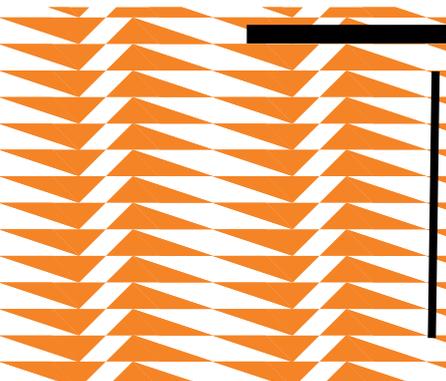


ADVICE

STARTING OUT



Everything you need to know about finding the right musical partners, also available at:

bbc.co.uk/music/introducing/advice/

STARTING OUT	3
GETTING TOGETHER	3
HOW TO START	3
AUDITIONS	3
PICKING A NAME	4
PRACTISING AND REHEARSING	4
GETTING ON	5
THE RIGHT GEAR	6
GUITARS	6
BASS GUITARS	7
DRUMS	8
KEYBOARDS AND SYNTHS	8
MICS	8
AMPS	9
SONGWRITING	9
WHERE TO START	9
LYRICS	9
DJING	9
DECKS	9
OTHER ESSENTIALS	9

STARTING OUT

GETTING TOGETHER

HOW TO START

You might like to control every aspect of your music or you may feel most creative when working with other people. Spending time with other musicians means you can bounce ideas off each other and make use of each other's skills and contacts. Even if you're a solo act you may find you need the help of someone else when performing live. School, college, university or work have brought many great acts together, so keep a look out for any untapped talent around you.

Most bands start with a bunch of mates picking up instruments, coming up with some songs and teaching themselves along the way. This can be the best way to kick off your musical career but it's worth bearing in mind that if you really want to make a go of it you'll be spending a lot more time together. Just because you're mates, don't be afraid to have a plan and make sure everyone's willing to put in the work: it could save some hassle later on.

Another way to meet potential bandmates and collaborators is to just be sociable. Any local gig that you go to or play at is a perfect place to meet new people who are interested in the same music as you. If you watch a band you like, there's no harm in asking if you can meet up to play together sometime, especially if you think you could bring something new to the table. Try and keep in touch with people you meet. They may be committed to something now, but later down the line they may want to work on other projects, giving you the opportunity to poach them for your own band.

Don't discount the idea of going it alone - not everyone wants or needs to team up with other people to make it. You may feel that you work better on your own or that the sort of music you want to make just doesn't need that many people to bring it to life. As well as being a solo artist you can make a good living writing for other people. Bear in mind though that further down the line you may need to work with other musicians when it comes to recording or playing live.

AUDITIONS

If you're struggling to find people to join you on your musical mission you could also try advertising for bandmates in music mags like NME, local papers, music shops, rehearsal studio notice boards or sites like [MusoFinder](#). You can also send out a quick message to your friends on any social networking sites you use to see if they, or anyone they know, might be interested. If you're a songwriter, [Songlink International](#) or the [British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors](#) offer detailed databases that could link you up with an appropriate performer for your material.

When you've got somebody in mind, it's important to make sure that your personalities and ambitions won't clash in the future. If you arrange an audition, make sure their playing style and the music they want to make suit what you have in mind. Be willing to compromise and try out new things – approaching music from a different perspective can be a good thing.

If you've already written material, play the person auditioning some of your songs. If you haven't got that far, ask them to come to the audition with a few ideas, and work it out from there. It can be awkward playing in front of strangers to start with, so try to keep relaxed and ask them what they think of the tracks you're working on. Try to be honest with each other. There's no point talking about being the next stadium-filling superband if one of you would rather keep it as a Sunday afternoon hobby. This can also be a good time to discuss how often you'd like to practise, gig and record.

