

Recording Roles: The Recording Studio

A **recording studio** is a facility where **sound recording** and **mixing** takes place. A number of job roles work with the studio to ensure the studio runs **efficiently** and produces a **professional sound**. In this section you will learn about these different recording roles and the **process** of making a **sound recording**.

A **recording studio** works with **other organisations** in the industry:

- a **record label** might book the studio to record a song for one of their artists for which they will then own.
- An **artist/band** might book a studio to record their own songs to create a demo
- A **composer** might book the studio themselves (as well as the musicians) to record a version of their song so they can pitch their music to publishers



Blog written by a band discussing their experience of recording their single at H2O recording studio:

We arrived at H2O studios at 9.00 am. Our manager had arranged the booking with the recording studio's manager. The studio's manager had booked another recording session immediately after ours so we only had 5 hours of studio time. We had to pay the studio's manager £500 for the studio time, which our manager had finalised prior to our arrival. We met with the record producer and we were really impressed with his creative vision. We have worked with producers before who have not really understood what the band's sound is about and have overseen poor work throughout the recording process. He seemed to have an excellent relationship with the other studio personnel and gave us some creative ideas throughout the recording process. We had some time to set up our instruments. We used the drum kit already present at the studio. We used session musicians to provide us with a string section since we wanted strings on our recording but they are not part of the band. We had given them the sheet music arrangement of our song prior to the recording so they could learn the parts. They were highly skilled at their instruments. The studio itself was impressive. It was very tidy and organised. Microphone wires were tucked away and the whole outfit was highly professional. The sound engineers did sound checks to ensure all the levels were correct. We did a number of takes of the recording. Listening back we were offered creative ideas from the producer and also the sessions musicians, who suggested a few changes to their string arrangement. We recorded a few more takes and were happy with the raw recording. We packed up ready to leave. We had not realised that there was extra costs for production of CD's and for different sound formats to be created. The studio manager negotiated the fees we owed. Before we left we spoke with the mastering engineer. He had already started to put the finishing touches to the mix. It already sounded much more professional than the raw recording. We spoke with her about what formats we wanted the final recordings to be in.

TASK:

Read through the blog made by a band who recorded their single at the H₂O recording studio and use the information to complete the following tasks:

- (1) For each description given, identify the job role being discussed.. Summarise the description into a short headline. Write in empty box above description
- (2) In each empty circle, complete with a number between 1 and 5 to correspond with the order in which each job is done in the recording process. Draw arrows from the start to end.

Extension: What skills do you think are important for each job role to have?

When recruited I work in a studio. I have to rehearse music and keep my instrumental skills high. I follow instructions from the producer/conductor. Sometimes I contribute ideas to the arrangement

We take on a number of roles within the studio. We choose suitable equipment such as microphones and sure these are set up properly. We maintain equipment to a high standard and fix when needed.

My role puts me in charge of the administrative side of the recording studio. I schedule times with clients, booking the musicians. I have to publicise the studio to make sure we have as much work as possible to run efficiently. I am in charge of the studio's health and safety, making sure all equipment is properly tested. I hire all staff that

I complete the recording process producing the final mix. I have to refine the sound quality, subtly changing the audio to create an appealing sound and make it sound professional. This is vital to make people want to buy the song. If i am working on an album i have to make sure that each songs level is the same. I prepare the audio in the desired format (EG: mp3, mp4) making sure it is the standardised volume so that it sounds correct when played after other songs on the radio.

I am in charge of the overall recording process ensuring this is on time and on budget. I oversee the creative / artistic direction. I liaise with all studio personal involved in the recording process. I gather ideas and select songs. I contribute lots of creative ideas to how the recording should be done

TASK:

As a group, use the information learnt from the recording session you participate in to discuss each role involved in the recording process. What must each role do to ensure the recording studio operates efficiently?

Studio Manager

Producer

**Sound engineer
/ technician**

Session musician

Mastering engineer

TASK: An essay style scenario

Task and AJ both have their own small recording studios. Neither of their studios have enough bookings for them to work at the studio full time so they both have part-time jobs. They both handle all the bookings, as well as working as the studio engineer and carrying out technician responsibilities.

Task has suggested to AJ that they join together and form one larger studio. Both of them already have some bookings for the next six months.

Tash



AJ



- ★ Expert knowledge of technology uses and recording techniques, although limited instrumental skills
- ★ Very organised and good reputation with clients
- ★ Excellent communication skills
- ★ Limited experience of working in a team

- ★ Plays a number of instruments including trumpet, piano, drums, guitars.
- ★ Excellent creative skills
- ★ Poor admin skills and struggles with organisation
- ★ Very good at mastering and mixing of tracks

Advantages of combining their businesses	
Disadvantages of combining their businesses	

Advantages of remaining separate	
Disadvantages of remaining separate	

Exam Questions

Recording roles - the process of recording music

Q1. Which of these is the responsibility of the musicians when working in a recording studio?

- ☐ **A** Position the microphones correctly
- ☐ **B** Hire the correct equipment for the session
- ☐ **C** Ensure the licensing requirements have been met
- ☐ **D** Have their instruments ready to play on time

Q2. Explain one reason why it is important to check the sound of the microphone prior to a recording session taking place?

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Learning aim B: Understand job roles in the music industry

Q3. The production of the new star wars sound track may require time in the recording studio. Here are quotes from two people working at the recording sessions.

Name	Quote
Sarahthere are a lot of microphones to understand. Which mic, where do you put it, how do you route it? A lot of my time is spent plugging cables in and gaffing everything down!
Wayne it is important that i make sure that people stick to their booked time slots. Over-running even by half an hour can have a huge impact on loads of other people.

a) Identify Wayne and Sarah’s job roles.

Wayne

Sarah

b) State **one** responsibility of the guitar technician at the session.

Q4. Identify the job role which involves:

- having creative control over sound recordings
- working with musicians and studio personnel
- checking that all samples have been cleared for use

Q5. Explain **one** reason why the mastering process is essential to the **commercial** success of the track

Learning aim B: Understand job roles in the music industry

Q6. Give **two** skills or responsibilities a successful studio manager should have.

1.

2.

Q7. Explain **one** reason why a recording studio should update its software and equipment regularly

Q8a. For one band AJ has to act as a drum technician. Identify **one** of his responsibilities.

Q8b. Bands who want to get signed by record companies come to AJ's studio to record their demo. Give two advantages of recording a demo in a professional studio rather than using a home studio set up.

Learning aim B: Understand job roles in the music industry

Q8c. Explain **one** task AJ should complete at the home-studio in preparation for a recording session with a band.

Q9. Which of these is the responsible for ensuring health and safety is adequate at the studio?

- ☐ **A** Sound technician
- ☐ **B** Sound engineers
- ☐ **C** Record Producer
- ☐ **D** Studio Manager