



12. THE ART OF APPROACHING LABELS



The Art of Approaching Labels

How to Submit Music Without Looking Like an Amateur

Getting a label's attention is not about begging, spamming, or blasting the same message to 200 inboxes hoping one replies. It's about preparation, timing, fit, and professionalism. A strong track can still be ignored if the approach is bad, and a decent track can get attention if the artist presents it properly, targets the right label, and makes the label's job easy. This guide is about doing it right.

What Labels Actually Ask Themselves

When a label receives your demo, they are not just asking "Is this track good?" They are running through a full internal checklist before they even finish the first listen. Understanding their perspective is the foundation of a strong submission.

Does it fit?

Does this track belong in our catalog alongside our existing releases?

Is it finished?

Is the mix clean, the arrangement complete, and the master handled properly?

Is the artist serious?

Do they have direction, identity, and a clear sense of who they are?

Can we market this?

Is there a story here? Can we build something around this artist?

Are they easy to work with?

Can they communicate, meet deadlines, and handle the release process professionally?

The label is not your audience. They are a business partner evaluating a potential investment of time, money, and reputation. Every part of your submission, the music, the message, the link, your bio, your online presence, communicates something about who you are. Make sure it communicates the right thing.

Before You Contact Any Label

Do not send music just because you finished a bounce. The moment you hit send, you are making an impression, and first impressions in this industry are hard to undo. Run through this checklist honestly before reaching out to anyone.

Is the track actually finished?

Is the mix balanced? Is the arrangement complete with a proper intro and outro? Does it sound intentional from start to finish?

Does the track fit the label?

Have you listened to their recent releases? Do you understand their catalog? Can you honestly explain why your track belongs there?

Do you have the assets ready?

A private streaming link. A short artist bio. A professional file name. Visual direction or artwork if available.

Do you know what you want?

Are you submitting for a single deal, a compilation slot, or a long-term relationship? Know your goal before you reach out.



If you cannot answer those questions clearly, you are not ready to submit. Preparation is not optional, it is the whole point.

What Labels Actually Care About

Music is not the only thing labels evaluate. When they listen to your demo, they are simultaneously reading your submission, checking your profiles, and forming a picture of who you are as an artist. These are the five things that consistently matter across every serious label.

1 Quality

The track needs to sound intentional. It does not need to be the loudest master in the world, but every element, the mix, the arrangement, the low-end, needs to feel like it was placed there on purpose. Sloppy demos signal an unready artist, regardless of the underlying idea.

2 Fit

A liquid DnB label might not want aggressive jump-up. A deep underground imprint might not want commercial pop crossovers. Fit is not about genre tags, it is about energy, aesthetic, and catalog alignment. If your track does not honestly belong there, do not send it.

3 Identity

Labels want artists with direction. Your sound, visuals, name, and online presence should tell a coherent story. You do not need a perfectly polished brand, but you need to look like someone who knows who they are and where they are going.

4 Reliability

Labels want artists who can send files, answer messages, meet deadlines, and communicate without creating problems. If your submission looks chaotic or your follow-up behavior is erratic, that signals what working with you will feel like.

5 Potential

You do not need to be famous. But you need to look like you are building something real. Are you active? Do you have more than one finished track? Is there a story a label can get behind? Potential matters as much as the current state of the music.

Research First. Submit Second.

One of the biggest mistakes producers make is mass-submitting, sending the same demo to every label on a list without thinking twice. It makes you look desperate, and it wastes everyone's time. Before you submit to any label, you need to do real research.

What to Research

- Their latest releases and biggest tracks
- Their smaller artists and emerging signings
- Compilation tracks and label samplers
- Artwork style and visual aesthetic
- Release schedule and output frequency
- Genre range and subgenre specifics
- Sound quality standards across releases
- Active artist roster and community presence

The One Question That Matters

After all your research, ask yourself honestly: Does my track belong here? Not "could they maybe like it", but does it genuinely fit alongside what they have already released? If the answer is no, move on. Sending anyway wastes your submission and potentially closes a door for the future.

