

## Lecture 35

### Using the Mixing Desk Part One



[K2K Radio.Com Desk](#)

Many community radio stations use music mixing desks as their broadcast desks due to limited funds. However, the principles are the same for any radio desk. Learn these principles well and you'll be able to use any broadcast desk. In fact, most of you are going to come across desks like this in the picture. Don't be disheartened. Desks like this can do ninety percent of the things that a professional radio desk can do.

### Professional Sounding

It's imperative that your radio show sounds professional. Make sure all your levels are balanced. In other words, all the volumes are the same. [Read the PDF from lecture 39 on audio levels.](#) Our shows have to flow smoothly without any dead air. You can have the best content in the world, but if your show sounds technically bad, then no one will want to listen to it.

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## **The Desk of Dooooooooom**

Operating a radio desk is EASY. Most of the buttons that you see on a radio desk you'll never have to use. It is, however, vital that you learn how to work the desk properly. If you don't, then you're going to take that well-planned show and destroy it very easily.

## **So Why Do We Use Mixing Desks?**

We use mixing desks to send a collection of sounds from the studio to people's radios/computers etc. We've got 'sounds' like voices, music, telephones, jingles, etc., and we need to get those sounds into the desk and then out on air.

Each channel strip is an 'input'. The mic channel is the 'input' for your voice, the computer playout channel is the 'input' for the music, the telephone channel is the 'input' for the telephone, etc. Each input goes into the desk through a separate channel, and each channel has its own fader.

This is why you have a mic 1 fader (for the mic 1 input), a mic 2 fader (for the mic 2 input), a computer playout fader (for the music on the computer), a jingle fader (for the jingles), an aux fader for people to plug in their laptops or iPhones etc. and so on.

Think about the fader channel as being like a tap. When we turn the voice tap on, the voice comes out. When we turn the voice tap off, the voice stops. When we turn the music tap on, the music comes out. When we turn the music tap off, the music stops. You get the idea.

Turning the tap on is simply pushing the fader up to either 0 on the desk (*the number may have three little lines next to it*) and turning the tap off is pulling the fader to the bottom.

On some desks you may have to switch the channel "on" first before you open the fader.



**In this case, it's switch on the channel - open the fader - easy.**

A word of warning though. Some desks you open the fader up to the top and other desks you open the fader to midway.



At my hospital radio station, we opened the fader to midway, but most of my volunteers thought you had to open the fader to the top of the desk. As a result of this, too much signal was going into the desk. All their music and vocal links ended up being too loud as they'd turned the volume up too high. It also meant that the output was being heavily distorted. Watch out for this mistake.

**Always ask your trainer where does the fader go on the desk.**

### **More About the Desk**

Think of the desk like this. Each fader is linked to a 'source'. A 'source' could be a microphone, a playout computer, a phone line, a CD player, a record player, etc. Each channel normally represents one source. Don't get scared by the number of faders on the desk. Just think one fader, one source.

Mic faders tend to be red in colour.

A lot of radio mixing desks tend to follow the same configuration. In other words, a lot of the desks tend to look the same. Different companies may place individual buttons in slightly different areas, but all these desks are very similar. Once you can work one radio desk, you can pretty much work any radio desk. It's just a case of searching for the same buttons.

As a presenter to a radio show, all you need to know is how to pre-fade listen (cue) your source. In plain talk, this just means knowing how to set your volume levels and knowing how to monitor your volume levels. More on this in the next video.