

BEGINNERDJ'S

The essential DJ equipment Guide

THANKS!

I know this may sound sappy but I want to thank you for taking the time to download this DJ equipment guide. I know there are many other resources out there but I believe that this guide will become one of the “essentials” that you’ll be referencing time and time again.

Before you begin, I’d like to let you know what you can expect out of this guide:

I would recommend to take my opinions of each piece of gear with an open mind; there are hundreds (thousands) of individual pieces of equipment you can sort through but I believe those that I recommend have everything you need to get started, an affordable price and won’t burn you in the end from breaking down.

Additionally, I want to personally give you an internet high-five because for us music lovers out there, every new DJ and producer makes the music scene that much better - my hats off to you.

~BeginnerDJ.com

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intro

Hey! Oi! Greetings!

I don't want to hold you up from digging through this DJ equipment guide but I'd like to introduce myself so you can see who's the guy behind the blog.

This is me (over there, on the right - yeah, scraggly as hell, I know). A couple years ago I was frustrated because I couldn't find a lot of information about DJing online. There were tutorials out there but the information was so scattered around that I thought it would be great if someone put together a definitive source; and that's how BeginnerDJ was born.



BDJ is a combination of my current experiences with DJing and the love for the music. If you're reading this than you're (probably) starting out as I was not long ago.

I browsed forums for hours, listened to everyone I could about gear and finally, when I got a little bit of money, I went out and bought my first decks. Since then I've been busy as every playing - it's still a bedroom thing but the love is there.

This guide may be a bit crude around the edges but it'll be the only guide you need to get started - *I want to thank you again and wish you best of luck.*

Let's get started

Choosing equipment can be quite a task if you are inexperienced as to what you'll need to begin DJing. There are many various factors to consider before making any purchase, the purpose of this guide is to help you through each to ensure you make the best choice to begin your DJ career.

DJs use many different types of equipment depending on the musical format they wish to spin: vinyl DJs use vinyl records, CD DJs use CDs and Digital DJs use MP3s and any other digital formats. DJing will continue to evolve over the years but the point will always be to bring the music to the masses.

Regardless of the type of DJ you choose to become, there is still a basic set of equipment each DJ must purchase:

- 2 x Turntables
- 1 x Mixer
- 1 x Headphones
- 1 Pair of monitor speakers (optional)
- 1 Pair of PA speakers (optional)

And let's never forget that your music is going to be factored into your overall costs when getting started!

Before you buy

Before you make any decision on the gear you plan to buy it's best to determine your budget. Many people rush into making a purchase only to pick up gear which breaks within a few years or is downright unreliable.

Like the old saying goes "you get what you buy".

I highly suggest you make a budget of what you can afford along with a wish list this way you can distinguish between needs and wants.

Set aside a bit of money from each paycheck to go toward your gear funds. You may be tempted to go out and buy some pieces with the money you have saved but resist the temptation to buy gear until you have enough money to buy your complete set - this way, you won't mismatch your gear in terms of quality and compatability.

It's always better to go into a deal with enough money to buy exceptional gear than to buy in the heat of passion - you'll end up with mediocre gear.

It's my suggestion that you set aside at least \$1500 to begin with if you're really interested in higher end gear but you can get started for under \$200.



turntables

A quick overview on vinyl turntables

Turntables are going to be your most important decision when building your DJ set up. The quality of turntable directly relates to the amount of money you're willing to spend. With that being said and as mentioned before, don't rush out to buy turntables just because they're cheap, if you can save just a little bit more toward your purchase you could walk away with much higher quality decks.

Note: All of the other pieces of equipment can be upgraded at a later time but starting off with a mediocre pair of turntables will not only hamper the learning process but will just be a larger investment in the long run since you would be replacing them or worse, having to continually repair them.

There are dozens of manufacturers of turntables but, in my opinion, only a few of them produce quality equipment required for DJing. Buying quality turntables will guarantee that your set up will last you for many years without major problems.

For vinyl DJs, there are two common types of turntables:

- Direct Drive
- Belt Driven

Other DJs that use CDs or Digital may or may not need to decide on these two choices alone.

These will be explained in detail on the next few pages.

Direct Drive Turntables

Direct Drive Turntables are the best bang for your buck.

Direct Drive "DD" turntables use a motor which is directly connected to the small platter to provide optimum torque and durability in comparison to belt driven turntables which use ... belts.

