

DJing & Live Performance — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into reps. Each section maps to a course module and gives you drills to practice at the decks, worksheets to plan your gear and library, and checklists to run before and during a gig. Work through it with a controller or turntables in front of you, a metronome or analyzed tracks loaded, and a recorder running so you can hear your progress.

Your Rig, Your Library, and First Mixes

Set up your gear, organize a gig-ready library, and learn to hear track structure in 8, 16, and 32-bar phrases.

Exercise: Phrase-Counting Ear Drill

Load ten four-on-the-floor tracks. For each, find the kick, count beats in fours, then count full 8-bar phrases. Mark where new instruments enter and confirm they land on a phrase boundary. Do this until phrase starts feel obvious without counting.

- Which tracks had instruments enter exactly at the start of a new 8-bar phrase?

- Where in each track is the intro mixing zone and the outro mixing zone, in bars?

- Which track was hardest to count, and was its beat grid actually correct?

- Can you now predict the next section change before it happens? On how many of the ten?

Worksheet: Gear and Software Setup Sheet

Document your exact rig and software configuration so you can rebuild it fast and troubleshoot at a gig. Fill every field for the setup you actually use.

DJ setup type (controller / CDJ + mixer / turntables + DVS)

Controller or player model

Mixer model (if separate)

Software and version (rekordbox / Serato DJ Pro / other)

Headphones model

Audio file format and quality (WAV / 320 MP3)

Crossfader curve setting (gentle / sharp)

Master and trim default levels

Backup plan if laptop or USB fails

Checklist: Library Preparation Checklist

- All tracks imported and fully analyzed for BPM and key
- Beat grids spot-checked on at least 20 tracks, downbeats corrected where wrong
- Crates built by use: Openers, Peak Time, Closers
- Energy level 1 to 5 tagged via color or comments
- Key field set to display for harmonic mixing
- Tight gig crate of 40 to 80 trusted tracks assembled
- At least five tested track pairs saved to a Plays Well Together list

Beatmatching and Clean Transitions

Build the core skills of matching two tracks by ear and blending them with faders and EQ.

Exercise: Manual Beatmatch, No Sync

Disable sync. Pick two tracks within 4 BPM of each other. Cue the second in your headphones, match its tempo with the pitch fader, then nudge the jog wheel to hold phase for 8 full bars without touching anything. Repeat with five different pairs and log how long you can hold the lock.

- How many bars can you hold a manual beatmatch before it drifts?

- When it drifts, is the cued track running fast or slow, and by how much pitch?

- Which kind of track (steady electronic vs live drums) was hardest to lock?

- Can you now hear drift within one or two beats, before it becomes obvious?

Exercise: The EQ Bass Swap

Beatmatch a pair, then practice swapping the bass at a phrase boundary: kill the incoming Low, bring its fader up, then in one move cut the outgoing Low and restore the incoming Low. Record three attempts and listen for any moment two basslines overlap.

- Did any low-end mud appear, meaning both basses played at once?

- Did the bass swap land exactly on the downbeat of a new phrase?

- How long did you layer mids and highs before swapping the bass?

- On playback, can you hear the swap, or does it sound like one continuous low end?

Worksheet: Transition Planner

Plan one specific transition between two real tracks in detail before you attempt it live. Complete every field, then execute and compare.

Outgoing track, BPM, and key

Incoming track, BPM, and key

Transition type (long fader blend / bass swap / filter / quick cut)

Hot cue point set on incoming downbeat

Bar where the blend starts and bar where it ends

EQ moves and timing

Effect used, if any, and its settings

What to listen for to confirm it worked

Checklist: Clean Transition Checklist

- Both tracks beatmatched and holding phase before the blend begins
- Incoming Low EQ cut before the incoming fader comes up
- Bass swap executed in one move at a phrase boundary
- Transition started on a downbeat, not mid-phrase
- Outgoing track pulled fully out within a phrase or two
- No two basslines overlapping at any point
- Crossfader or line-fader choice matched to the style

Harmonic Mixing and Creative Tools

Combine tracks in compatible keys and use loops, hot cues, and effects to make transitions musical.

