# Essential Studio Tools

Trouble deciding what you need? Use this guide to help you put together your home studio.

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## Computer

Buy the most powerful machine you can within your budget. This means as much CPU, RAM, and Hard Drive space as possible. Get a Mac if you plan on using Logic for your software. I've found that the MacBook pros are now more powerful than the iMacs, although if you don't plan on being mobile, then a Mac Mini gives you the most bang for your buck. You'll just have to buy a monitor for it.

**What to look for:**
- CPU - Shoot for 7000+ CPU mark score. Use [cpubenchmark.net](http://cpubenchmark.net) to check.
- RAM - At least 16GB. More is better.

- Hard Drive - At least 500GB SSD (solid state drive).

**Reagan's picks:**
- Mac - [Apple.com](Apple.com)
- Mac refurbished - [Swappa.com](Swappa.com)
- PC - [Dell](Dell), [HP](HP), [Sweetwater custom build](Sweetwater custom build)

## Storage

Buy as much storage as you can within your budget. For best performance, go SSD for your internal and working drives.

3-Drive Setup (ideal)
- Internal SSD - At least 500GB for operating system, applications, and plugins
- External SSD - Working drive. At least 500GB for active sessions, virtual instruments, and samples
- External HDD - Backup drive. At least 2TB for backup, archive, long-term storage

2-Drive Setup (minimum)
- Internal SSD - At least 500GB for operating system, applications, and plugins
- External SSD - Working drive AND backup drive. At least 2TB for active sessions, virtual instruments, samples, and backups

**Reagan's picks:**
- [Samsung](Samsung)
- [Seagate](Seagate)

## Audio Interface

Read [The Audio Interface Buying Guide](The Audio Interface Buying Guide).

You don't have to break the bank. Even the most affordable interfaces are phenomenal. Here's what I recommend if you're just getting started:

**Reagan's picks:**
- For solo artists/musicians: [IK Multimedia iRig Pro Duo](IK Multimedia iRig Pro Duo)
- For those who need to record drums or live bands: [Presonus Studio 1824c](Presonus Studio 1824c)

## Headphones

First, watch [this video](#).

If you already have closed-back studio headphones, you are good to go. If not, here are my picks...

**Reagan's picks:**
- Headphones for tracking & mixing
  - [Beyerdynamic DT770](#)
  - [Sennheiser HD280](#)
  - [Sony MDR-7506](#)
- Headphones for mixing only
  - [Beyerdynamic DT990](#)
  - [Sennheiser HD600](#) (These are what I use)

## Monitors

First, read the [Studio Monitor Buying Guide](#).

Buy the best powered monitors you can within your budget. If you're working in a typical-sized room in the home, 5-inch monitors will work perfectly. Any bigger is overkill and more likely to cause problems like low-end frequency buildup.

***Don't forget to buy cables to connect your monitors to your interface, and stands to make sure your monitors are not sitting on your desk.

**Reagan's picks:**
- 5" Monitors
  - [Yamaha HS5](#)
  - [JBL 305P MKII](#)
  - [IK Multimedia iLoud Micro](#) (These are what I use)
- Monitor Stands
  - [Jamstands](#)
- Cables
  - Amazon Basics
  - Hosa
  - Pro Co

## Microphones

First, read the [Studio Microphone Buying Guide](#) for a complete overview.

If you're buying your first mic, go with a medium-large diaphragm condenser. Keep it simple and don't break the bank.

***Don't forget a mic stand, cable, and pop filter if you plan on recording vocals.

**Reagan's picks:**
- Microphones
  - [Audio-Technica AT2020](#)
  - [AKG P120](#)
  - [Maono PM500](#) (This is what I use, and it comes with a stand, cable, and pop filter)
- Mic stand
  - [Amazon Basics](#)
- Pop filter
  - [Any basic nylon pop filter will do](#)
- Cables
  - Amazon Basics
  - Hosa
  - Pro Co

**MIDI Controllers**

First, read the [MIDI Controller Buying Guide](#).

There are way too many options and personal factors to be able to recommend a specific controller… but here are the brands that I know and trust:

**Reagan's picks:**
- M-Audio (I have personally used [M-Audio](#) in the past)
- Arturia
- Korg
- Novation
- Akai
- IK Multimedia

**DAW**

Read the [DAW Buying Guide.](#)

If you don't already have a DAW, and you just want to get started right away, here's what I recommend based on ease of use:

Reagan's picks:
- [Logic Pro X (Mac only)](#) (This is what I use)
- [Presonus Studio One (Mac or PC)](#)
- [Cubase (Mac or PC)](#) (This is what I started with)

**Virtual Instruments**

First, read the [Virtual Instruments Buying Guide.](#)

Only buy the virtual instruments you NEED. If the virtual instruments you currently have sound too cheesy, or "MIDI-like", consider upgrading. Make sure to do your own research on this, but here are some of my personal suggestions:

**Reagan's picks:**
- Drums
  - [Logic Pro Drummer](#)
  - [EZ Drummer](#)
  - [Superior Drummer](#)
  - [Steven Slate Drums](#)
  - [Addictive Drums](#)
  - [Ujam BeatMaker](#)
- Amp Sims
  - [Bias](#)
  - [Amplitube](#)
  - [Guitar Rig](#)
  - [TH-U](#)
  - [Toneforge](#) & [Bassforge](#)
- Orchestral & Wind
  - [EastWest Composer Cloud](#)
  - [Native Instruments](#)
  - [Miroslav Philharmonik](#)
- Synthesizers
  - [Serum](#) - If you can only get one, get this one

**Samples, Loops, & Presets**

There are a TON of options out there… do some googling on your own, but here are my top picks…

Reagan's picks:
- [Splice](#)
- [Cymatics](#)
- [Vengeance](#)

**Third Party Plugins**

Disclaimer: you do not need third party plugins to get pro results. If you're not already getting great mixes with your stock plugins, you don't need to think about these.

That being said, here are some companies I know, love, and trust:

**Reagan's picks:**
- Slate Digital
- Waves
- FabFilter
- Soundtoys
- Izotope
- Antares
- IK Multimedia
- Baby Audio

**Buy Bundles**

Look for bundles to help simplify the buying process and save money on the essentials. Here are some examples:

- [Presonus Bundle](#)
- [Focusrite Bundle](#)
- [AT2020 Bundle](#)

**Buyer's Checklist**

Do you have everything you need?

- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Storage
- ☐ Audio Interface
- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Monitors & Accessories
- ☐ Microphone & Accessories (if needed)
- ☐ MIDI Controller (if needed)
- ☐ DAW
- ☐ Virtual Instruments (if needed)
- ☐ Samples (if needed)