

Notes

2013

# Mixcraft How-To

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Midnight Music

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# Mixcraft How-To

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## Basics

### Getting help

There are lots of good quality tutorial videos that teach you the basics of Mixcraft - many by Acoustica (the company that makes Mixcraft) themselves. You should also take a look at the **Help Topics** in the Help menu of Mixcraft.

### Videos

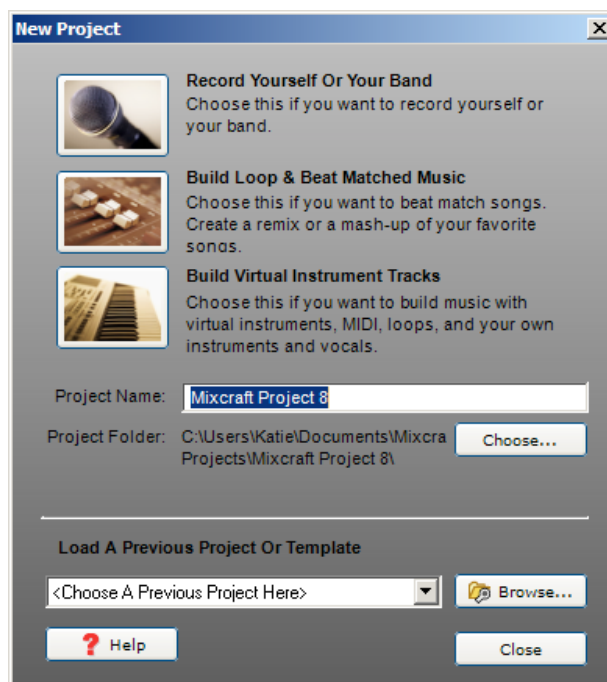
- Mixcraft tutorials on Mixcraft website (and Youtube) <http://www.acoustica.com/mixcraft/v6/help/video-tutorials.htm>
- Mixcraft 6 Tutorial The Basics (created by a Mixcraft user): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkst8MIP6BI>
- There are many others. Go to Youtube and search "Mixcraft tutorial" or "how-to"

### Teacher's Guide

Acoustica have published an excellent free Teacher's Guide which is available for download from their website. It includes lots of step-by-step projects, how-to instructions and sample files for you to use with your students.

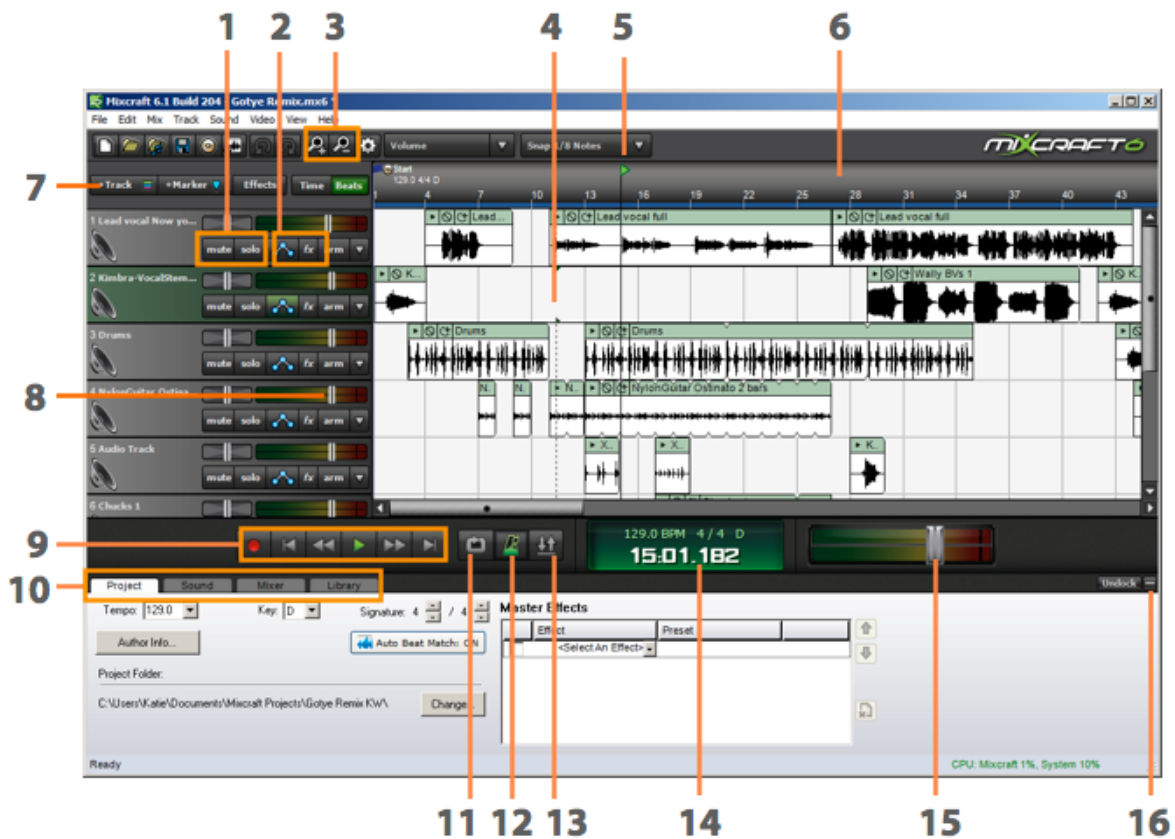
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## Starting a new project



Open Mixcraft and in the **New Project** window, give your project a name and choose your project type. Most are self-explanatory and it's not the end of the world if you choose the wrong one!