Torque allows the turntable to speed up rapidly after being held during the cueing letting it start and stop without making distorted sounds from speeding up. You can notice the difference between the two because there will be a sound kind of like "rrrruUUUP".

By purchasing direct drive turntables in the beginning you'll avoid having to pay for repairs to belts and you'll be ready for those nights where you're heavy into mixing and scratching.

Here are a few direct drive turntables I'd highly recommend checking out, they range from beginner to professional:

Technics 1210's (industry standard) - [Read the reviews here](#)

Gemini TT-2000 Direct Drive Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

Numark TTX Professional Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$300 - \$600 each*

Belt Driven Turntables

Belt driven turntables are exactly how they sound: the belt of the turntable is connected from the motor to the platter. Belts eventually stretch and cause your vinyl to sound distorted which is why Belt Driven turntables should be avoided.

If a belt breaks in the middle of your set, you're pretty much screwed. Not only will you need to buy a new belt but you just wrecked your set - pissing people off.

If a belt is stretched, you'll have a difficult time trying to beatmatch your records. A stretched belt will spin the platter at a slightly slower speed, throwing off your beatmatching efforts.

Many beginner DJs become discouraged while beatmatching because the tracks keep going out of sync. The problem may not be the DJ, it may be the belt driven turntable.

Finally, belt driven turntables do not have the same amount of torque as a direct drive turntable. When you release the vinyl on a belt driven turntable, it will start just a bit slower than you expect, throwing off your beatmatching.

Stanton T52B Straight Arm Belt-Drive Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

NUMARK Belt Drive Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

Gemini TT-1000 Belt Drive Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$100 - \$300 each*

Vinyl Turntable Cartridges

A few items that are often overlooked when buying vinyl turntables are the cartridges, needles and slipmats.

Each of these pieces of equipment make up the vinyl turntable in whole, without these pieces you simply would not be able to DJ.

Most vinyl turntables come with a basic set of cartridges, needles and rubber slipmats. You will want to replace these components if you are serious about DJing as they are very basic.

Cartridges come in two major flavors:

Shell Mounted
Concord Design

Both of these designs will work perfectly with your DJing, it's mostly a matter of personal choice and opinion.

Shure M44-7H Scratch Cartridge with Headshell - [Read the reviews here](#)

Ortofon Concorde Scratch Twin Pack - [Read the reviews here](#)

Stanton 500.V3 Spherical DJ Turntable Cartridges - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$70 - \$200 each/set*

Vinyl Turntable Needles

Most cartridge come with a set of needles but it's always worthwhile to invest in few more in case they break. There are two basic types of needles for DJs:

Spherical - Spherical stylus' have a rounded tip that prevent the needle from skipping. These spherical stylus' are great for scratch DJs but they also wear down your vinyl.

Elliptical - Elliptical stylus have a pointed end which fits snugly between the vinyl grooves. These elliptical stylus' do have a tendency to skip easier but they provide a better quality of sound.

Slipmats

Turntables usually come with a set of rubber mats, these are no good for DJing (they make your vinyl stick, eliminating your ability to rock the record).

There is no "best" slipmat. You will, however, need to make sure you purchase felt slipmats. These felt slipmats are very cheap and often have some really cool designs (for personal flare).

Thud Rumble Butter Rug Slipmat Pair - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$15 for the pair*

CD Turntables

CD turntables have seen a rise during the 90s and especially the 2000's with the increase in music being produced on CDs, easier access to gear and some very cool features built into each deck.

Many DJs are taking the route of using CD turntables because much of today's music isn't being pressed on vinyl any longer.

With the addition of the internet, DJs can buy their tracks on websites like beatport, iTunes and many other online retailers, burn the tracks to CD and be ready to play the new tracks without having to take a trip down to the record shop.

It's no doubt that the Pioneer CDJ-800's and CDJ-1000's have become the standard for CD turntables. The CDJ's are used globally in clubs, bedrooms and most parties for their reliability and features.

Not having to buy cartridges, slipmats and needles are some of the additional benefits of using CD turntables.