Reliability is key, so if they turn up an hour late and steaming drunk you should be looking elsewhere! To prevent cancelled rehearsals or shows it's best if you have the same amount of free time and money, similar work commitments and live fairly close to each other.

PICKING A NAME

Choosing a name all members of the band are happy with can be very difficult. You want something punchy and memorable that reflects the music you make, but think carefully - are you sure you want people saying, "Hey look, it's that guy from Ill-Fated Colonic" in a few years time?

If you're having trouble deciding on a name to everyone's taste, try looking at some of your common interests. Films, books, song titles, lyrics and even historical figures have all been the basis for many successful artists' monikers. If you're really struggling, there are some random name generators online, like [Band Name Maker](#), that might offer some inspiration.

After the fights are settled and you've decided on a name, enter it into a few search engines and see what you get back. You might also want to see if anyone else has trademarked that name by looking on the [UK Patent Office](#) website. You may even want to register yourselves with [Band Name](#). Not only will you be able to see if anyone else has the same name but it may help your case down the line if there's a dispute over who had it first.

You may find that another band takes up your name once you've already become established. For information on what to do, head to the [Your Money and Your Rights](#) section.

PRACTISING AND REHEARSING

As well as a being a chance to play through your songs, rehearsals offer great opportunities to improve your skills and become a tighter live unit.

If you're in a group, arrange to practise at the same time and day(s) every week. Avoid weekends if possible, because family events or people heading out for the weekend can disrupt or postpone practices. It's also far more likely that one of you will be feeling worse for wear if you meet during the weekend, meaning less productive sessions. If you're a solo artist you may find it helps to set yourself regular times to work on your songs and practise playing. Try and stick to them. If you want a second opinion try setting aside time with a friend or another musician to bounce around ideas.

If you're practising at home you probably don't have the room for all your equipment, particularly a drum kit, so use these occasions to fine-tune details and sharpen-up your songwriting. They can also be good opportunities to discuss what you like about each track, and which parts could do with a revamp.

It's worth booking yourself into rehearsal rooms in blocks so that you're all committed to being there for a few hours over the next few weeks. If you can find yourself a permanent base even better. For example, using their local pub gave [Pulled Apart By Horses](#) not only a place to rehearse but also somewhere to store their gear.

Some studios can only be booked for a minimum of three to four hours, which can be a pretty gruelling length of time if you've hit a creative block. Instead, think about sharing your practice time with another band, or wait until you've built up your repertoire a bit before booking. Building up a decent catalogue of songs can take a while and you don't want to get bored of playing the same couple of tracks over and over again each time you rehearse. It can be tempting to keep playing your newest songs because they're the most exciting to play, but don't neglect your old material. Make sure you can play all of your songs at the drop of a hat - you never know when you'll need to pull one out of the bag for an encore.

In bands each member should try to come to each practice with a new idea or basis for a song. As you get more used to playing and writing in practices, you should try developing a song from this small idea by jamming together. To start with, they might be directionless, repetitive or just plain noise – but once you get used to each other's playing styles improvising like this can be a great way of creating new material.

You might find it helpful to record some of your jams and rehearsals to listen back to in between practices. You can play along to the recording to practise parts you need to improve, or write new ones. This could be particularly useful for a singer or lyric-writer, because they can take the tape away and work without holding up the other members of the band. Listening back to a track as a band is also a good way of taking an objective view of which parts work and which don't. Don't worry about the quality of the recording - as long as you can hear all the parts then it will do the job.

Practicing on your own is a key part of improving your skills as an artist. If you're in a group, make sure you iron out any kinks in your playing on your own time. That way you can make the most of playing together when you rehearse. You should obviously know how to play your own material, but playing it note-perfect every time will only come with practice. As a professional musician, you should aim to get to a stage where you can sail over the notes and concentrate on how you express them – leaving notes ringing or placing more emphasis on certain parts of a chord can make even a simple verse or chorus stand out from the crowd. If you're a singer, practise making up phrases on the spot that fit the melodies that you've written. If you forget your words when you're in front of a crowd, singing complete rubbish is better than standing there with your mouth open and looking for somewhere to hide.

