



00 FREE PLUGIN GUIDE



Free DAW Plugin Guide

Best Free Plugins for Music Producers, Beat Makers, Vocalists, and Independent Artists

You do not need to buy expensive plugins to start making serious music. A good free setup can cover almost everything: synths, drums, sampling, bass, vocals, mixing, mastering, loudness checking, guitar tones, creative effects, and sound design.

This guide is built around free plugins that are actually useful, not random filler. The goal is to help you build a solid free production setup without wasting time downloading 200 things you will never use.



Start Here: The Essential Free Plugin Pack

Install these first. This gives you the core tools needed to make full songs.

Plugin	What it does	Download
Vital	Wavetable synth for bass, leads, pads, sound design	Download Vital
Surge XT	Powerful free synth for sound design	Download Surge XT
Sitala	Simple drum sampler for one-shots	Download Sitala
AmenBreak VST	Break slicer for jungle, DnB, breaks	Download AmenBreak VST
TDR Nova	Dynamic EQ for mixing	Download TDR Nova
Kilohearts Essentials	Big free FX bundle	Download Kilohearts Essentials
Valhalla Supermassive	Huge reverb and delay	Download Supermassive
Voxengo SPAN	Spectrum analyzer	Download SPAN
Youlean Loudness Meter	LUFS / loudness meter	Download Youlean Loudness Meter
GClip	Clipper for drums, bass, loudness	Download GClip
LoudMax	Simple limiter	Download LoudMax
Graillon Free	Vocal pitch correction	Download Graillon

This is the best "first install" setup for most producers.

Free Synths and Instruments

These plugins are for creating melodies, basslines, pads, chords, sound design, and playable instruments.

Best Free Synths

Plugin	Best for	Download
Vital	Modern bass, leads, pads, Serum-style sound design	Download
Surge XT	Deep sound design, experimental bass, synth layers	Download
Odin 2	Bass, leads, hybrid synth sounds	Download
Dexed	FM sounds, bells, keys, DX7-style bass	Download
TAL-NoiseMaker	Simple analog-style synth sounds	Download
u-he Tyrell N6	Warm analog-style synth	Download
u-he Zebralette	Spectral synth sounds	Download
u-he Triple Cheese	Weird resonator-style synth textures	Download
Eventide Pendulate	Chaotic, experimental synth sounds	Download
Full Bucket Music Plugins	Free vintage synth emulations	Download
Cardinal	Modular synth environment	Download
OctaSine	FM synthesis	Download

Free Sample Instruments

Plugin / Library	Best for	Download
Splice INSTRUMENT	Free playable sample instruments	Download
Decent Sampler	Free sample instrument player	Download
Pianobook	Free Decent Sampler libraries	Download Libraries
Komplete Start	Free Native Instruments bundle	Download
BBC Symphony Orchestra Discover	Free orchestra sounds	Download
Orchestral Tools SINEfactory	Free orchestral and cinematic instruments	Download
Ample Bass P Lite II	Free bass guitar	Download
Ample Guitar M Lite II	Free acoustic guitar	Download
TX16Wx	Full sampler plugin	Download

Free Drum and Break Tools

Use these for drums, one-shots, breakbeats, jungle, DnB, and live drum sounds.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Sitala	Simple drum pads and one-shots	<u>Download</u>
AmenBreak VST	Break slicing for jungle and DnB	<u>Download</u>
Steven Slate Drums 5 Free	Real acoustic drums	<u>Download</u>
MT Power Drum Kit 2	Free acoustic drum kit	<u>Download</u>

For electronic music, start with **Sitala**.

For DnB and jungle, add **AmenBreak VST**.

For rock, pop, and live-style drums, use **Steven Slate Drums 5 Free** or **MT Power Drum Kit 2**.

Free Mixing Plugins

These are the tools you use to clean, shape, balance, control, and polish your mix.