Pioneer CDJ-800MK2 Professional CD/MP3 Turntable - [Read the reviews here](#)

Denon DN S1000 Scratch DJ Table Top DJ - [Read the reviews here](#)

Technics SL-DZ1200 Digital TurnTable - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$300 - \$600 each*

Midi Turntables & Time-Coded Systems

Midi controllers and time-coded systems have seen a tremendous rise over the last decade prompting many veteran DJs to drop their vinyl and CD collections for this new format. Being able to play virtually any available song is one of the main appeals to digital turntables and time-coded systems.

DJ's use controllers connected to programs on their computer and cue up digital music which they have purchased or ripped from their collection.

Digital is increasingly becoming a great choice for beginner DJs due to the ease of building a massive song collection on their computer and not having to hunt down vinyl or CD's in shops.

Both of these will be explained in detail on the next two pages.

Midi Controllers

With a midi controller setup, you will be controlling your mixes via a midi device that is plugged into your computer.

A midi controller sends midi signals to the computer which controls the program such as Traktor, Virtual DJ, Serato and many others.

Midi controllers are often very inexpensive, easy to hook up and will allow you to use any music you have available on your computer.

Additionally, many midi controllers and programs come with built in mixers and effects which could save you quite a bit of money.

Midi controllers give you a lot of control over your music but many DJ's frown upon full midi setups because of tradition and that many mediocre DJs abuse built in processes like auto beatmatching.

Hercules DJ Console (great for starting) - [Read the reviews here](#)

Numark Total Control USB MIDI DJ Controller - [Read the reviews here](#)

Vestax VCI-100 USB MIDI DJ Controller - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$70 - \$400 each*

Time-Coded Systems

Time-Coded systems such as Serato Scratch Live, Traktor Scratch Duo/Pro, Torq Connectiv and many others have seen their share of popularity by bridging the feel of vinyl with the limitless potential of computers.

With a time-coded system, special time-coded vinyl is used on regular turntables to control the packaged program.

This does mean that you will have an additional piece to hook up throughout your gear but if you are a die hard fan of vinyl but would like to spin exclusive released only available in MP3's, time-coded is for you.

Of course, this also means that you'll end up having to spend additional money on your turntable setup so be sure to incorporate the cost of these time-coded systems when you set your budget.

I personally have Traktor Scratch Duo, it hasn't let me down yet.

Native Instruments TRAKTOR SCRATCH DUO - [Read the reviews here](#)

MAudio Torq Connectiv - [Read the reviews here](#)

Serato Scratch Live - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$200 - \$500 each*



mixers

DJ Mixers & You

The next essential piece of DJ gear is the mixer. Quite simply, the mixer allows the DJ to hook up their turntables, mix and connect to speakers. The mixer allows the DJ to control the sounds from each turntable and mix them properly before sending them out.

Let's take a look at a fairly basic mixer and learn more about the parts do:

Crossfader

The crossfader is very important for DJing because it allows you to easily transition between the two songs playing. Although you may still mix between songs using the volume controls, the crossfader makes your job much easier while also giving you the ability to cut and do many other tricks.

The Lows, Mids and Highs

Most standard DJ mixers come with knobs which controls the low (bass), mids (synths and other middle sounds) and highs (snare and such). These knobs should be fully adjustable to give you full control over your mixes.

The Input/Outputs

In order to hook up your turntables to your mixer you're going to need inputs on the back of the mixer. The inputs allow you to hook up external devices such as turntables then output them through speakers.

DJ Mixers & You (continued)

Headphone Jack

Unless you plan to mix solely by ear, you're going to need a way to hook up your headphones hence the headphone jack. With this connection, you'll be able to listen to a track in one ear and cue up the next track without having to guess where you're mixing or do it using monitor speakers (although you may be faced with this one day – in shitty clubs).

A Sound Meter

The sound meter allows you to see how loud your music is playing over the speakers. The reason why you want a mixer with this is simple: if it goes red, you're probably going to blow your speakers (don't do that).

A Few Misc. Things

You may also want kill switches which "kill" the low, mids and highs – this adds the ability to do some fun effects on the fly. You may also want to find a mixer that has additional inputs in case you eventually use an additional turntable, midi controller or musical device.

Stanton RM-3S DJ Mixer - [Read the reviews here](#)

Pioneer DJM-400 Pro Dj Mixer - [Read the reviews here](#)

**These range from \$100 - \$300 each*



headphones

DJ Headphones

Headphones provide DJs with a way to listen and cue tracks in one ear while monitoring the track currently being played, the basis of beatmatching.