However you choose to hone your skills, set yourself the goal of being the best prepared person ahead of your next group rehearsal. Practise whenever you get a chance. Singing in the shower may irritate your neighbours, but it's a great chance to hear your voice with natural reverb and to warm up ahead of a rehearsal – just be considerate to your housemates while you're clearing out your sinuses. Playing in front of a mirror may seem vain or ludicrous to an outsider, but it can be a great way of honing your performance and can help you to identify bad posture and technique that could cause you problems later in your career.

GETTING ON

Aside from wanting to make good music together, it's important that all members of your band can communicate and get on well. It's likely that you'll have some professional differences at some point –

so laying down the ground rules of how to be constructively critical can help to avoid someone throwing their toys out the pram later on. Remember that you're all on the same team - it's easy to be offended if someone says they don't like a part you're playing, but you'll need thick skin if you're going to get anywhere in the business and it's better that you hear it from your mates than an over-zealous journalist. You'll all care about the music you make, and sometimes it can be hard to be diplomatic when you feel very strongly about something. That said, you need to be able to criticise each other without anyone getting upset. It can be quite a knock to a newcomer's confidence if they don't feel they're making the grade, so don't go in all-guns-blazing about a minor detail. If you're writing material together, then it's important to give everyone's ideas a fair chance. If something's not working, don't be shy about saying why and how you think it could be improved.

If you want to make it as a band, you have to be professional. If it's going to be your livelihood, you need to make sure that every detail is the best it can be, and sometimes that means being told that something you've done hasn't made the grade on this occasion. Take criticism on the chin and work on your faults when you practise on your own – use it as a chance to improve your skills and look at the music you play objectively.

THE RIGHT GEAR

Finding the right instrument for you is all down to personal choice. Most bands form around a basic line-up of guitar, bass and drums and maybe synths too so, we've focused on those. Just because it's the most common route doesn't mean you have to go for them too though. Exploring other instruments can give you an edge and make you stand out so find what's most comfortable for you. We've got guides for [DJs](#) and [producing at home](#) too if that's where your skills lie.

GUITARS

Choosing which guitar you use depends on what sort of sound you want and how big your budget is. Normally, a guitarist in a band will own one or more of two main types: acoustic or electric.

Acoustic guitars give a warmer tone than electric guitars, caused by the string vibration resonating through the wooden cavity. This makes it the perfect choice for understated, mellow tracks or songs with a slow tempo. Put simply, acoustic guitars are great for evoking roaring fires and heartbreak and are also singalong-tastic due to their portability!

Strumming the strings of an electric guitar creates an electric signal that is then amplified and sent to speakers. Commonly used in everything from jazz to indie, via metal, they can have a more abrasive and jagged tone than an acoustic. In short, electric guitars are for the aspiring rock gods and goddesses among us.

When looking around for the body style you're after, there's a huge range out there. The Fender Stratocaster, Fender Telecaster, Gibson Les Paul and Gibson SG are all iconic designs, and while guitar geeks may guffaw at the idea of buying a "budget" guitar, you don't need to buy from the top rack to get a six-string that you'll fall in love with.

Perhaps your best bet is to see what equipment your favourite musicians use through photographs or fansites. Equipment will often be a topic on the forum of an artist's website.

Choosing a guitar is an extremely personal thing, so take your time to decide and try a few out at a music store before you commit to buying one. When you find the perfect guitar for you, you'll know. The majority of guitars are designed for right-handers but there are still plenty of options out there if you're left-handed. Ultimately, investing in a specially designed model will make life easier than trying to play the wrong way round or doing a Jimi Hendrix and playing a right-handed guitar upside down. Your local music shop should be able to help you and there are plenty of places worth checking out online like [Left Handed Guitars](#) and [Guitar Guitar](#).

