

Sample Risk Assessment Checklist

Use this before releasing any song that contains borrowed audio.

1 . Source Identification

- Where did the audio come from?
- Is it from a commercially released song?
- Is it from a film, TV show, YouTube video, or podcast?
- Is it from a sample pack or royalty-free library?
- Do I have written proof of the license?
- Is the work genuinely in the public domain? (Verify both composition and recording.)

If the original source cannot be clearly identified, do not release.

2 . Rights Breakdown

- Who owns the master recording?
- Who owns the publishing (songwriters/composers)?
- Are there multiple writers or publishers involved?
- Is the ownership information verifiable through PRO databases or liner credits?

If ownership cannot be confirmed, clearance cannot be secured.

3 . Usage Type Assessment

- Will this be commercially released (Spotify, Apple Music, etc.)?
- Will this beat be sold or licensed to artists?
- Will this track be pitched for sync (film/TV/games)?
- Will this be monetized on YouTube or other platforms?
- Is this strictly a private, non-commercial demo?

If any monetization is planned, clearance is likely required.

4 . Detectability & Exposure

- Is the sample recognizable to an average listener?
- Is it central to the hook or main melody?
- Could automated content ID systems detect it?

- Is the original recording from a major label or well-known artist?
- Could the song realistically gain traction?

The more exposure potential, the higher the risk.

5 . Modification Test

- Was the original audio file used directly?
- Was it chopped, reversed, pitched, or filtered?
- Was it replayed or fully re-performed?

Note: Modifying audio does NOT remove the need for clearance if the original recording is used.

6 . Financial Reality Check

- Can clearance fees be afforded if required?
- Is giving up publishing or master percentage acceptable?
- Is the sample worth long-term ownership concessions?

If the economics do not make sense, reconsider the sample.

7 . Final Decision Path

Choose one before release:

- Proceed with professional clearance
 - Replay/interpolate and clear publishing only
 - Replace with royalty-free or original composition
 - Remove the sample entirely
 - Scrap the track
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Release Rule

If there is uncertainty at any stage, pause release until clarity is obtained.

Ownership and scalability always outweigh short-term convenience.