As a DJ, you're going to be in situations where the music is extremely loud all the while people are shouting and making noises. The DJ headphones provide a way to drown out the sound so you can accurately listen to your mix without getting distracted from the rest of the sound.

Most standard headphones you find in large retail stores will not be able to handle the type of abuse and monitoring you'll need while DJing. You'll want to get a pair of headphones which can handle the lows and highs of the music you're playing.

Look for headphones which a very wide range of frequency response, often 20 – 20,000 Hz. Avoid brands like *Skull Candy* because they're not meant for DJing.

Another aspect to look for when choosing your DJ headphones is how comfortable they are. You should look for closed ear headphones - the kind which completely wrap up and over your ears - these are very comfortable and give you an added touch of isolation without completely blocking out all the sound.

Pioneer HDJ-1000 DJ Headphones - [Read the reviews here](#)

Sony MDR-V700DJ - [Read the reviews here](#)



**speakers and
sound systems**

DJ Speakers & Sound Systems

You have your turntables, your mixer, headphones and tunes ready to play but uh-oh, there's no sound!

Obviously you now need to invest in a pair of speakers and I'm not talking about just plugging in your computer speakers (although I bet you'd try anyway).

Speakers used by DJs are very robust - they're made to take the high abuse of pounding beats and high frequencies; normal speakers you'd find on common hi-fi systems isn't going to cut it.

For DJs, there are 2 speaker systems you'd be using:

- Monitor Speakers
- PA Speakers

Additionally, there are generally two types of speakers for each:

- Active – self contained amp and power
- Passive – needs additional amp and power supply

For most beginner DJ's, you'll want to start with Active speakers this way you can just plug them in and start playing. Passive speakers do give you more flexibility but all of the extra components and hook-ups may drive you a little crazy.

Monitor Speakers

Monitor speakers play back the music at a very flat level, nothing dynamic because they are solely made to be able to monitor the music.

These speakers are the ones you see pointed toward the DJ in their booth.

Music played on PA speakers are too loud and filled with bass which would make monitoring the music virtually impossible. DJs often use monitor speakers to help them hear the mix besides using their headphones, giving them an accurate representation of what the party people are hearing.

Monitor speakers are very inexpensive and do not necessarily need to be included with your DJ setup however they will help you understand your mixing and come in handy when you forget your headphones.

I suggest you go with active monitor speakers. Active monitor speakers will allow you to hook up directly to your mixer without any extra amplifier but may include an additional power chord to connect.

Behringer MS40 - [Read the reviews here](#)

M-Audio StudioPro 3 - [Read the reviews here](#)

Sound Systems aka. DJ P.A. Systems

Unlike monitor speakers, PA speakers are meant to be loud, bassy and handle super high frequencies from the music; these are the speakers you see in front of the booth and around the dance floor.

PA speakers have a large dynamic range and can handle the abuse of cranking up the tunes to peak levels for prolonged periods of time. However, all mechanical devices do have limits which is why sometimes you'll hear a *pop* and then the music sounds like shit. Likewise, too much power being drawn to the speakers will cut out the sound - that's then everything gets silent.

Keep in mind that passive speakers will require an additional amp and power supply when hooking up. Chances are, if you're DJing at a club, party or festival you really won't be playing around much with these as they're mostly on the side of promoters.

Active PA speakers are your best bet because they include the amplifier and power supply within the cabinet, making it very easy to lug around from venue to venue. Active sound systems are your best bet when starting out.

For a great guide to learn on speakers, check out [SweetWater's Buying Guide](#).

**additional
resources**

A few extra resources before you go

This guide is coming to an end but before you go, I want to leave you with a few additional resources that will help you get started; these are a collection of guides that have appeared on BeginnerDJ over its lifetime.

[What Type Of Music Should I DJ?](#)

[The Types of DJs](#)

[How To Choose A DJ Name](#)

[Where To Buy Vinyl Records Online](#)

[How To Choose A Great Pair Of Headphones For DJing](#)

[What Is The Best DJ Laptop? A Simple Buyer's Guide](#)

[Hercules DJ Console MKII Review](#)

[How To Beat Match](#)

**These should help you get started once you have your gear*

So, this complete the guide, I hope you've found it helpful and would love to hear your feedback - come on over to BeginnerDJ and join in on the community, get started with DJing and have a kick-ass time! ~Muxx