Unless you're determined to finger-pick all the time, you'll need some plectrums too. They can really help you develop smooth strumming and picking styles and cost pennies. Grab yourself a few different thicknesses and designs to see what suits you.

There are loads of accessories out there you may want to delve into, depending on your needs and style. Capos are used to change the pitch of the open strings - useful for finding new chords that would otherwise be unreachable - and slides are great for blues guitar work. Pedals come in all shapes and sizes for modifying your sound, but a beginner may want to opt for a 'multi-effect' model that'll give you everything from fuzz to flange. An E Bow is also a particularly nifty bit of kit - allowing a guitarist to simulate playing the strings with a bow. Used by everyone from Metallica to Radiohead, they can help you to create some incredible sounds from even the most budget electric guitar.

A tuner is also a useful investment. You can buy a variety of handheld electronic ones that produce a sound you then tune to. You can also buy ones that display on a screen what pitch you're at when you pluck a string, then you tune until it matches the correct note. If you play electric guitar you can also buy a pedal tuner you can control with your foot which goes on the ground with all your others meaning less fiddling around onstage.

BASS GUITARS

Bass guitars are tuned to an octave lower than the four lowest strings of a guitar and offer a meatier sound, great for playing an underlying melody. A strong bass sound can radically change a track. For example, Peter Hook's lower-end bass became a trademark of New Order's sound. Along with a drummer, the bassist forms the rhythm section of a band. It's essential that they can play tightly together.

As with the guitar, deciding on the right bass is also dependent on the type of music you're making. Traditionally all bassists use a four string but, depending on the kind of music they want to create, it can be the norm for them to use types with extra strings.

For example, five string basses are used by heavy metallers while six string basses are often the domain of jazz and world musicians. The orchestral style double bass, meanwhile, is used by bluegrass, rockabilly and jazz musicians, and the acoustic bass is affiliated with more traditional Mexican music.

Your musical style can also dictate whether you end up using a fretted or fretless bass. A fretted bass is much easier to play than a fretless one and the fact it delivers a clipped, crisp sound makes it ideal for most rock music. In contrast fretless basses offer a smoother sound and give the player more freedom to move around the guitar neck, hence it's use in funk music.

As with other guitars there are plenty of different effects pedals out there for the electric bass. These can include anything from distortion pedals to compression units.

DRUMS

The target of musicians' jokes across the land, the drummer is arguably the member of the band who has the greatest effect on how everyone else plays. If your drummer can't keep time, you're going to sound terrible. It's not an instrument suited to everyone – you'll need great coordination and timing to be good, but you'll probably have more fun than anyone else on the stage.

A standard five-piece kit consists of a bass drum, a snare, two toms, one floor tom and hi hat. You can add definition and drama to your playing by adding a crash or ride cymbal to your setup too. Probably the most overlooked part of the kit is in fact the stool. A good stool should be padded enough to be comfortable, not inhibit movement in your arms or legs and promote good posture.

Individual drums are normally described in terms of their size and depth - a common snare drum has a diameter of 14" and a depth of 5". Cymbal sizes vary, depending on how much sustain you want from them and your own personal style and preference. Playing along to your favourite albums or instructional DVDs, which you can buy at most music shops, are great ways to improve your technique and develop your own style.

KEYBOARDS AND SYNTHS

Picking your first keyboard or synth can be a baffling experience, especially because there's a lot of confusion between the two. They can have similar functions and often look similar to the untrained eye.

A synth produces sounds by generating and combining different frequencies of signals, so they can produce some very individual sounds. You can buy synths with as few as 25 keys, up to a full piano-sized 88. They generally don't have built-in speakers, so you'll need an amp or something similar to play through. They also tend not to have functions to arrange songs or record your tinklings. A synth should be your first choice if you want to emulate the sound of another instrument, particularly if it'll be distorted, as you can fine tune many aspects of the instrument's sound.