EQ / Dynamic EQ / Analyzer

Plugin	Best for	Download
TDR Nova	Dynamic EQ, harshness control, vocal cleanup	Download
TDR Prism	Spectrum analysis	Download
Voxengo SPAN	Spectrum analyzer	Download
Blue Cat Freeware Pack	EQ, analyzer, gain tools	Download
Melda MFreeFXBundle	EQ, pitch, compression, utilities, FX	Download

Compression / Dynamics

Plugin	Best for	Download
TDR Kotelnikov	Clean mastering-style compression	Download
TDR Molotok	Character compression	Download
Klanghelm MJUC jr.	Tube-style compression	Download
Klanghelm DC1A	Simple compressor	Download
Auburn Couture Free	Transient shaping	Download
FLUX BitterSweet	Transient shaping	Download

Saturation / Color / Distortion

Plugin	Best for	Download
Klanghelm IVGI	Saturation and analog-style color	Download
CHOW Tape Model	Tape saturation	Download
Voxengo Tube Amp	Tube-style drive	Download
Softube Saturation Knob	Simple saturation	Download
Analog Obsession Plugins	Free analog-style EQ, comp, saturation	Download
Airwindows	Huge free collection of mixing and color tools	Download

Free Mastering and Loudness Plugins

These help prepare songs for release, streaming, and final export.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Youlean Loudness Meter	LUFS, true peak, loudness checking	<u>Download</u>
LoudMax	Simple limiter	<u>Download</u>
GClip	Clipping drums, bass, and mix buses	<u>Download</u>
D16 Frontier	Limiter / soft clipper	<u>Download</u>
iZotope Ozone Imager	Stereo width control	<u>Download</u>
Voxengo MSSED	Mid/side utility	<u>Download</u>

Basic mastering chain idea:

1. Corrective EQ – Light compression – Saturation or clipping – Stereo check – Limiter – Loudness meter

Do not put stereo widening on your sub bass. Keep the low end focused and controlled.

Free Reverb, Delay, Space, and Movement

These plugins help create space, atmosphere, width, depth, and movement.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Valhalla Supermassive	Huge reverb, delay, space FX	Download
Valhalla Freq Echo	Frequency-shifted delay	Download
Voxengo OldSkoolVerb	Reverb	Download
Dragonfly Reverb	Reverb bundle	Download
SIRI	Convolution reverb	Download
Acon Digital Multiply	Chorus / doubling	Download
Polyverse Wider	Stereo widening	Download
Cableguys PanCake	Auto-pan movement	Download
Sixth Sample Deelay	Delay	Download

Free Vocal Plugins

These are useful for tuning, doubling, brightness, vocoder effects, and vocal cleanup.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Graillon Free	Pitch correction and vocal effects	<u>Download</u>
MAutoPitch	Free autotune-style pitch correction	<u>Download</u>
iZotope Vocal Doubler	Vocal doubling	<u>Download</u>
Slate Digital Fresh Air	Vocal brightness and air	<u>Download</u>
TAL-Vocoder	Vocoder / robot vocal effects	<u>Download</u>
Bertom Denoiser Classic	Noise reduction	<u>Download</u>

Simple vocal chain idea:

1. Noise cleanup
2. EQ
3. Compression
4. Pitch correction if needed
5. Saturation
6. Delay / reverb
7. Doubler or width, only if it fits the song

Free Guitar and Bass Plugins

These are useful for guitar, bass guitar, heavy distortion, amp simulation, and live instrument tones.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Neural Amp Modeler	Free amp modeling	<u>Download</u>
Blue Cat Free Amp	Simple guitar amp simulation	<u>Download</u>
Ignite Emissary Bundle	High-gain amp and cab tools	<u>Download</u>
AmpliTube 5 CS	Free amp suite	<u>Download</u>
TONEX CS	Free amp captures	<u>Download</u>
TSE BOD	Bass overdrive	<u>Download</u>

Free Creative FX and Glitch Plugins

These are for making weird sounds, transitions, glitches, texture, and movement.

Plugin	Best for	Download
Glitchmachines Fracture	Glitch and buffer effects	<u>Download</u>
Glitchmachines Hysteresis	Glitch delay	<u>Download</u>
Tritik Krush	Bitcrushing and downsampling	<u>Download</u>
iZotope Vinyl	Lo-fi vinyl texture	<u>Download</u>
Xfer OTT	Aggressive multiband compression	<u>Download</u>
Kilohearts Essentials	Phaser, chorus, delay, limiter, transient tools, distortion	<u>Download</u>

For bass music, use creative effects carefully. It is easy to destroy the groove by over-processing everything.

