

COMPRESSOR SETTINGS QUICK GUIDE

Live sound starting points for each channel. Adjust by ear after gain is set and the full band is playing.

CH	Source	Threshold	Ratio	Attack	Release	Gain	Key Filter
CH 1	Kick Mic	-18 dB to -10 dB	4:1	10-30 ms	80-180 ms	Add makeup gain only as needed	Low focus around 60-120 Hz
CH 2	Snare	-18 dB to -8 dB	4:1	10-25 ms	100-200 ms	Add makeup gain only as needed	Snare body/crack around 150-250 Hz or 2-5 kHz
CH 3	Rack Tom	-16 dB to -8 dB	3:1	15-30 ms	150-300 ms	Add makeup gain only as needed	Tom body around 100-250 Hz
CH 4	Floor Tom	-16 dB to -8 dB	3:1	20-40 ms	200-400 ms	Add makeup gain only as needed	Low tom focus around 60-150 Hz
CH 5	Hi-Hat	Usually Off	-	-	-	-	-
CH 6	Bass	-24 dB to -12 dB	3:1 to 4:1	20-40 ms	100-250 ms	Add makeup gain to match bypass level	Low/mid focus around 80 Hz-700 Hz
CH 7	Rhythm Guitar	Usually Off or -12 dB to -6 dB if needed	2:1	20-40 ms	100-250 ms	Very little makeup gain	Midrange focus around 150 Hz-3 kHz
CH 8	Lead Guitar	Usually Off or -12 dB to -6 dB if needed	2:1 to 3:1	15-35 ms	150-300 ms	Very little makeup gain	Mid/high-mid focus around 200 Hz-4 kHz
CH 9	Keys Left / Mono	Light or Off; -18 dB to -10 dB if needed	2:1	20-50 ms	150-300 ms	Add only if level drops	Wide focus around 100 Hz-5 kHz
CH 10	Keys Right	Light or Off; -18 dB to -10 dB if needed	2:1	20-50 ms	150-300 ms	Add only if level drops	Wide focus around 100 Hz-5 kHz
CH 11	Male Lead Vocal	-24 dB to -12 dB	3:1 to 4:1	10-30 ms	80-200 ms	Add makeup gain until vocal sits on top	Vocal focus around 120 Hz-4 kHz

COMPRESSOR SETTING MEANINGS

Setting	What It Does	Simple Rule
Threshold	Decides when compression starts	Lower threshold = more compression
Ratio	Controls how much the signal is reduced	Higher ratio = stronger control
Attack	How fast compression reacts	Slower attack keeps punch; faster attack smooths peaks

Setting	What It Does	Simple Rule
Release	How fast compression lets go	Too fast can pump; too slow can flatten the sound
Gain	Adds volume back after compression	Match the compressed level to the original level
Key Filter	Tells the compressor what frequency area to respond to	Helps avoid over-compressing from unwanted lows or harsh frequencies

SIMPLE COMPRESSOR SETUP RULES

If This Happens	Change This
Sound feels flat or lifeless	Raise threshold, lower ratio, or slow attack
Kick loses punch	Slow the attack slightly
Snare loses crack	Slow the attack slightly
Bass is uneven	Lower threshold slightly or use 3:1 to 4:1 ratio
Vocal jumps out too much	Lower threshold slightly
Vocal sounds squashed	Raise threshold or lower ratio
Sound gets louder when compressor is on	Lower makeup gain
Sound gets weaker when compressor is on	Add a little makeup gain
Mix sounds like it is pumping	Slow the release or reduce compression

Quick live sound starting point: For most channels, aim for 3-6 dB of gain reduction on loud hits or peaks. For vocals and bass, it is okay if the compressor works a little more steadily. For drums, compression should control the hit without killing the punch.