

Release window / last safe delivery date:

Budget ceiling / reserve:

Decision-maker / owners:

Stop or postpone rule:

Studio readiness

Arrangement locked:

Lead / doubles / harmonies / ad-libs mapped:

BPM / key:

Instrumental + stems location:

Demo + lyric version:

References + timestamps + reasons:

Beat license / samples / interpolations:

Full rehearsal reviewed:

Two backup locations:

Session brief

Session date / room / engineer:

Creative target:

Required performances:

Session end deliverables:

Decision-maker:

Contributor legal name / role / contact:

Mix priorities / references:

Fee / deadline / revisions / approver:

Backup verified by:

Rights + split control

Composition writers / legal names / PRO IDs / shares:

Composition total = 100%:

Master owner(s) / shares:

Producer fee / points / ownership:

Feature terms:

Samples / interpolations / beat license status:

PRO / MLC / SoundExchange responsibilities:

Agreement and registration locations:

Approvals required:

Distributor scorecard

Release rate / catalog size / artist count:

Five-year base cost:

Commissions / add-ons / withdrawals:

Required stores / social / content ID:

Team roles / royalty splits:

Support need / response route:

Cancellation / catalog continuation:

Migration / identifiers / data export:

Choice / reason / review date:

Metadata master

Release / track title / version:

Primary / featured / remixer roles:

Writers / producers / performers / engineers:

® / © lines / label / publisher:

ISRC / UPC-EAN:

Explicit / language / genre / territory:

Release date / original release date:

Existing profile URLs:

Lyrics / artwork / master / smart link locations:

Eight-week calendar

Week / deliverable / owner / due / approver / dependency / status:

-8 Decide:

-7 Finish:

-6 Deliver:

-5 Capture:

-4 Open:

-3 Pitch:

-2 Retest:

-1 Commit:

0 Release:

+1 to +4 Compound:

Content test board

Test ID / song section / opening / format:

Content lane: performance / story / world / response:

Audience hypothesis:

Platform / publish time:

24h hold / completion / replays:

Shares / saves / comments:

Profile visits / follows / clicks:

Decision: stop / retest / vary / amplify:

Lesson:

Pitch builder

Recipient / outlet / actual fit:

Recent work referenced:

One-sentence sound / story:

Relevant proof point:

One clear ask:

Private or public listening link:

EPK / clean edit / credits:

Sent / reply / follow-up date:

Next action / do-not-contact:

Ad test plan

Learning question:

Business action / campaign objective:

Audience / exclusions:

Creative IDs:

Destination / tracking / event test:

Budget / duration:

Primary quality metric:

Stop rule / scale rule:

Result / next test:

Release scorecard

Window / baseline:

Attention: reach / views / hold / completion:

Intent: shares / saves / profile / follows / clicks:

Consumption: listeners / streams per listener / saves / repeats:

Business: owned audience / sales / tickets / inquiries / net:

Top source / audience / territory:

Strongest creative / weakest handoff:

Spend / revenue / unresolved task:

Decision:

Ninety-day next bet

What happened:

What evidence matters:

What likely caused it:

What remains uncertain:

What we stop:

What we repeat:

What changes next release:

Audience / primary signal / fixed constraint:

Budget / owner / deadline:

Next-bet sentence:

Sources / Keep learning

Editorial pitching + Release Radar

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

Guaranteed-stream warning

<https://support.spotify.com/us/artists/article/third-party-services-that-guarantee-streams/>

Official promotion options

<https://support.spotify.com/us/artists/article/promoting-music-on-spotify/>

Provider directory

<https://artists.spotify.com/en/providers>

Clips and countdown video changes

<https://support.spotify.com/us/artists/article/clips/>

Countdown Pages

<https://artists.spotify.com/countdown-pages>

Music-video delivery + direct-upload beta

<https://artists.spotify.com/music-videos>

Fan Study: connection + visual tools

<https://artists.spotify.com/en/fan-study/fan-connection>

U.S. Copyright Office for musicians

<https://www.copyright.gov/engage/musicians/>

Music Modernization Act

<https://www.copyright.gov/music-modernization/>

The MLC: get started

<https://www.themlc.com/get-started>

SoundExchange

<https://www.soundexchange.com/>

ASCAP registration guidance

<https://www.ascap.com/help/registering-your-music>

BMI creators

<https://www.bmi.com/creators>

Apple Music for Artists support

<https://artists.apple.com/support/>

YouTube Official Artist Channel

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/7336634?hl=en>

YouTube multi-format release strategy

<https://artists.youtube/resources/multi-format-release-strategy/>

SoundCloud upload requirements

<https://help.soundcloud.com/hc/en-us/articles/360039171614-Upload-Requirements>

SoundCloud distribution overview

<https://help.soundcloud.com/hc/en-us/articles/360051038314-Distribution-with-SoundCloud-for-Artists>

SoundCloud distribution workflow

<https://help.soundcloud.com/hc/en-us/articles/24320060389275-How-to-Distribute-with-SoundCloud>

SoundCloud upload-first workflow update

<https://help.soundcloud.com/hc/en-us/articles/360051803773-Edit-a-live-distribution-release>

Instagram creator best practices

<https://creators.instagram.com/best-practices>

Instagram trial Reels update

<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/inspiring-instagram-creativity>

YouTube: Content ID reference eligibility

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2605065?hl=en>

DistroKid

<https://distrokid.com/>

TuneCore pricing

<https://www.tunecore.com/pricing>

CD Baby

<https://cdbaby.com/>

Amuse pricing

<https://www.amuse.io/en/pricing/>

Ditto pricing

<https://dittomusic.com/en/pricing>

UnitedMasters pricing

<https://unitedmasters.com/en/pricing>

FTC: disclosing sponsored endorsements

<https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/disclosures-101-social-media-influencers>

Meta ad objectives

<https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1438417719786914>

Meta A/B testing

<https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1738164643098669>

TikTok Spark Ads

<https://ads.tiktok.com/help/article/spark-ads>

TikTok Spark Ads creative playbook

<https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/quicktok/online/Spark-Ads-Creative-Playbook/pc/en>

Google Ads video campaigns

<https://support.google.com/google-ads/topic/10513839?hl=en>

Ableton: bars and musical time

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/make-beats/bars.html>

Ableton: song structure

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/song-structure/song-structure.html>

Berklee: writing a topline and hook

<https://online.berklee.edu/takenote/what-is-topline-songwriting/>

BeatStars: licenses and terms

<https://help.beatstars.com/hc/en-us/articles/360035466813-What-are-the-differences-between-the-available-licenses-and-terms>

Copyright Office: songs and recordings

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

Ableton Learning Music: free interactive lessons

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/>

Ableton: beats, tempo, and numbered steps

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/make-beats/beat-and-tempo.html>

Ableton: drum sounds

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/make-beats/what-are-these-sounds.html>

Ableton: basslines and low notes

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/make-basslines/make-basslines.html>

Yamaha: the drum kit and toms

https://www.yamaha.com/en/musical_instrument_guide/drums/mechanism/

Yamaha: drum-rim techniques

https://www.yamaha.com/en/musical_instrument_guide/drums/play/play003.html

Roland: the 808 sound

<https://articles.roland.com/nothing-sounds-quite-like-an-808-analyzing-the-bass-that-changed-music/>

Ableton: the playground

<https://learningmusic.ableton.com/the-playground.html>

BandLab: browser music-making

<https://www.bandlab.com/>

GarageBand for Mac

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/garageband/id682658836>

FL Studio: official learning manual

<https://www.image-line.com/fl-studio-learning/fl-studio-online-manual/>