Free MIDI and Composition Helpers

These plugins help with chords, sequencing, and idea generation.

Plugin	Best for	Download
CodeFN42 Chordz	Trigger chords with one note	<u>Download</u>
Stochas	Probabilistic sequencer	<u>Download</u>

Use these as helpers, not replacements for learning music. They are good for ideas, but you still need to understand what sounds good.

Recommended Free Setup by Style

For Bass / DnB / Jungle

Install:

- Vital
- Surge XT
- AmenBreak VST
- Sitala
- TDR Nova
- Kilohearts Essentials
- Valhalla Supermassive
- Voxengo SPAN
- Youlean Loudness Meter
- GClip
- LoudMax
- Xfer OTT
- Tritic Krush

Main focus: clean drums, strong sub, controlled mids, and loud but not destroyed masters.

For Rap / Vocals / Trap

Install:

- Vital
- Decent Sampler
- Komplete Start
- Sitala
- TDR Nova
- Graillon Free
- MAutoPitch
- iZotope Vocal Doubler
- Slate Fresh Air
- Valhalla Supermassive
- Youlean Loudness Meter
- LoudMax

Main focus: clean vocal chain, strong drums, controlled low end, and space that does not drown the vocal.

For Bands / Guitar / Live Instruments

Install:

- Neural Amp Modeler
- Blue Cat Free Amp
- AmpliTube 5 CS
- TONEX CS
- TSE BOD
- Steven Slate Drums 5 Free
- MT Power Drum Kit 2
- Ample Bass P Lite II
- TDR Nova
- TDR Kotelnikov
- Valhalla Supermassive
- Voxengo SPAN

Main focus: good source recordings, clean gain staging, and not over-compressing everything.

For Cinematic / Orchestral / Ambient

Install:

- BBC Symphony Orchestra Discover
- Orchestral Tools SINEfactory
- Decent Sampler
- Pianobook libraries
- Splice INSTRUMENT
- Valhalla Supermassive
- Dragonfly Reverb
- Surge XT
- u-he Zebralette
- Youlean Loudness Meter

Main focus: layers, dynamics, space, and arrangement.

Plugin Installation Tips

Before installing, check what plugin formats your DAW supports.

Common formats:

- **VST3**: Windows / Mac, most common modern plugin format
- **AU**: Mac only, used in Logic and some Mac DAWs
- **AAX**: Pro Tools
- **CLAP**: Newer format supported by some DAWs
- **Standalone**: Opens outside the DAW

General advice:

- Install **VST3** whenever possible.
- Do not install every format if you do not need it.
- Keep all installers in one folder.
- Make a text file with plugin names and download links.
- Restart your DAW after installing plugins.
- Rescan plugins if they do not appear.
- Avoid cracked plugins. Free legit plugins are safer and more stable.

Do Not Download Everything at Once

The biggest mistake beginners make is downloading too many plugins and never learning any of them.

A good rule:

1 main synth

1 drum sampler

1 sampler instrument player

1 EQ

1 compressor

1 reverb

1 delay

1 limiter

1 loudness meter

1 analyzer

Once you understand those, add more.

More plugins do not make better music. Better decisions make better music.

Best Minimal Free Setup

For the smallest serious setup, install only these:

01	02
Vital	Sitala
03	04
Decent Sampler	TDR Nova
05	06
Kilohearts Essentials	Valhalla Supermassive
07	08
Voxengo SPAN	Youlean Loudness Meter
09	10
GClip	LoudMax

With those 10, you can make full songs, mix them, and export them properly.

Final Advice

Free plugins are not "beginner only." Many free plugins are good enough for professional work.

The important part is learning when and why to use them:

- EQ to remove problems or shape tone
- Compression to control movement
- Saturation to add harmonics
- Reverb and delay to create space
- Clipping and limiting to control peaks
- Meters to check what your ears might miss
- Synths and samplers to create the actual music

Build a small toolkit, learn it deeply, and finish songs.

That matters more than having a giant plugin folder.