Keyboards can replicate loads of different instruments and sound effects, from pianos, drums or bass through to comic helicopter sounds, but generally have fewer functions than synths – particularly in cheaper models. In-built speakers are more common, and the amount of keys vary from 61 – 88. Keyboards offer the travelling pianist the opportunity to play gigs without lugging a piano the size of a family saloon up the pokey stairs of a local venue. Most models will also let you record and arrange tracks so you can play over them in a live setting.

There are few useful features to look out for. Choosing a touch responsive keyboard will allow more expressive playing – putting you in greater control of how loud individual notes are, while a dual voice or layered facility will let you play one instrument with your left hand, and one with your right.

If you fancy a mish-mash of the two options, you might fancy a flutter on a workstation synthesiser. These combine the creative potential of a synth with the song-arrangement functions of a keyboard.

MICS

If you're going to be singing, or playing instruments that aren't electrically wired, you're going to need some microphones. There are scores of different makes and models, all suited to certain situations and

not so good in others. Dynamic mics are fairly cheap, can take a bruising and are pretty versatile. They tend to be directional – meaning that they only pick up sound from the direction they are pointed in. While this will help to block out background noise like traffic, it also makes them unsuitable for capturing drums or recording a band playing in a small room. If you want to record a rehearsal or capture the sound of an entire room, see if you can get hold of a pressure zone mic (PZM) instead. If your multitrack or mixing desk doesn't support phantom power, you should avoid capacitor mics unless they also take batteries. Generally these mics can't be battery-operated and need to be powered by another piece of equipment. Always try before you buy and ask the store owner about their returns policy, just in case you're not happy with your setup once you get home.

Even the best mic can sound kind of lousy unless you've got a decent pre-amp. Mics put out small signals that are then amplified to a fuller sound by a circuit called a mic pre-amp. Your soundcard or mixer should have a pre-amp installed, but the quality of your recordings will depend on how good that preinstalled circuit is. When you're starting out you should be able to make do with what you've got, but if you're striving towards better quality recordings it might be worth getting a pre-amp box for around £100.

Most sound engineers and venues will provide mics when you're gigging, so you shouldn't need to have a huge stock of them yourself. If you're just starting out, you probably won't need to buy your own PA – they cost loads and can be a nightmare to move from place to place. It's probably only worth considering buying if you're gigging regularly or putting on your own nights and are renting one regularly.

AMPS

It can be hard to decide which amplifier to get. The first decision to make is what size amp will suit you best. Amps are rated by wattage rather than physical size, but high-wattage amps do tend to be bigger. While it might be every aspiring rocker's dream to play in front of a wall of Marshall stacks, it's unlikely that you'll be needing one unless you regularly play arenas or stadiums. That considered, you're probably best off narrowing your search to combos – amps that combine the amplifier electronics with one or more speakers in one handy box. They're generally cheaper, easier to transport and take up less room.

A 30 watt amp will be more than enough for your bedroom, rehearsals and small gigs. A sound engineer will normally mic your amp up to the PA system when you play live, so you don't need to buy one that'll shake the plaster from the walls. Larger units will probably sound better, unless you invest in a tube amp.

When you're starting out, you'll probably be using a solid state amp. These are cheap and good for the early stages of your career. However, in terms of aural quality they can lack dynamic range, making it difficult to differentiate between guitar sounds.

When you get more gigs, a tube amp will become more appropriate. Not only are they better quality than a standard amp; creating a 'warmer' sound than the solid state ones, they are also technically less problematic. The only downside is that they cost a fair wad more than their solid state counterparts.

There is also the question of whether you need a combo amp or a head/cabinet unit. If you'll mainly be studio-based and playing in small clubs you'll probably be ok with an all-in-one combo unit.