# Mixcraft screen



- |   |                           |    |                           |
|---|---------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 1 | Track mute & solo buttons | 9  | Master transport controls |
| 2 | Track automation & FX     | 10 | Tab/details area          |
| 3 | Zoom in/out               | 11 | Loop mode                 |
| 4 | Caret (dotted line)       | 12 | Metronome settings        |
| 5 | Playback cursor           | 13 | Recording punch in/out    |
| 6 | Timeline                  | 14 | Tempo and time screen     |
| 7 | Add new track             | 15 | Master volume             |
| 8 | Track volume              | 16 | Hide tab/details area     |

## Zooming

To zoom the project area in and out, you can hover your mouse in the Timeline area and use the mouse wheel to zoom in and out. You can also zoom by using the + and - buttons.

## Using loops

### Searching for loops

- To see the Mixcraft loop library, click on the **Library** tab

- You can use the **Library** and **Sort By** drop-down menus to narrow your choices: select loops by style, genre or instrument
- You can also type something into the search box - such as “drums” or “dubstep”
- Click on the green **Play** button next to the loop to hear it play back

## Adding a loop to your project

When you’ve found a loop you like you can add it to your project by doing one of the following:

- Drag it up into the project area
- Select an audio track, place the playback line where you want the loop to go and click on the plus button next to the loop name. Mixcraft will add the loop into the timeline area

Each loop or snippet of music that appears in your Mixcraft project is known as a **Region** or **Clip**.

## Reset the loop browser

If you used the search field to look for a loop, you will need to clear the search box by clicking on the cross (to delete your search text).

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## Playback

You can play back the project in a number of ways:

- Click on the **Play** button on the Transport controls (right)
- Use the **Space bar** to start and stop playback
- Use the **Home** and **End** keys to jump to start or finish
- Use Ctrl+. (full stop key) to fast forward or Ctrl+, (comma) to rewind




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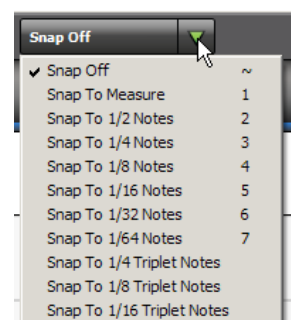
## Adding sound effects to a project

### A word about snapping

Snapping is a feature that causes loops or recorded audio to “snap” to the beginning of a bar, or to a specific beat. This is highly useful when you’re doing a music project since you’ll nearly always want the music to adhere to bars and beats in a song.

However, if you are working on podcasting, storytelling, or adding sounds effects to a film scoring project, it’s unlikely that you’ll want snapping enabled since dialogue and sound effects don’t conform to bars and beats.

You can turn snapping off by going to clicking on the **Snapping** drop-down menu on the Toolbar. Select **Snap Off** (see right).



## Adding sound effects

Once you've turned off the snapping function, you can add a sound effect to your project in the same way you would add a music loop - by dragging it into the timeline area, or by positioning the playback line and then using the plus button next to the loop name to add it to the project.

Once the sound effect is in the timeline area, you can drag it left or right with your mouse to position it more precisely.

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## Adding a virtual instrument

### Add a new virtual instrument track

A virtual instrument track allows you to record music into your project by using the on-screen keyboard, or by playing an external MIDI keyboard that you have plugged into your computer.

- Go to **Track > Add track** and choose **Virtual Instrument Track** (or use the shortcut **Ctrl+E**)
- A new Instrument track will be created with the default grand piano sound

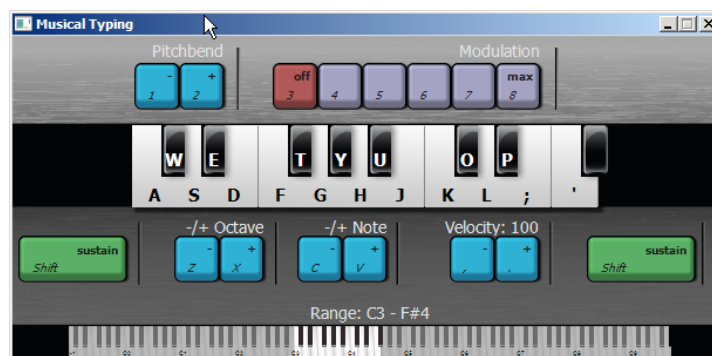
### Change instrument sound

To change the instrument sound:

- First, click on the **Change Instrument** button on the track header
- Select an instrument **Category** on the left-hand side of the panel
- Then select a specific **Instrument Preset** within that family on the right-hand side of the panel (below)



- Click on the **Musical Typing** button to open the floating on-screen keyboard. This allows you to play notes by using the keys on your computer keyboard (or by clicking on the screen)



- Press the letters **A – L** on your computer keyboard to audition the instrument sound

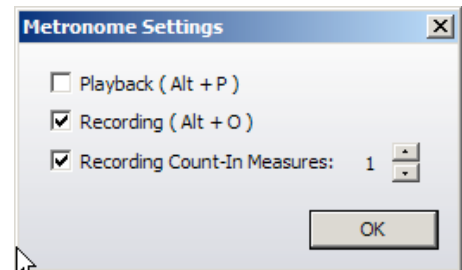


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# Recording a virtual instrument