Label Fit Test

For each target label, write down: the label name, their genre focus, three artists they have released, three recent tracks, what their sound feels like, why your track fits, and why it might not. If you cannot complete that exercise, you are not ready to submit to that label.

Preparing the Track and the Submission

Do not send a messy work-in-progress unless a label specifically accepts rough demos. For most professional submissions, your track should be close to release-ready. The file itself, the link, and the message all contribute to how seriously you are taken.



Track Checklist

- Intro is complete and functional
- Drop or hook is clearly defined
- Arrangement is fully finished
- Mix is balanced with controlled low-end
- Vocals and samples are cleared or original
- No uncleared AI vocals or copyrighted media
- Export is clean with no clipping



File Naming

Your file name is the first thing a label sees when they download your track. Make it professional.

- **Good:** ArtistName - TrackTitle - Demo.wav
- **Good:** ArtistName - TrackTitle - Premaster.wav
- **Bad:** finalfinal2realmaster.wav
- **Bad:** newbouncefixedmaybe.wav
- **Bad:** trackidea.wav



Streaming Link

Never attach a huge file in the first message. Send a private streaming link instead.

- Private SoundCloud or DISCO link
- Private Dropbox or Google Drive link
- Label's official submission portal
- Confirm the link works before sending
- No login or permission barriers

The Demo Submission Message

Your message should be short. Labels are busy. They do not need your life story, a list of your influences, or a paragraph about how long you have been producing. They need to understand who you are, why you are contacting them, and where to find the music. That is it.

✗ Bad Message

"Yo I make crazy music, check me out, I promise this is fire, I sent it to a bunch of labels, let me know ASAP."

This signals no research, no professionalism, and no understanding of how the industry works. It will be ignored, or worse, remembered for the wrong reasons.

Things to Never Say

- "This is my best track ever."
- "You need to sign this."
- "I sent this to many labels."
- "My friends say this is fire."
- "The mix is not done but imagine it finished."
- "I deserve a chance."
- "Can you master it for me?"

✓ Demo Email Template

Subject: Demo Submission: Artist Name – Track Title

Body:

Hey [Label Name],

I'm [Artist Name], a producer from [City/Country]. I've been following the label and I think this track could fit your catalog, especially because of [specific reason: sound, artist, release, subgenre, energy].

Private link: [Paste link]

Track: [Artist Name] – [Track Title]

Style: [Genre / mood / reference energy]

Status: Unreleased and unsigned.

Thanks for listening.

[Artist Name]

✓ Short. Clear. Specific. Professional. That is all it needs to be.

Your Artist Bio and Online Presence

A label does not need your full life story in the first message. They need enough context to understand who you are and whether you are a serious artist. Your bio should be clean, believable, and free of inflated claims. Your online presence should support the same picture.

1

One-Line Bio

One sentence. Artist name, location, sound, and direction. Nothing else. This is what goes in the first line of a submission email.

2

Three-Sentence Bio

Artist name and sound. One or two relevant achievements or context points. Current direction and what you are building toward. Keep it honest.

3

Full Label Bio

Five sentences maximum. Expand on your sound, your background, and your current activity. Do not inflate numbers. Do not invent achievements. Labels will check.

Your public profiles, Instagram, TikTok, SoundCloud, Spotify, Bandcamp, YouTube, will be checked. Labels are not always looking for massive follower counts. They are looking for signs of seriousness: consistent artist name, music that is easy to find, visuals that match the sound, and recent activity. Fix your online presence before submitting if it currently looks dead, inconsistent, or confusing. Ask yourself: would a label understand your direction in 30 seconds of scrolling?

 No fake hype. No "next big thing." No exaggeration. A good bio gives context without begging for validation.

Follow-Up, Rejection, and Interest

How you handle the moments after your submission defines your professionalism as much as the submission itself. Whether you hear nothing, hear no, or hear yes — your response matters.

1

Follow Up

Wait 7-14 days. Send one short follow-up. Reference your track and include the link again. No pressure. If no response after one follow-up, move on.

2

Handle Rejection

Do not argue. Do not ask them to explain themselves. Reply professionally and keep the door open for future submissions. Rejection is not permanent, it is often just timing or fit.

