

Common compression terms

Term	Definition	Dimension
Threshold	The threshold of volume at which the compressor starts working	Level
Ratio	The extent to which the signal is compressed	Level
Attack	How long the gain reduction process takes after the Threshold is breached (the attack time is roughly two thirds of the total time)	Time
Release	The speed at which the compressor releases the gain reduction process (the release time is roughly two thirds of the total time)	Time

Common compression terms

Term	Definition
Hard Knee	Any sound breaching the threshold has gain reduction applied at the given ratio.
Soft Knee	The compressor applies harder gain reduction according to the extent of the breach of the threshold.
RMS	Root Mean Squared – a way of measuring the average of the waveform over a period. A more subtle form of compression.
Peak	Measurement of the Peak volume – a fast-acting, reactive form of compression.
Make-up	Amplification of the compressed signal to compensate for overall gain reduction.
Limiter	A compressor where no signal can breach the Threshold, essentially an infinite ratio.

Common compression terms

Term	Definition
Lookahead	Delaying the input signal so that the compressor can 'foresee' peaks in volume.
Sidechain	The use of an external signal to trigger gain reduction.
Sidechain EQ	The filtering of the external sidechain signal, to remove undesired peaks.
Wet/Dry/Depth	The mix between the original signal and the compressed signal.
Saturation/ Distortion	The artificial distortion of the signal to create desirable harmonics.
Range	The constraint of the range of possible gain reduction.

THE **MUSIC**
PRODUCER'S
→ **GUIDE**

Decision- making framework

I want my sound to...	Consider...
Be more harmonically rich	A vintage compressor (or a vintage-modelling plugin)
Have tightly controlled dynamics	A digital compressor
Glue different elements together	Bus compression
Use an external source as a sidechain	Any compressor with a sidechain input, although you'll get more precision from a digital compressor
Have a large dynamic range, but never exceed a particular threshold	A limiter, or limiting compressor
Be tightly controlled, but still sound natural	Parallel compression
Use different compression ratios on different frequency bands	Multiband compression
Some combination of the above	Serial compression