## Prepare to record

- Before you record, make sure the Musical Typing window is open, or that you have access to a MIDI keyboard
- If you're going to play something musical (in time to a beat), click on the **Metronome** icon next to the Transport controls and turn on the **Recording** and **Recording Count-In Measures** options on. If you're going to play something non-musical (like sound effects) then turn those options off



## Record some music

- Make sure the instrument track is selected
- Rewind the playback line to beginning (or move it to the place you want to start recording from)
- Press the **Record** button, wait for the count-in bar (if applicable) and then record the part

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# Recording a drum pattern

The steps for recording a drum part are essentially the same as the Recording a Software Instrument instructions, but there are a couple of other things you should do:

## Prepare to record

- Before you record, make sure the Musical Typing window is open, or that you have access to a MIDI keyboard
- Locate the kick, snare and hi-hat sounds! Make sure your Musical Typing keyboard is using the C1 octave. The kick can then be triggered with the **A** key on your computer keyboard, the snare with the **S** key and the closed hi-hat with the **T** key
- Make sure the Metronome and Count-in are turned on: click on the Metronome icon to check these settings
- **Adjust the tempo** if necessary. You do not need to record the drum pattern at speed - slow it down to 80 BPM if you like and then speed it up again when you've finished

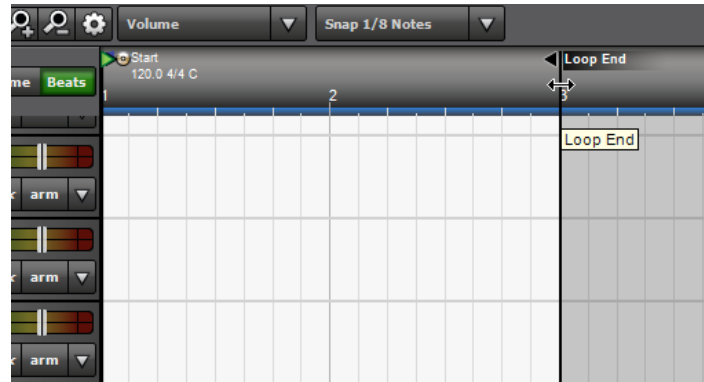
## Set up the loop region

When recording drum patterns, it's a good idea to record just one or two bars. You can then drag the end of your recorded region to make the pattern longer. To record the pattern, we'll set up a one or two-bar cycle which Mixcraft will play over and over. On each "pass" of the cycle you can record a different part of the drum pattern.

- Click on the **Loop Mode** button located to the right of the Transport control (see right). A loop region will show in the timeline area (the non-loop region will be greyed-out)



- Adjust the length of the loop region by dragging the **Loop End** in the Timeline. I usually suggest making the loop region two bars long



### Record the pattern

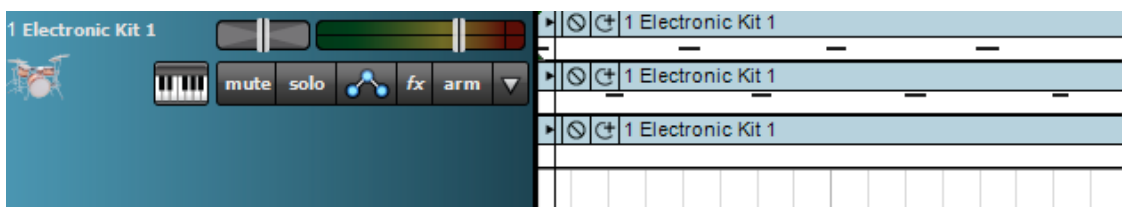
- Arm** the drum track for recording
- Rewind the playback line to beginning of the loop region
- Don't forget that if you do not feel confident about playing the drum pattern at the project tempo, slow the tempo down first, before hitting the record button!
- Press the **Record** button, wait for the count-in bar and then record the **kick drum** part only
- When the playback line returns to the beginning of the cycle region, play the **snare** part
- When it returns to the beginning again, play the **hi-hat** part

It doesn't matter if you don't start playing each part straight away, one after the other, just wait for the beginning of the loop region and then play. You can even stop or pause the recording and then start recording again.

When you've finished, **disarm** the track.

### Combine parts

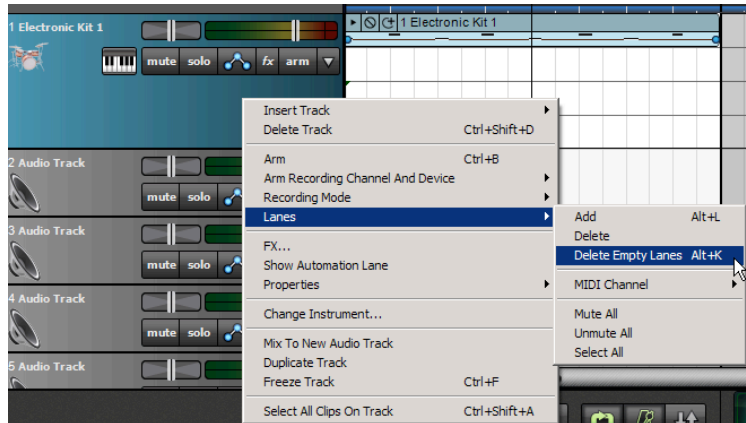
Each of the parts will end up on its own "lane" on the track (see below).



