

GETTING STARTED WITH MUSIC SOFTWARE

► PROJECT-BASED MUSIC

Modern music software usually combines MIDI sequencing with audio recording. You can work with either separately or both at the same time. This may create a number of files which work together as a project.

► COMPUTER MUSIC

Digital audio requires a large amount of processing power from a computer as well as significant amounts of storage space for files. If possible, use a separate computer for music work. If that is not practical, avoid running other applications at the same time.

► KEEPING IT TOGETHER

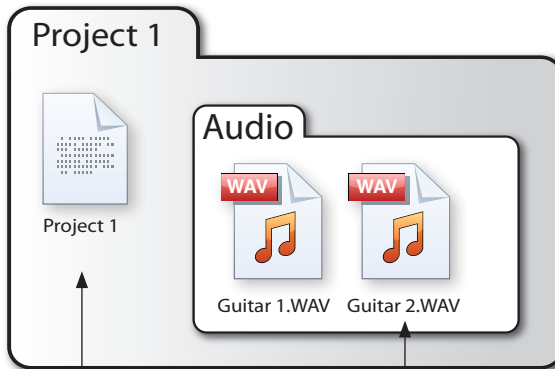
Most software will open a dialogue box when you start a new project, offering to use a template or a new, blank file. A **template** is a file to get you started with some tracks and settings already in place. You can make and save your own templates.

You also need to decide where to save the project (also known as the **save path** or **record path**). Any computer-based music project has to be kept in a folder. Within that folder will be the project file (recognisable by the icon of the software you are using) and an additional folder for any audio files. It is essential that you save the project as soon as you create it.

► BACKUP

If you need to move your work, you must copy the entire folder. Some software will re-save the project in a new location with all the associated files and this is the best option. Always save at least one copy of your project to removable storage every time you finish working.

PROJECT FOLDER



A main project file is saved by the music software. This stores all the information about timing, tracks, setup and any MIDI data.

A separate sub-folder keeps audio files together. Every time you record anything, an audio file is created. During playback, the software finds the correct audio file to use. Multimedia projects may have a Video or Images sub-folder as well. If these files are moved or separated from the project folder, the software will not be able to operate correctly.

► FILE TYPES

Music software

Any music application will have its own unique file format. This stores all the information about the project and controls the recording and playback of other files. It will have a recognisable icon and file extension (the letters added after the period at the end of the file name, not always visible).

Audio files

Digital audio files store sound as a series of samples, which are themselves numbers. This creates a lot of data and for stereo sound it works out at around 10MB (megabytes) per minute. There are different types of audio file and they are usually referred to by their file extensions. Common formats are WAV and AIFF, and there are many others including MP3, WMA, OGG and FLAC.

MIDI files

When you work with MIDI tracks, the sequencing data is stored in the project file. If you want to use this in another program you need to **export** a MIDI file. This will have the file extension .mid and only contains the MIDI data, excluding all the graphical detail of the program you are using. MIDI files are very small, usually just a few KB (kilobytes).

One file

Every time you record something, however short, a new audio file is created. You could end up with hundreds of files, some of which will not be needed. To finish a project, you need to create a master track that can be played back by any listener. This can be done by recording the mixed output from your project in real time. It can also be created digitally by exporting a final audio file in a suitable format for distribution.