



# The Ultimate Song Release Checklist:

## Maximize Exposure, Royalties, and Chart Success

Releasing a song is more than just hitting "upload" on your favorite streaming platform—it's about strategically planning every step to ensure your track gets the attention, streams, and royalties it deserves. This comprehensive checklist is designed for independent artists who want to maximize their song's impact, from pre-release promotions to post-release engagement. Whether you're aiming for chart success, viral attention, or just making sure every royalty is accounted for, this guide will walk you through each essential step. Ready to turn your music into a hit? Let's get started!

### 8 Weeks Before Release: Pre-Production and Planning

#### 1. Set a Release Date (on a Friday)

Setting your release on a Friday is essential because most streaming platforms and chart trackers, like Billboard, refresh their charts every Friday. By releasing your song on this day, you'll have a full week to accumulate streams, downloads, and sales, which gives you a better chance of charting.

#### 2. Define Your Goals and Audience

Identify what success looks like for your release (charting, reaching new fans, selling merch, etc.). Knowing your target audience will inform your marketing and promotional efforts. This step is critical for optimizing your promotional materials and release strategy.

#### 3. Register with BMI or ASCAP

Sign up with **BMI** or **ASCAP** to ensure you collect **performance royalties** whenever your song is played publicly (e.g., radio, live venues, streaming). These organizations track and pay out royalties based on where and how your music is used, making sure you get paid for your work.

#### 4. Register with Songtrust

Songtrust helps collect publishing royalties from over 100 countries and multiple platforms. While BMI and ASCAP handle performance royalties, **Songtrust** ensures you receive your **mechanical royalties** from international sales and streams.

### 6 Weeks Before Release: Registration and Rights Management

#### 5. Register with SoundExchange

**SoundExchange** collects digital performance royalties from non-interactive streaming services like Pandora, SiriusXM, and webcasts. This is different from royalties collected by BMI or ASCAP, and registering here ensures you maximize earnings from streaming platforms.

#### 6. Register with Mediabase and Luminate (formerly Nielsen SoundScan)

To track your song's performance on radio and streaming platforms, you need to register with **Mediabase**. This company monitors radio airplay, helping to ensure your spins are counted toward charting.

Meanwhile, **Luminate Data** (formerly Nielsen SoundScan) tracks physical and digital sales and streams for chart consideration (Billboard and others). This step is crucial for accurately counting every sale and stream that contributes to your chart ranking.

#### 7. Copyright Registration

To protect your intellectual property, file your song with the **U.S. Copyright Office**. This legally registers your work, giving you legal backing if someone tries to use your song without permission.

#### 8. Obtain ISRC Codes

Every song needs an **ISRC code** (International Standard Recording Code). This code acts as a fingerprint for your song, helping to track sales, streams, and radio plays. It's crucial for accurate royalty collection across all platforms.

### 4 Weeks Before Release: Distribution and Pre-Release Campaigns

#### 9. Select a Distributor

Choose a digital distributor like DistroKid, TuneCore, or CD Baby to upload your song to major streaming platforms (Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal). These services handle getting your

song out to listeners worldwide and distribute your royalties.

## 10. Launch Pre-Save and Pre-Order Campaigns

Create a pre-save campaign for Spotify and pre-orders for platforms like iTunes. These campaigns allow fans to "lock in" their interest, so your song gets a significant number of plays and purchases right after it drops—boosting your chart performance in that crucial first week.

## 11. Social Media Teasers and Content Plan

Build anticipation with behind-the-scenes footage, teasers of the track, and release announcements. Consistently post content related to the release to build excitement across all your platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc.). This would be a good time to create the cover art for your single/album. It's best to create different variations of this artwork to use for your social media posts promoting the upcoming release. If you're doing a music video, it's best to release the video and single on the same day. It's also a good idea to incorporate images from the music video in the artwork for the single, as well.

## 2 Weeks Before Release: Video Production and Final Prep

### 12. Music Video Production

If you're releasing a music video, make sure it's ready before the release. A compelling video can be a key part of your promotional strategy.

- **Pre-Production:** Plan the concept, scout locations, and gather your crew.

- **Post-Production:** Edit, color-correct, and finalize your video. Make sure the visuals are polished and fit your song's vibe.

### 13. Press Outreach and Playlist Submissions

Reach out to music blogs, magazines, and influencers to review or premiere your song. Submit your track to Spotify playlists and curators, aiming for influential lists that can push your song to more listeners. Platforms like SubmitHub can help with submissions.

### 14. Merchandise Preparation

If you're planning to sell related merch (T-shirts, signed copies, etc.), now is the time to finalize those products and ensure they're ready for your fans. Merch can significantly boost your income, especially during the release period.

## **Release Week: The Big Day**

### **15. Go Live on All Platforms**

Ensure your song is live on Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, and other platforms. This is when all your pre-saves will convert to plays, helping your song debut with strong numbers.

### **16. YouTube Video Release**

Coordinate the release of your music video on YouTube, making it coincide with your song's release. A YouTube premiere can generate immediate engagement and excitement from your audience.

### **17. Push for First-Week Streams and Sales**

The first week is critical for charting, so push hard on social media to encourage fans to stream, download, and share your song. This is where your pre-save and pre-order campaigns pay off, as well as playlist placements and press coverage.

### **18. Promote on TikTok and Instagram**

Encourage fans to use your song in their content. TikTok, in particular, is a powerful tool for going viral. Create challenges, memes, or duets to get people involved in your song.

## **Post-Release: Ongoing Promotion and Engagement**

### **19. Track Your Song's Performance**

Monitor your song's performance through platforms like Mediabase and Luminate. These services track your airplay, streams, and sales, helping you understand how well your song is performing and where your fanbase is growing.

### **20. Follow-Up Content and Engagement**

Keep promoting your song with new content, like behind-the-scenes footage from the video shoot, fan-generated content, or acoustic versions. Engage with fans via live streams or Q&As to keep the buzz alive.

### **21. Plan Live Performances or Virtual Shows**

Boost your song's exposure with live performances, whether in-person or via virtual events. A well-timed tour or concert can drive even more streams and sales.

## Why Do We Do All This?

- **BMI/ASCAP & SoundExchange:** Ensures you collect every performance and digital royalty when your music is played publicly or streamed.
- **Mediabase & Luminate Data:** These platforms track your song's airplay, sales, and streams, ensuring every spin and purchase counts toward chart placements (e.g., Billboard).
- **Songtrust:** Helps you collect international mechanical royalties and publishing income, ensuring you're paid for every play across all platforms.
- **Copyright Registration & ISRC Codes:** Protects your music and ensures it's correctly tracked for royalties.
- **Distributors & Pre-Save Campaigns:** Maximizes your song's exposure, ensuring your music is available globally and builds momentum before the release.

By following this detailed checklist, you're setting yourself up for maximum exposure, legal protection, and financial success. Whether you're aiming to chart or go viral, these steps will make sure you're hitting all the key points to give your release the best shot at success.