To combine the 3 parts into one:

- Control-click on all 3 clips (or double-click the track header to select everything on the track - useful if this is the only thing on the track so far)

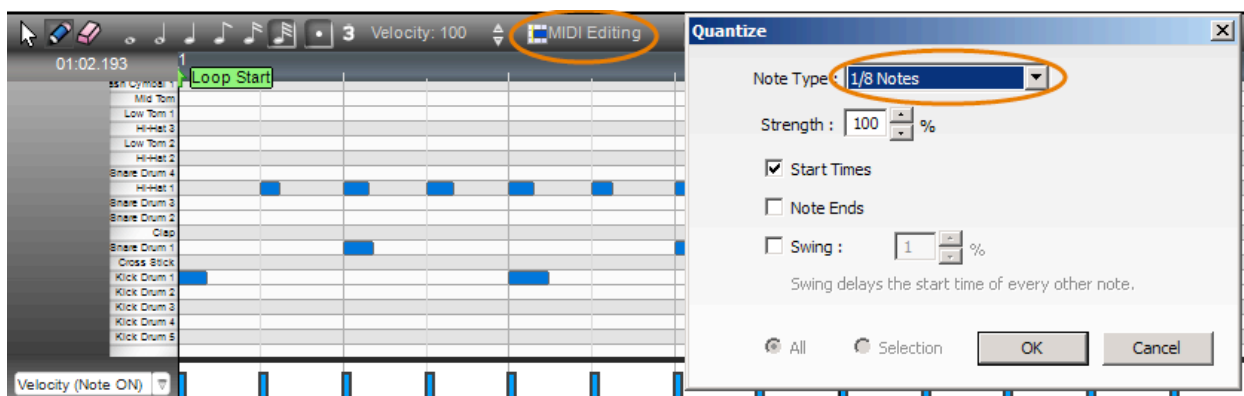
- Right-click on any one of the parts and choose merge. The 3 parts will merge into the first one
- To delete the empty lanes, right-click on the track header and choose **Lanes > Delete empty lanes**



## Quantize

You can quantize the drum pattern to even-up any uneven playing:

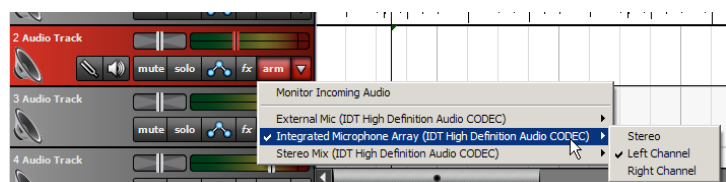
- Double-click on the drum pattern region to open the piano roll editor at the bottom of the screen
- Click on **MIDI Editing > Quantize** and then select an appropriate value from the **Note Type** drop-down menu (usually 8th or 16th notes)



## Recording a speaking or singing track

To record a speaking or singing track:

- Select an audio track. If there is no empty audio track in your project, you can add a new one by going to **Track > Add Track > Audio Track**
- On the track header, select your recording input device (microphone) from the drop-down menu (see right)



- Test the levels by speaking or singing into the microphone - you should see the meter moving. You want to make sure the meter is showing green/yellow levels and not red (which means the recording will be distorted). If you are seeing red, move away from the microphone, or adjust the recording level by using the slider on the track header (tip: the slider allows you adjust the recording level when you have armed the track for recording. When the track is disarmed, it becomes the volume slide for that track)



- Check that the track is armed for recording (the track header should be red)
- Put some headphones on your singer so that they can hear the backing track (if applicable) and so that the sound of any previously-recorded tracks does not come out of the computer speakers

- If your singer would like to hear their own voice, as well as the other tracks, click on the **Monitor Incoming Audio** button on the track header (see right)



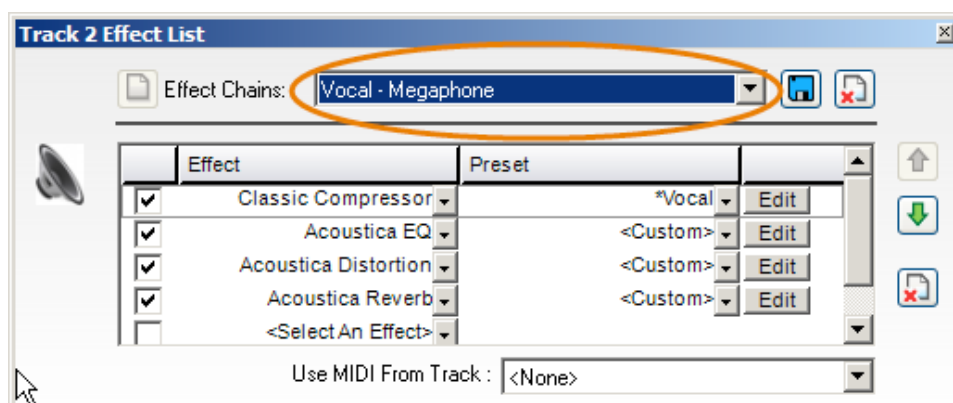
## Adding Effects

Using voice effects can give students a boost in confidence - they're more comfortable recording their voice when it sounds different, or is disguised a little!

You can choose to add effects - such as AM Radio, Megaphone, Chipmunk, or reverb - to a voice track (or other audio track) *while* you're recording, or after you've finished recording.

