



How to Record Good Quality Vocals at Home

(So they sound their best when mixed)



QUICK START GUIDE

VOCAL SECRETS

By ADG Mastering

The biggest issue most artists that record at home have (or in less than ideal conditions) is getting decent vocal quality.

Now since you're recording at home...getting perfect vocal quality is out of the question.

The goal is to record vocals that are recorded good enough so that when you send them for mixing, your audio engineer isn't pulling his hair out and cursing your existence.

So here are 4 things you can do to get killer vocals...

Absorb Room Reverb

Most "bad vocals" I receive suffer from too much room reverb.

This is because the rooms they're being recorded in have too many hard flat surfaces which are causing the vocals to bounce off them and back into the microphone.

How can you fix a room with too much reverberation? Through *absorption*.

Instead of allowing your voice to bounce around in your room and into your mic, the best way to stop them is to have them absorbed into the surrounding walls and floors.

This is why a must for home studios is **acoustic panels**.



There is a little bit of a science to how many you need and how far to space them but usually, if you have a small size room say 10 feet by 10 feet, you'll want them to spread out about 2 to 4 inches apart from each other.

Keep in mind you don't want them to cover the whole room, otherwise, that will completely kill the acoustics in your room making it sound "dead".

You'll have to experiment with coverage as every room has its own unique shape and build. Obviously, this isn't an option for everyone as panels can cost around \$100 each.

When I was a teenager, I actually built a few panels for about \$60 each and they worked great. They were hideous but they worked. Just google "How to Make Acoustic Panels".



An alternative to acoustic panels is **mic shields** or **reflection filters**.

They are little half-sphere panels lined with acoustic treatment that connect to your mic stand and create a little vocal booth for you.

These help out, however, you're still going to have sound hitting your ceiling, floor, and wherever else the reflection filter doesn't cover.

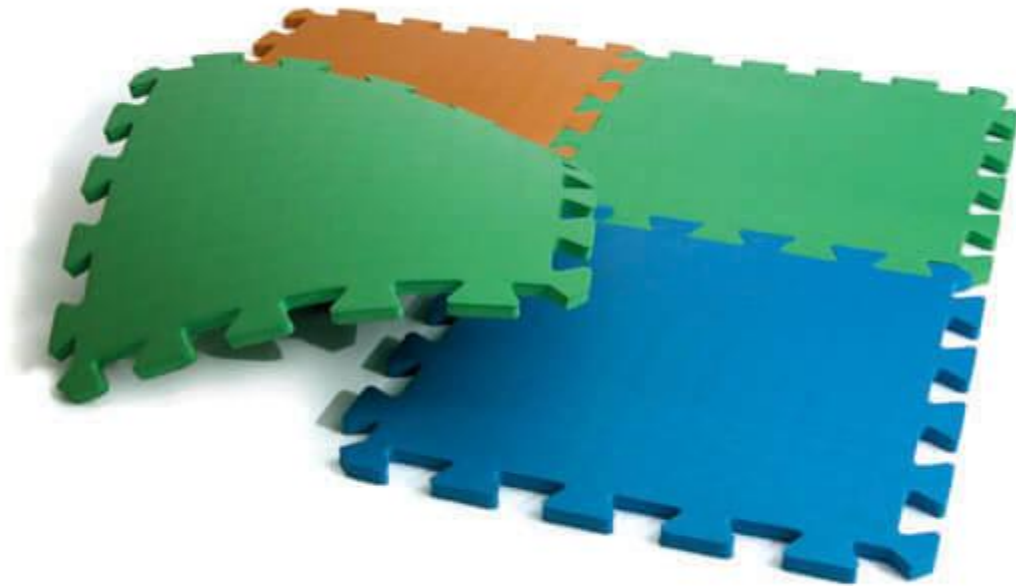
Another drawback is that they break easily as they add weight to the top of the mic, making it easy to come crashing down.

Let's just say, I've broken a few mic shields in my day.

Another thing you're going to want to dampen is the **reverb from the floor.**

If you're recording on hardwood or cement, you're definitely going to want to put down some kind of padding or thick rug to absorb the reverb.

Again, acoustic floor pads can cost over \$100 so it isn't a bad idea to look for cheaper alternatives: just the other day, I noticed my son has this play mat made of a soft rubber that only costs \$4 and covers about 6 square feet, I haven't tried it yet, but it looks like it could do the trick or at least be an interesting addition to the studio.



For even better sound absorption, get both acoustic panels, mic shield, and floor padding.

Microphone Check

No, you don't need a \$1000 mic.

But you do need something that costs over \$100 to get something a talented engineer could work with.

I last wrote about [What are the Best Budget Microphones](#), which is a good starting point for those recording vocals.

And please guys, don't use computer mics! Every time I receive vocals recorded on a computer mic a part of me slowly dies inside and begins to lose all faith in humanity.



Hold the Special Effects

Unless you want to have a weird effect on your voice, you should record your vocals as dry as possible and that means with no fx added.

If you're adding fx to make the quality sound better, leave that up to your mix engineer.

They have better equipment and a better-trained ear to solve those kinds of problems.

Also, keep in mind a good [mixing and mastering service](#) can improve your song's sound exponentially.



Quality Monitor Headphones

I do get that not everyone can afford \$1,000 speakers to actually hear what is going with their music, but why not spring for \$100 monitor headphones.

What are monitor headphones?

Well, they're not consumer headphones or \$300 Beats By Dre crap that is only going to color the sound.

The great thing about monitor headphones is that they'll give you an accurate audio picture of what you and your music sound like.

I guarantee a pair of [good monitor headphones](#) will drastically improve the artistic choices you make and are well worth the small investment.