3

Handle Interest

Slow down. Ask questions. Understand the deal before you say yes. Do not agree to terms you do not understand. Get help reading a contract if needed.

Rejection Reply Template

"Thanks for listening. I appreciate you taking the time. I'll keep developing the sound and may send something more fitting in the future. Respect. [Artist Name]"

That keeps the door open. A label that passes today may sign you next year if you handle rejection with maturity.

If They Are Interested, Ask These

- Single, EP, compilation, or album?
- What rights are being licensed and for how long?
- What royalty split is offered?
- Who pays for mastering and artwork?
- What is the release timeline?
- Is there marketing support?
- Can I see the contract before agreeing to anything?

Red Flags and Building Real Relationships

Not every label opportunity is a good one. Knowing how to identify red flags protects your music and your career. Equally important: the best label relationships often begin before the demo ever gets sent.

Label Red Flags

- Asks you to pay for your own release with no clear service
- Refuses to provide a contract
- Claims ownership of too much with no explanation
- Wants rights forever for no advance or compensation
- Cannot explain royalty splits clearly
- Has no verifiable release history
- Uses pressure tactics or promises of fame
- Avoids answering direct questions
- Wants you to pay for everything but still owns the release

 Not every small label is bad, but unclear terms are dangerous. Respect the opportunity and protect your music.

Build Relationships Before You Need Them

The best label approach often starts before the demo. Labels are not machines. They are communities of people who work with artists they trust. Support the label first. Buy music. Share releases. Comment genuinely. Attend events or streams. Support their artists. Send respectful feedback when appropriate.

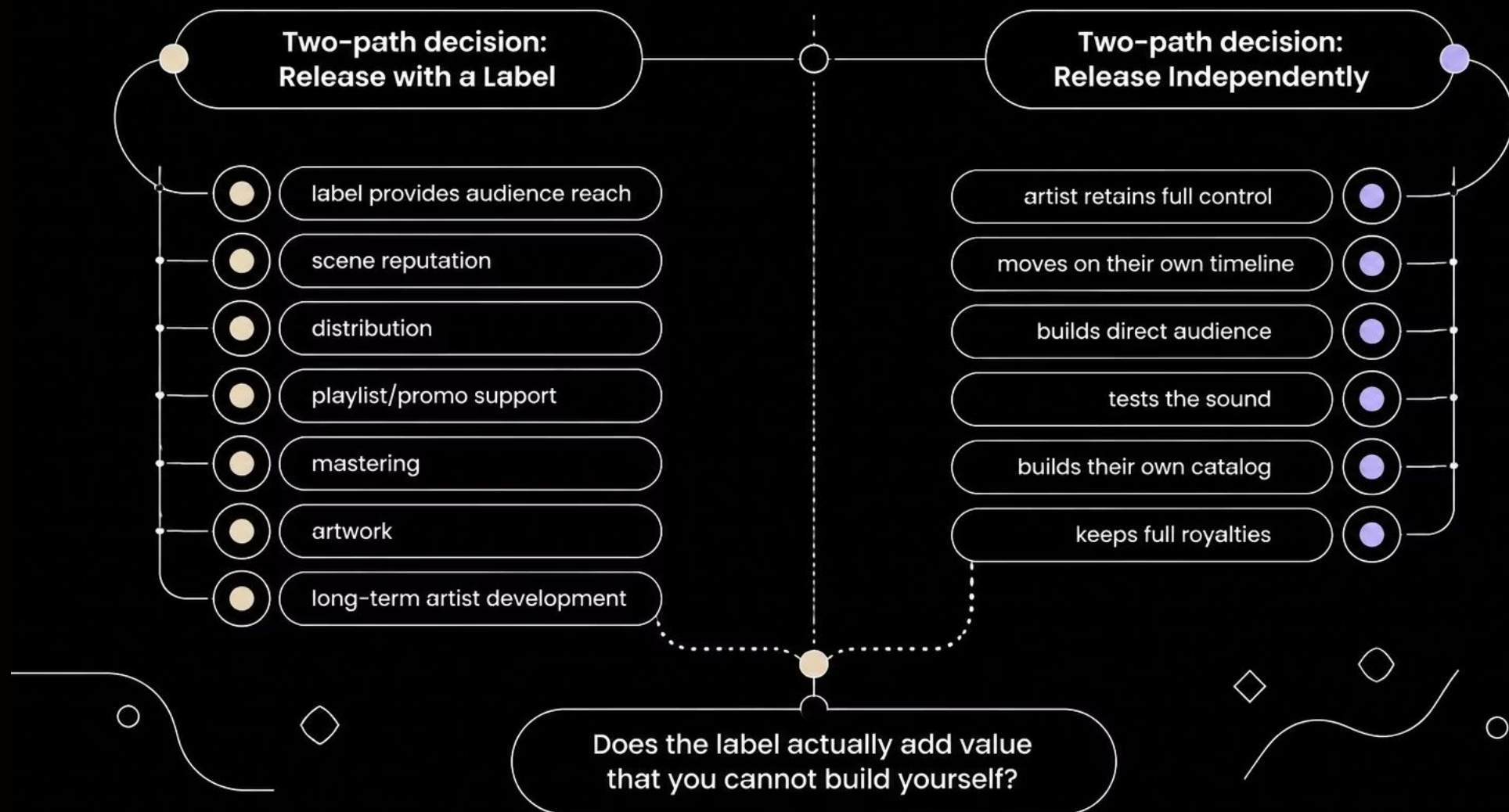
Do not only appear when you need something. People remember real support, and they remember who showed up before they had a reason to.