To add an effect to the track:

- Click on the **FX** button on the track header
- In the window that opens, select one of the **Vocal effect** options in the **Effect Chains** drop-down menu (see below)



You can also build your own effects from scratch or adjust the preset effects by using the options in the lower part of the Effects window.

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## Delete a track

To delete a track:

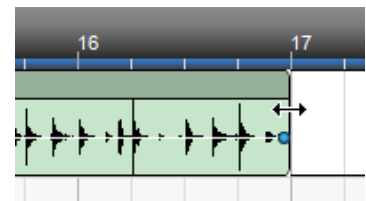
- Select the track
- Go to **Track > Delete Track**, use the shortcut **Ctrl+Shift+D** or right-click on the track header and select Delete Track

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## Editing Regions

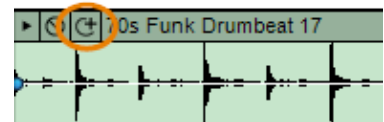
### Increase or decrease the length of a loop

- You can lengthen a loop by hovering your mouse at the top right corner until you see a double-headed arrow (see right)
- Click and drag your mouse to the right to increase the length of the loop. Drag to the left to decrease the length of the loop



### Increase the length of a loop (option #2)

- You can use the **+1 Loop** button on the region itself to add another instance of that loop at the end (see right)



### Copy and paste loops

- Select a region
- Press **Ctrl+C** to copy it
- Place the playback line at the destination point
- Paste by pressing **Ctrl+V**

### Split

- Select the region you want to split
- Place the playback line (cursor) at the point you want to split the region
- Go to **Edit > Split** or use the shortcut **Ctrl+T**

### The Edit window

To edit regions in more detail, you can use the **Sound** tab.

- Double-click on the region you wish to edit (or select the track and click on the Sound tab)
- The selected region will appear in detail at the bottom of the screen

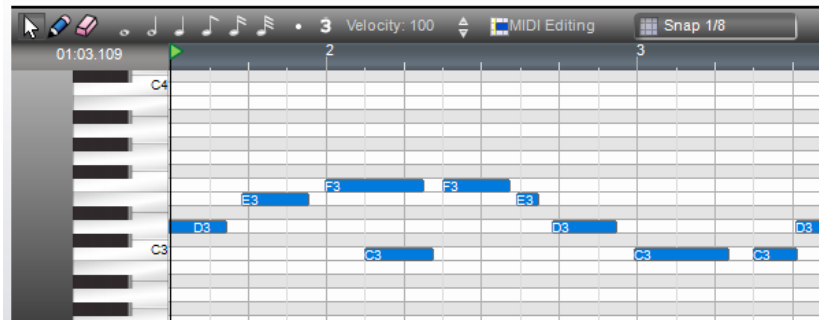
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# Editing MIDI

## Edit notes

To edit a MIDI region (correct mistakes, or add new notes):

- Double-click on the region you wish to edit (or select the track and click on the **Sound** tab)
- The selected region will appear in detail in the MIDI editing window at the bottom of the screen
- If you can't see the MIDI notes, you may need to scroll up or down within the MIDI editing window



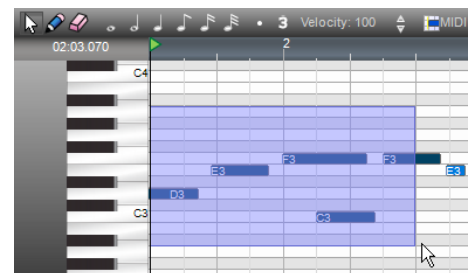
Select a note and then:

- Drag it up or down to change the pitch
- Drag it left or right to change the rhythmic position
- Shorten or lengthen the note by dragging the end

## Selecting groups of notes

You can select more than one note by doing one of the following:

- **Ctrl-click** or **Shift-click** on each one
- Click and drag a "lasso" around a group of notes that are near one another (see right)



## Transposing groups of notes

Once a group of notes has been selected, they can be transposed all at the same time:

- Select the notes
- Drag one of the notes up or down (all the other notes will move up simultaneously)

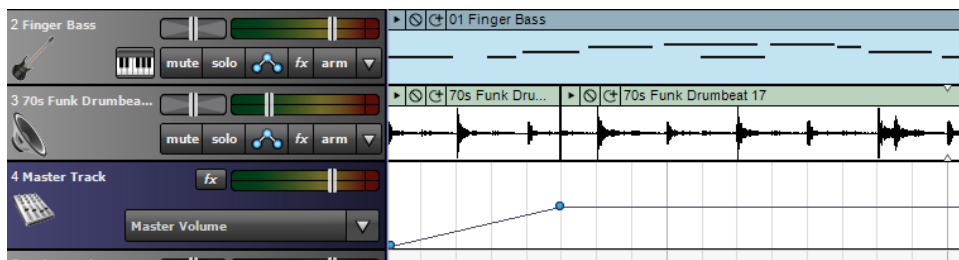
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# Fade-ins, fade-outs and panning (track & project automation)

## Varying the volume of the overall project

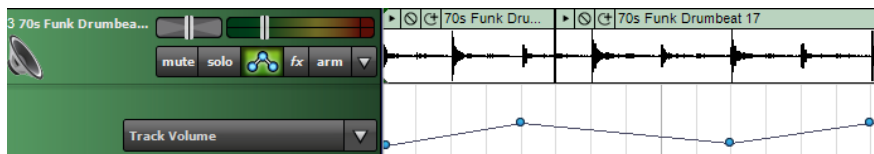
- Go to **Track > Show Master Track**

- You can click on the volume line to add “points”. Drag the points up or down to vary the volume (see below)



