

How To Use Gates

Do you know how to use Gates?

How To Mix Music: The Noise Gate



WHAT'S A GATE AND HOW TO USE IT

You can think of a gate as an automated mute button. Typically a gate stays “closed” (muted), until a sound comes in and reaches the set threshold, then the gate opens letting the sound through. This was often used back in the day to minimise the tape hiss, however gates can be used in lots of different ways.

CLEAN UP DRUM SOUNDS

Let's say you are recording live drums, and toms are come in only now and then. By adding a gate you can mute toms' channel to clean up drum spill when toms are not being played. You can also apply the same method to Kick Drum to gate unwanted noises. When it comes to drums, you just need to adjust threshold level carefully to get a nice & dry sound.

SHAPE DRUM SOUNDS

If you want to reshape the sound of snare drum, you can chop off the tail end of the sound by letting the gate close earlier. You can play with the attack time to reshape the initial transient of the sound.

CHOP OFF REVERBS

If you recorded a vocal with some reverb from the room, you can close the gate to chop off the tail end of the sound so your vocal can become drier and feel “closer”.

USE A GATE AS A SEQUENCER

This is my favourite way of using gates! You can trigger the gate by external signal such as click or hi hat from a drum machine. For example, if you have long pad sound, you can program 16th note signal to externally open the gate to make the pad sound into rhythmic sequenced sound. Listen to Kraftwerk’s Neon Light from The Man Machine album (the red that has “The Robots” in it) and you’ll know what I’m talking about! Skip towards the end of the track



When using a gate this way you can play with the attack and release (and “hold” if available) time to adjust how this chopping occurs... It’s a bit like transforming a gate into a synth!

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