Label Relationship Exercise

Pick three labels you respect. For each: research who runs it, who releases there, what events or streams are connected, where they accept demos, and how you can support them before asking for anything. Then act on it, over weeks and months, not days.

Should You Release Independently Instead?

Not every track needs a label. Sometimes releasing independently is the smarter move, and understanding when that is true will save you time, energy, and creative control. A label should always provide something genuinely valuable in exchange for what they receive from you.



A label should provide something useful: audience, reputation, distribution, playlist and promo reach, scene connection, branding, mastering, artwork, event support, or long-term development. If a label offers none of those things, or offers them in exchange for terms that do not make sense, ask yourself honestly why you need them. Independent releasing has never been more viable, and owning your catalog has never been more valuable.

The 7-Day Label Prep Challenge

Do not try to do everything at once. This structured seven-day process gives you a clear path from an idea to a professional, targeted submission, without rushing, without skipping steps, and without wasting a single send.



Submission Tracker and Final Checklist

Do not rely on memory. Stay organized. Track every submission you send so you know exactly where things stand, and so you never accidentally follow up too early, double-send, or lose track of a conversation that could matter.

Label	Contact	Method	Track Sent	Date Sent	Follow-Up	Status
Label A	demo@labela.com	Email	TrackTitle - Demo	—	+14 days	Not Sent
Label B	Portal	Submission form	TrackTitle - Demo	—	+14 days	Not Sent
Label C	IG DM	Direct message	TrackTitle - Demo	—	+10 days	Not Sent

Not Sent

In preparation

Sent

Awaiting response

Followed Up

Second contact made

Rejected

Move on respectfully

Interested

Ask questions before yes

Signed / Released

Deal confirmed

The Final Reminder

Approaching labels is not about begging for approval. It is about finding the right home for the right music at the right time. The producers who get signed consistently are not always the most talented, they are the most prepared, the most professional, and the most patient.

Do not spam. Do not rush.

A single well-targeted submission beats 100 mass emails every time. Quality of approach reflects quality of artist.

Do not send unfinished tracks.

If the music is not ready, it is not ready. No label can hear past a bad mix and imagine the finished version. They will just pass.

Handle rejection with maturity.

Every serious artist has a folder full of rejections. The ones who keep going, keep improving, and keep submitting professionally are the ones who eventually get through.

Protect your rights.

Do not sign things you do not understand. A bad deal is worse than no deal. Read contracts. Ask questions. Get help if you need it.

Keep creating.

The best label approach comes from an artist who is too busy making great music to be desperate about it. Build. Release. Grow. The rest follows.

Right track. Right label. Right timing. Right message. No bullshit.