## Varying the volume on a single track

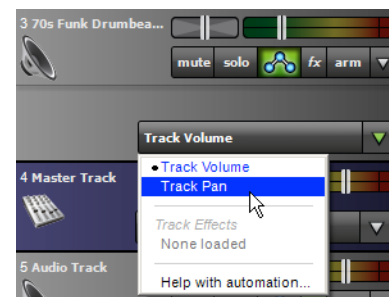
- You can fade sound effects and music in or out by adding a “volume envelope” to that track
- Click on the **Toggle Automation** button on the track header. The track volume info will appear underneath the selected track
- Click on the volume line to create points and drag the points up or down to adjust the volume level (see below)



## Track pan

You can adjust the track pan (the level of sound in each speaker or headphone) in the same way. Track pan is useful when you want to create an effect of footsteps or a car moving from one speaker to the other.

- From the automation drop-down menu, select **Track Pan** (see right)
- Add points to the line and then drag them up or down to vary the track pan

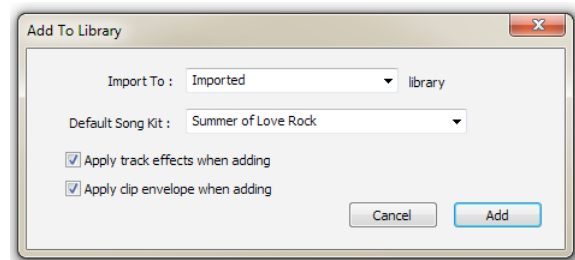


## Adding loops in to the loop library

### Creating loops from sounds in your project

Any sounds that are a part of your project can be added to the loop library.

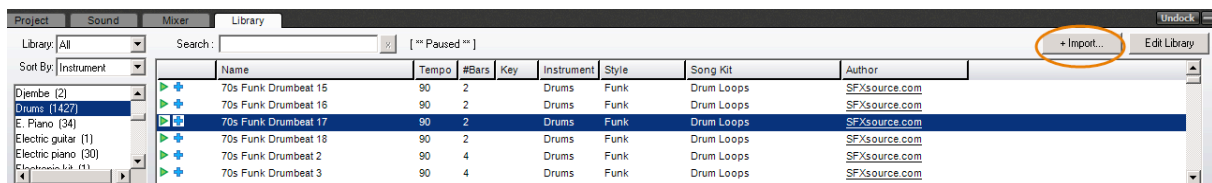
- Right-click on the sound in your project
- Select **Add To Library**
- In the dialog that opens (see right), select the library you would like to import to (type in a new name if you want to start a new library)
- Select the Song Kit you would like the sound to be associated with
- Choose whether you'd like track effects and clip envelopes to be applied when importing
- Click **Add**



## Importing loops from your hard drive

You can import individual loops, or folders of loops from your computer's hard drive into the Mixcraft library.

- Click on the **Library** tab
- Click the **+Import** button (see below)



- The **Import To Library** window will open with various options. To locate the loops on your hard drive, click on the **Browse** button
- Choose your other settings and click **Import**

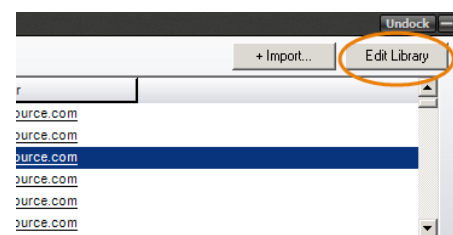
You can also open **Windows Explorer** and drag a folder of loops into the Library window.

For more information about each of the options in this window, see Mixcraft 6 Help.

## Editing the content of the Library

You can edit loop information such as the loop name, the tempo, key signature time signature, style and so on.

- Click on the **Library** tab
- Click on **Edit Library** (see right)
- Sounds or loops that you can edit will have a pencil icon next to them. Click on the field that you want to edit and type the new information
- When you've finished, click the **Stop Editing** button

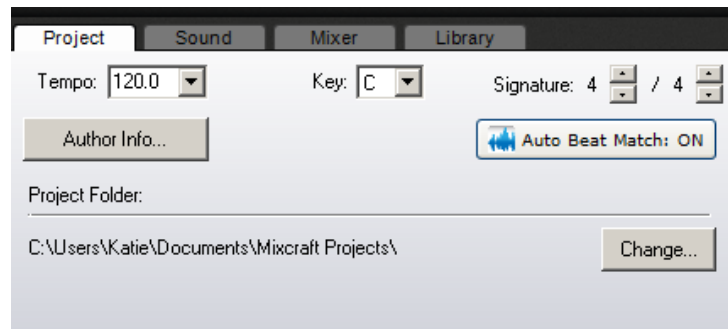




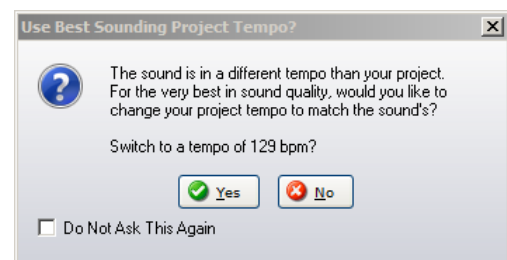
# Beat-matching stems

## 1. Setting up a new project

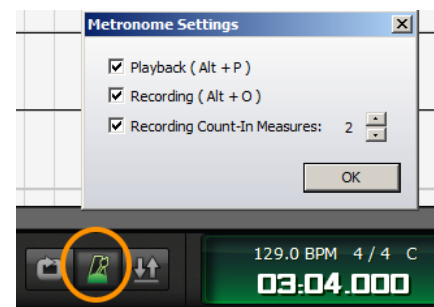
- Start a new project choose the **Build Loop and Beat Matched Music** template
- On the **Project** tab make sure **Auto Beat Match** is on