However, if you're playing larger venues you would do better to invest in a 'head/cabinet' set up. These are so called because they're made up of the 'head', which is the actual amp, and the 'cabinet' which is

a speaker. This setup gives you a louder sound on stage and is useful if you want to hear yourself over the rest of the band.

As a rule, if an amp doesn't have a 10 inch speaker, don't use it outside your bedroom. Smaller amps, 1-10 watts, are great for practising on your own, but will be drowned out by a drummer or other guitarist, so aren't suitable for jams.

If you're playing live and not using the local PA, an amp with two speakers is recommended. Standard 2x12 amps are small enough to store in your living or bedroom, fairly easy to lug around for practices and won't see you laughed offstage at medium-sized venues. However, whatever kind you use it's most likely your amp will be mic'd up to the PA. If you're a bassist and haven't got an amp the venue's sound engineer may allow you to plug straight into the PA too but, this often won't give you as strong a sound and gives you less control over your sound onstage.

Always try before you buy, bringing your own guitar and cable, and don't feel pressured to get a huge amp – a smaller amp with good tone will serve you better than a huge, cheesy sounding behemoth.

It's also vital you check whether your amp has a built-in clean/dirty channel. If not, and you want to rock out, you will need to invest in an extra FX-pedal.

SONGWRITING

WHERE TO START

If you play an instrument, you'll have an advantage when writing songs. If you don't play, getting hold of a cheap keyboard or guitar could be a big help when writing melodies. You don't need to be a concert pianist or Coventry's answer to Slash – you can let other members of the band worry about that later – but tinkling the ivories or plucking those strings could help you develop new ideas.

That eureka moment can come in loads of different ways. For VV Brown it was giving up on the piano and using a customised one-string guitar that helped her learn to play the blues, for Kate Nash learning to play the guitar whilst laid up with a broken foot helped her to start writing.

If you're starting out you can buy chord books to expand your repertoire and learn which ones fit together in a particular key. It can also help to take a look at other people's music, both old and new, to get you started. See which chord progressions you like in other acts' songs and then adapt them to write a melody of your own. If you want to get an idea of how your favourite songs are put together don't be afraid to flick through sheet music books which you can pick up in music shops. You can find them online too at places like [Sheet Music Direct](#) or [Music Room](#). If you're a guitarist there are also plenty of guitar tab sites like [Ultimate Guitar](#) or [Guitare Tab](#). If you'd rather see people in action to pick up some tips [YouTube](#) has plenty videos offering tutorials, tips and tricks.

Hard work can often be the missing ingredient when it comes to songwriting. Just ask [Marina Diamond](#) who by her own admission took time to get it right. Keep plugging away at writing and your own style will soon develop. Before you know it, you'll have some half decent tunes. Try mixing up the verse from one song with the chorus of another – it might just give you another idea for a track.

It's also worth experimenting with different ways of starting and ending songs, as well as varying how you lead into your choruses. Remember, now is the time to experiment and no one else needs to hear your ideas until you're ready. Even bad ideas can help to shape your style.

Be prepared for inspiration to come at any moment. If that killer melody or a way to make that middle eight work suddenly pops into your head you don't want to forget it. Don't be shy about using the memo function on your phone or a little dictaphone to capture any off-the-cuff ideas you may have.

LYRICS

You wouldn't want to be a songwriter unless you felt you had something to say. Writing lyrics gives you the chance to directly communicate with the audience and let them know what you like, what you don't, how you feel and why. Your words could be controversial and upfront or meek and tender, but try not to overcomplicate things. Your lyrics should compliment your music, not dominate over it - so there's no need to sing for every second of the song. A tune won't flow properly if the rhyme scheme is too forced and you should keep an eye out for any clichéd phrases you might have used. There's bound to be a more interesting way of putting what you're trying to say. If you feel comfortable it can be worth letting someone else cast an eye over what you've written - they may spot some weak spots you may have missed.

