

# Project 1: A Beginning, a Middle, and an End

## Objectives

- Create music using the included loops in Mixcraft.
- Audition loops and add them to the Sequencer Window.
- Balance the sounds of your loops using the Mixer window.

## Class Time Required

You should be able to complete this lesson well in three 45 minute sessions.

## Procedure

1. Create a folder in your Music Technology folder on your flash drive. Then, create a subfolder with your “LAST NAME FIRST NAME Beginning Middle End”
2. Launch Mixcraft 10. Got to File -> Save As. Save your new project name the title of “LAST NAME FIRST NAME Beginning Middle End.” It is a good idea to save your song every few minutes as you go through the project. You can do so easily by clicking the Save button or File->Save or Ctrl+S (it has a picture of a floppy disk on it) to overwrite your existing file or by selecting File > Save As to create a new file version.
3. In the lower part of your screen, the Details section, select the Library tab. This is where you can access hundreds of loop from within Mixcraft.
4. Look for some loops you like. On the left side of the Library screen, you’ll see a drop-down option for Category. Select Song Kits as your sort category and then select a song kit or song style to explore. You’ll now see many different loops listed on the right in the Library. As you click on the play head (the green triangle) beside any of these loops, they will download from the Internet (which is why you need an Internet connection when working in Mixcraft), and you will hear the loops play in your headphones. Audition any loops that have a length of 1, 2, or 4 in the #bars column. Keep auditioning until you find one you like for the beginning of your music.
5. Click the yellow plus sign beside the name of the loop you chose, and the loop will appear in the first available track in the Sequencer window. If you see a dialog box that asks you whether you wish to switch the tempo of your song to the tempo of the loop you selected, click Yes, and your song will now follow the exact tempo (speed) of the loop you chose.

You can also drag the loop into the Sequencer window by grabbing the name of the loop with your mouse and dragging it upward. A vertical line will show you where your loop is going. Make sure you drop it in the first available track, at the beginning of the song. If you drop it in the wrong place, you can always grab its name bar and move it to the right place.

6. Now that you have the first loop in your song, you’ll notice that across the top of the loop you have a play triangle (click it and you hear the loop), a Mute Button, and a Loop Repeat button (click it and the loop duplicates), and the Loop Name. Underneath that you see the

waveform of the loop. That's what the loop looks like in digital audio. You will see many spikes - these are the loud hits in the waveform. The spikes tell you how loud the music is - the bigger the spike, the louder the hit. Experienced audio engineers may be able to tell certain things about a loop just by looking at the waveform.

Duplicate the loop until it goes all the way from the beginning of the song to the number 5 (the end of the fourth measure). You won't have to do this if you already selected a loop that lasts four measures.

7. Return to the Loop Library and find three other loops to go with your first selected loop. These other loops should be different instruments that complement and cohesively work with the one you first chose. Be sure that they all end at measure 4. You can split the track at that point or click and drag the end to shorten the track.
8. Once your four instrument in four measures is complete, select a new song kit. Choose something in a different style, contrasting what you just worked with.
9. Go to measure 5. Click on the timeline just below the number 5 on the timeline. (A vertical line will now appear at that point.) Drag four new loops into the Sequencer and place it at number 5 into four new tracks (tracks 5-8). Duplicate this loop until it goes to the number 9 (the end of the eighth measure).
10. Choose a third song kit from the Library. Drop four loops into tracks 9-12. Drag it to the Sequencer at measure 9 and duplicate it until it reaches the number 13 (the end of the twelfth measure).
11. Now click the Rewind to Beginning button (or hit the Home key on your keyboard) and then click the Play button (or hit the spacebar) to hear how the three song kits and loops you chose sound consecutively. Click Stop or hit the spacebar again to stop playback. If you change your mind about a loop, you can get rid of it. Highlight it in the Sequencer by clicking its name, press Delete on your keyboard, and then choose a different loop to replace it.
12. Now select the Mixer tab. As you listen to your song, use the volume faders to adjust the relative volume of each track so that each instrument is equally audible. It's easier to mix if you set the song to loop - that way, you don't have to keep restarting the song every time it plays through. To set the song to loop, look in the green display counter where the time code is displayed and click on the loop arrow. Mixcraft will select all 12 measures of the song to loop automatically.

Use the L-R sliders above the volume faders to adjust where your instruments are from left to right in the mix. Imagine where you would like them to be on stage as they would be in live performance and then reflect this by mixing them to the appropriate side in the mix.

You can adjust the Hi, Mid, and Lo response in each track by turning the knobs in the EQ section of the Mixer. As you mix, make sure that the volume levels do not light up the red warning light at the top of the volume faders. If this happens, you must bring down the

volume fader, or it will sound distorted in the final mixdown.

You should check volume levels every time you change a pan position (L-R) or EQ setting, as even small alterations will affect the output level of the track. It is important to get a strong volume signal without lighting the red warning light. Keep your Main Mix fader down fairly low until you have eliminated all red lights in the instrument faders, and then you'll find you have some room to boost the Main Mix level. You'll learn many skills of mixing as you work through each project, but for now your most important task is to avoid the red lights.

13. Be sure to save your file often. (see step 2 for the process again)
14. When you feel that your song is the best you can make it and when the volume indicators never go into the red, click on the button to mix your song down to an audio file (it looks like an arrow pointing to a sheet of paper) or select File>Mix Down To> MP3.

If Mixcraft asks whether you would like to save your changes before mixing down, click Yes. Select a location for your mixed-down song and save it as an MP3 version. That way, you'll be able to listen to your song on your iPod or other MP3 player or use it as a ringtone on your phone.

### **EXTRA**

After you have mastered making a song with a beginning, a middle, and an end in 12 measures, make another song with 24 measures (8 measures per section), or extend your existing song of 12 measures (but be sure to save it to a different file). This will allow you to use some of the longer loops. Also, try adding in more than four instruments to the song, but still start with drums, bass, and guitar.