- Drag the audio file from Windows Explorer or from the Library tab in Mixcraft on to the main project area
- A dialog box will probably appear: **Use Best Sounding Project Tempo?** Say **yes** and take note of tempo identified



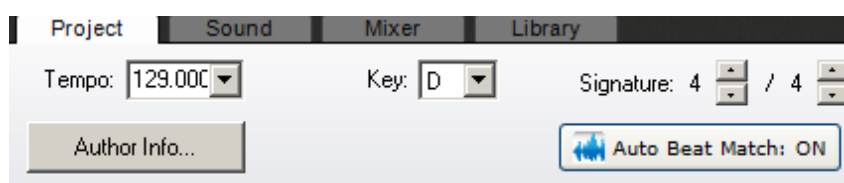
- Drag the audio region to bar 1 beat 1
- Set the Metronome to play during playback (see right) and press Play. Does the audio file match the metronome tempo? Is it in sync for the entire song? If yes, good!



## 2. Work out project tempo and key

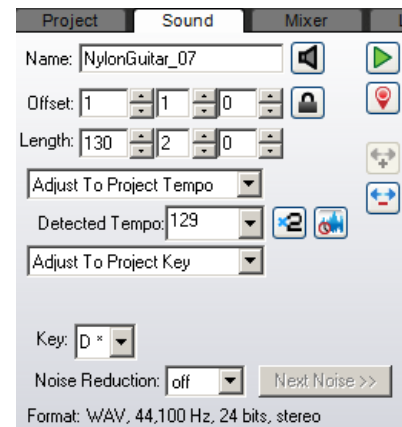
If the audio file is not in sync and does not start on a downbeat (most likely), follow these steps:

- Figure out the real tempo of the audio file. You can use an online metronome, or an iPhone/iPad app which will identify a tempo that you tap
- If it's a melodic part, work out the key as well
- On the **Project** tab, fill in the correct tempo and key settings



### 3. Adjust individual audio file tempo and key

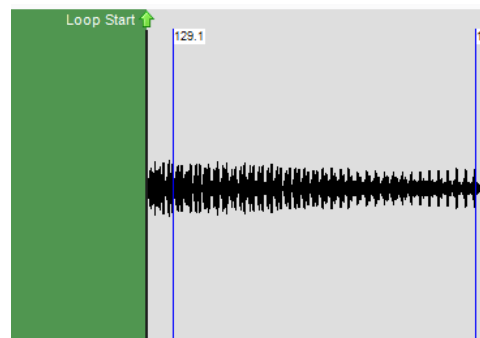
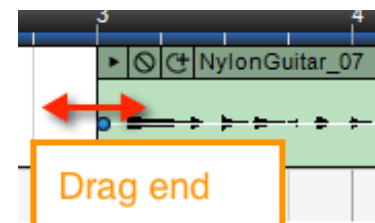
- Double-click on the stem you dragged into the main project area. This will take you to the **Sound** tab (or simply select the stem/region and click on the Sound tab)
- On the **Sound** tab, edit the loop tempo and key to match Project settings (see right)



### 4. Line up the first beat and synchronize

You'll need to beat-match each stem or audio file one at a time. Trim the beginning (and end of the region) so that it starts on the correct beat:

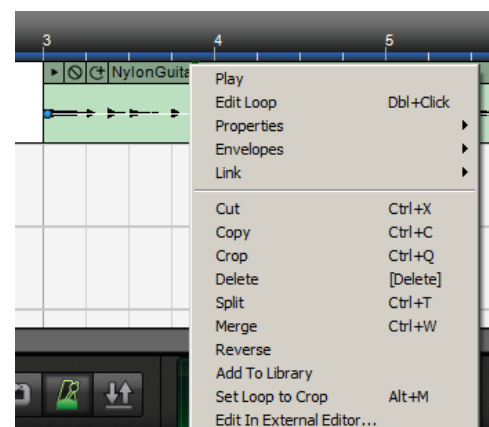
- Start by trimming the beginning of the region/loop in the main project area. Get as close to the downbeat as possible
- Drag loop back so it's begins at bar 1
- Look at the detailed view in the Sound tab. **Zoom in as far as possible** and trim the beginning of the loop even further by dragging the Loop Start line to the right



- Press **Play** (in the main Project area) and listen. Does the audio file start on the correct beat? Is it in sync? Adjust it further if necessary. Do lots of listening!