There really are no right or wrong answers, just try to draw inspiration from everything around you. Even crossword clues and headlines can spark an idea. You could write about the people you know, the places you go, the things you want or the things you've lost – it's completely up to you. Many musicians, like Elbow's Guy Garvey or Paul Smith from Maxïmo Park, find it handy to keep a notebook to jot down ideas as they come to them. It's an example worth following, especially if you like to write about people and events around you.

Bear in mind too that lyrics don't have to be conventional - Sigur Rós constructed their own version of Icelandic for their album () while Radiohead recorded the lyrics for their song Like Spinning Plates backwards. Once you feel comfortable try breaking some of the rules. Remember, you don't have to have lyrics at all - look at the likes of Mogwai, [Gallops](#) or Explosions In The Sky who operate purely as instrumental acts. If you don't want to go the whole hog just working on one or two instrumental numbers can also add a bit of variety to what you do.

DJING

DECKS

If you're starting out as a DJ, the choice of equipment available can be a bit dazzling - so it can be hard to pick gear that will help you on your way to stardom. How much you want to spend on your equipment is up to you, but it's worth investing in kit that will be reliable and transportable.

It may upset the purists but these days many DJs prefer to work off a hard-drive and a laptop. Programs like [Ableton](#), [Serato](#) or [Traktor](#) are used by the biggest names and allow you to beat match and play around with tracks live. They don't come cheap so it may be worth downloading a free demo from the manufacturers' websites to see which you like most. There are plenty of cheaper alternatives around too so have a good look around and chat to people you know to see what they use. Whatever you end up with just make sure you've got a computer with enough processing power to let things run smoothly.

If you want to keep it old-school there are two types of turntables: belt drive and direct drive. In a belt drive turntable, the motor is attached to a small spindle and belt that turns your vinyl. After a while, the tension on that belt can slacken, so you might find it harder to scratch on it and the speed of your track might vary.

The motor in direct drive turntables is attached to the main spindle in the middle of the platter, so there's no need for a belt. This means that vinyl is brought up to speed quicker and more accurately than on belt-driven turntables, which may need a bit of a push and be harder to mix with. All considered, if you can get hold of a direct drive turntable, then do.

The key to being able to DJ is learning how to beat match. No matter what road you've gone down when it comes to kit understanding the basic rules will help you. Even if you're using computer programs, which can make the whole affair easier, it'll help you build a good set and pick the right records if you know your stuff. It's all about manipulating two (or if you're really fancy more than two) tracks to that they play together to the same beat. You can find good guides to get you started online at [DJ Guide](#), [Online DJ Tips](#) or at [TruGroovez](#).

OTHER ESSENTIALS

Picking a mixer is no simple task. There are some incredible pieces of kit out there, and you could shell out a fortune for one that'll practically do your mixes for you. But you can pick up a decent "battle style" two-channel mixer for around 50 quid. You'll need at least two channels so you can adjust the volume of each turntable, and a crossfader to cut between the two records playing. It's also worth paying a little bit more for a mixer with three equaliser bands per channel – hi, mid and lo. This will let you change how loud the hi-hats and cymbals are compared to vocals, drums and bass lines.

You'll also need a decent pair of headphones to help you to beat match and cue in new tracks. Avoid using in-ear headphones – they tend to let in distracting surrounding noise – instead, get a pair with a can that covers your whole ear. Your headphones should be comfortable, have good sound clarity and be loud enough for you to hear over a bustling room of people havin' it. If you're planning to work in clubs, £80 - £150 is probably around the right mark. Always try before you buy – most DJ stores will let you test gear out in the shop.

If you're a bedroom DJ, using your hi-fi as an amp will probably be fine, though purists will say that it's worth getting a separate powered amp and a set of monitor speakers. Hi-fi systems don't tend to be too loud and may not have the same clarity, so your mixes may sound a bit muddy. Depending on how good your existing hi-fi is, you may want to think about parting with some cash for a decent package.