Exercise: Camelot Chain Builder

Pick a starting track and note its Camelot code. Build a chain of six tracks where each move is a legal compatible step: same code, plus or minus one number, switch the letter, or a plus-seven energy jump. Mix through the chain and judge whether each blend sounds consonant.

- What were the six Camelot codes in your chain, in order?

- Which move sounded smoothest, and which felt like an energy jump?

- Did any blend sound sour despite a clean beatmatch? What was the key relationship?

- Which compatible move do you want to use most in your real sets, and why?

Exercise: Loop and Hot-Cue Extension

Take a track with a short 16-bar outro. Set a 4 or 8-bar loop to extend it, and use that extra window to beatmatch and blend in the next track without rushing. Then practice a quiet train-wreck recovery by resetting to a hot cue and re-entering at the next phrase.

- How many extra bars did the loop buy you to set up the next mix?

- Did the loop sound seamless, or could you hear it restart?

- How fast was your recovery from a deliberately bad mix, in seconds?

- Which hot cues are most worth setting in advance on your go-to tracks?

Checklist: Creative Tools Restraint Checklist

- Key checked and a compatible Camelot move chosen before mixing
- Hot cues set on intro downbeat, drop, and outro during prep
- Loops used to extend tight intros or outros where needed
- Only one effect engaged at a time, then returned to neutral
- Delay and echo beat-synced to the track tempo

- Reverb and echo wet levels kept subtle
- Every effect had a clear purpose; none used as filler

Performing Live and Building a Set

Plan a set arc, read a crowd, run a real gig, and record and share your mixes to grow.

Exercise: Record a Full 30-Minute Set

Plan a skeleton (opener, closer, four anchors, an energy arc), then record an unbroken 30-minute set in rekordbox, Serato, or Audacity. The next day, listen back critically and mark every transition that drifted, clashed, or lost energy.

- Where exactly did transitions drift or clash, by timestamp?

- Did your energy follow a curve, or did it flatline at one level?

- Were your opener and closer the right choices on replay?

- What are the three specific things to fix in the next recorded set?

Worksheet: Set Planner

Plan the skeleton of a real set for a specific slot. Define the job first, then the arc, then the anchors. Leave room to improvise live.

Venue and slot length

Time of night and crowd type

DJ before and DJ after you

Opening track and why it fits the room

Closing track and the feeling it should leave

Four to six anchor tracks and rough positions

BPM arc (start BPM to end BPM)

Camelot key sequence for the anchors

Escape-route tracks to re-energize a fading floor

Checklist: Gig Day Checklist

- Headphones, primary USB, and backup USB packed
- Library exported and verified on both USB sticks
- Arrived early and observed the previous DJ's setup
- Introduced yourself to the sound engineer
- Trim and master levels set out of the red
- Took over without dropping the music to silence
- Set time honored, no overrun into the next DJ

[] Mix recorded for later review

Your Action Plan

1. Set up your rig and software, then complete the Gear and Software Setup Sheet so you can rebuild it in minutes.
2. Import and fully analyze your library, correct beat grids, and build Openers, Peak Time, and Closers crates.
3. Train your ear with the Phrase-Counting drill across ten tracks until 8-bar phrases feel automatic.
4. Beatmatch manually with sync off until you can hold a lock for 8 bars on five different track pairs.
5. Drill the EQ bass swap until you can swap basslines on a downbeat with zero low-end mud.
6. Tag every track's Camelot key and build a six-track harmonically compatible chain.
7. Add loops and hot cues to extend tight mixing zones and practice a two-second train-wreck recovery.
8. Plan and record a full 30-minute set from a skeleton, then review it the next day and list three fixes.
9. Repeat the record-review-fix loop weekly, uploading your best mix to SoundCloud or Mixcloud.
10. Approach one promoter or venue with a clean recorded mix and the Gig Day Checklist ready.