### 5. Crop the loop (audio)

- When you're satisfied that it's playing back in time to the metronome, right-click on the loop and choose **Set Loop To Crop** (or press **Alt+M**)



## 6. Rename and Add To Library

- Click on the Sound tab and rename the loop if necessary
- Right-click on the loop and choose Add to Library (the first time you do this you might like to set up a folder so the loops are organised into a single location)

## 7. Repeat!

- Drag in the next stem and repeat this process (from step 3) for all other stems

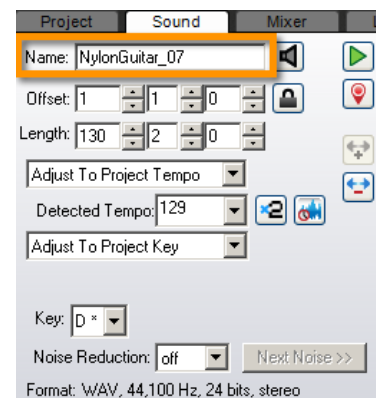
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# Chopping up long stems into short loops

Once you've beat-matched the complete stems, you might like to choose short sections of audio and create little snippets or loops for use in your remix.

## Creating short loops

- Drag a beat-mapped stem/loop into the project area
- Find the bit you want to keep - usually just a few bars in length
- Place the cursor at the beginning of the section (placing it at the beginning of a bar works best) and press **Control+T** to split the region
- Place the cursor at the end of the section you want to keep (at the end of a bar) and press **Control +T** to split the region
- Select the section you want to keep and press **Alt+M** to Set Loop To Crop (this will mean that the little snippet will be cropped and it will "loop" when the end of it it dragged out)
- Click on the Sound tab and rename the loop (see right). This is **VERY important!!** Rename it to reflect the nature of the cropped loop - ie. "Guitar ostinato beginning only" or "First line of verse"



- Then, right-click on the loop and choose **Add To Library**

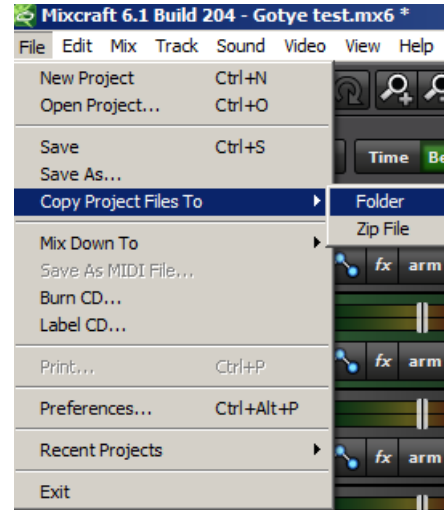
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# Sharing Beat-Matched Loops

If you want to share a set of loops that you have beat-matched (or that a student has beat-matched), you can drag them all into a project and save all of the Project Files into a folder for others to use in their own projects.

## Save the loops into a folder

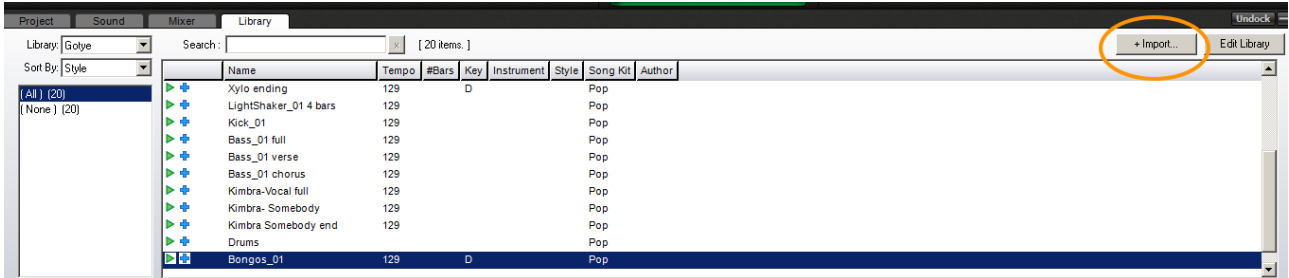
- First, beat-match the loops
- Put all the loops into a project (don't worry about how it sounds - just dump them all in!)
- Save the file
- Then go to **File > Copy Project Files To... > Folder** (see right)
- Choose an existing folder or click Make New Folder, name the folder and click **OK**
- Mixcraft will save your project to the folder and all of the loops used in that project will appear as individual loops inside the folder, alongside the Mixcraft file



## How to import the beat-matched loops

Students can now import the beat-matched loops into their own projects:

- Open Mixcraft and start a new Project
- Click on the Library tab
- Select **+Import** (see below)



- Browse for the folder containing the loops
- Choose your desired import settings (particularly the Import location)
- Click Import
- The loops will now appear in the Library, ready for students to use

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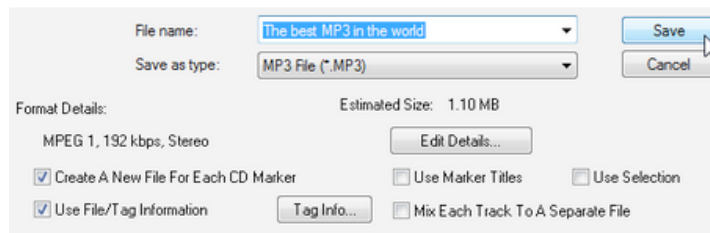
## Exporting a project

When you have finished your project, you can export it as a WAV or MP3 file so that it is in a sharable format, suitable for burning to CD or adding to a mobile device.

- Go to the **File > Mix Down To** or click on the **Mix Down To Audio** button on the toolbar (below)



- In the **Save Your Mix** window that opens, name your file and select an option in the **Save As Type** drop-down (usually MP3 or WAV)



- Click **Save**