



SoundGirls Best Practices Guide

Creating Safe, Respectful & Professional Recording Environments

A Resource for Studio Owners, Producers, Engineers, Recording Facilities, Post-Production Houses, Broadcast Studios, Educational Institutions, Independent Producers, and Freelancers

About SoundGirls

SoundGirls is dedicated to supporting and advancing women and gender-diverse people in professional audio through education, mentorship, networking, training, career development, and community.

Since 2013, SoundGirls has worked to increase opportunities throughout live sound, recording arts, broadcast, post-production, podcasting, game audio, theater, corporate AV, education, and related fields.

This guide reflects our belief that the strongest studios are built on professionalism, collaboration, respect, and continuous learning.

Purpose of This Guide

Recording studios are unique workplaces.

Whether recording an album, mixing a feature film, producing a podcast, mastering an EP, creating immersive audio, editing dialogue, or designing sound for games, studio work relies on trust, communication, and creativity.

Studios often bring together artists, engineers, producers, assistants, interns, musicians, clients, and technical staff under intense creative and technical conditions. Long sessions,

freelance work, uneven power dynamics, and close collaboration create opportunities for remarkable creativity—but they also require thoughtful leadership.

This guide provides practical recommendations to help studios create environments where every participant can contribute their expertise, develop professionally, and work safely.

This document is intended as guidance and does not replace applicable employment laws or organizational policies.

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1. Leadership & Professional Responsibility

Studio owners, chief engineers, producers, educators, and managers establish the culture of every recording environment.

Leadership is demonstrated through everyday actions:

- treating everyone with respect
- communicating expectations clearly
- recognizing contributions
- maintaining confidentiality
- creating opportunities for learning
- responding appropriately to concerns

Professional studios cultivate trust before creativity.

2. Building Studio Culture

Every interaction contributes to studio culture.

Healthy studios encourage:

- curiosity
- preparation
- collaboration
- mentorship
- constructive feedback
- professionalism

People should never feel embarrassed for asking technical questions.

The best studios are places where everyone continues learning.

3. Preparing Before Sessions

Preparation creates confidence.

Before sessions begin:

Provide:

- schedules
- parking information

- accessibility information
- session expectations
- payment terms
- emergency contacts
- Wi-Fi information
- studio policies
- safety information

When everyone understands expectations, sessions run more efficiently.

4. Communication

Clear communication prevents misunderstandings.

Best practices include:

- confirming expectations
- discussing budgets beforehand
- reviewing deliverables
- communicating file formats
- documenting revisions
- explaining technical workflows when appropriate

Encourage respectful discussion rather than assumptions.

5. Sexual Harassment & Professional Boundaries

Every person has the right to work in a recording environment free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and unwanted conduct. Studios should foster a culture where professionalism, respect, and consent are expected at all times.

Sexual harassment can include unwelcome comments, jokes, gestures, unwanted physical contact, repeated requests for dates or personal attention, inappropriate text messages or social media interactions, sharing sexual images or content, or creating an environment that makes someone feel unsafe or excluded. Harassment can occur between colleagues, artists, producers, engineers, interns, clients, or anyone present in the studio.

Studio leaders, producers, and managers have a responsibility to set clear expectations and model professional behavior. Power imbalances should never be used to pressure someone into social situations, personal relationships, or unwanted interactions.

Studios should:

- Maintain a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, discrimination, bullying, and retaliation.
- Clearly communicate expectations for professional conduct to employees, freelancers, interns, artists, and clients.

- Provide multiple confidential ways for individuals to report concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Respond promptly, respectfully, and appropriately to all reports.
- Protect the privacy of those involved whenever possible.
- Take corrective action when inappropriate behavior occurs.
- Ensure that reporting harassment never negatively impacts someone's employment, education, or future opportunities.

If someone tells you they have experienced harassment, listen without judgment, thank them for coming forward, and take their concerns seriously. Leaders should avoid minimizing experiences or attempting to investigate beyond their role if formal reporting procedures exist.

A safe studio is one where everyone can focus on creating great work—not managing inappropriate behavior or worrying about their personal safety. Professional boundaries protect individuals, strengthen collaboration, and build healthier creative communities.

Resources

- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\) – Harassment Resources](#)
- [RAINN \(Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network\)](#)
- **Time's Up Foundation**
- [Safe In Our World \(Mental Health & Workplace Wellbeing\)](#)

This section aligns well with the tone of the rest of the guide by focusing on prevention, professionalism, accountability, and creating safe, respectful recording environments.

6. Power Dynamics in the Studio

Studios often involve unequal power relationships.

Examples include:

- artist / producer
- producer / assistant
- engineer / intern
- educator / student
- employer / freelancer

Those in leadership positions have a responsibility to maintain professional boundaries.

Leadership should never depend on intimidation.

Feedback should focus on improving the work—not diminishing the individual.

7. Supporting Women

Women continue to encounter barriers within recording environments.

Studios can promote equity by:

- assigning technical responsibilities based on skill
- including women in technical conversations
- rotating leadership opportunities
- recognizing expertise publicly
- providing mentorship
- correcting inappropriate behavior immediately

Every engineer deserves to be recognized for their work—not their gender.

8. Supporting Transgender & Gender-Expansive Professionals

Respect begins with communication.

Best practices include:

- using chosen names
- respecting pronouns
- correcting mistakes briefly
- protecting privacy
- never disclosing previous names or transition history
- updating credits whenever possible
- providing gender-neutral restrooms whenever feasible

Respect should be routine—not exceptional.

9. Accessibility & Disability Inclusion

Recording environments should be welcoming to professionals with disabilities.

Consider:

- accessible entrances
- adjustable workstations
- captioning during educational sessions
- accessible software
- lighting considerations
- mobility needs

- hearing accommodations
- visual accommodations

Ask privately how accommodations can support success.

10. Neurodiversity

Many successful engineers, editors, producers, programmers, and designers are neurodivergent.

Helpful practices include:

- written schedules
- written instructions
- advance notice of changes
- minimizing unnecessary interruptions
- predictable workflows
- quiet workspaces whenever possible

Different thinking styles strengthen creative teams.

Designing Accessible Materials

Accessibility applies to all creative assets, including documentation, presentations, and educational resources. Professionalism involves ensuring that every participant can engage with information regardless of how they process written content.

- prioritizing legible sans-serif typefaces such as **Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Tahoma, or Aptos**
- utilizing inclusive fonts like [Atkinson Hyperlegible](#), [Lexend](#), or [OpenDyslexic](#)
- avoiding script, cursive, or highly stylized fonts that create barriers for readers with dyslexia
- maintaining a minimum size of **18–24 pt** for slide decks and ensuring high visual contrast
- organizing content with headers, concise paragraphs, and bulleted lists
- using icons or labels alongside color to convey essential information
- sharing resources early to support the use of assistive technologies and screen readers

The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) offer further industry standards for creating inclusive digital communications.

11. Mental Health & Creative Work

Creative work often involves:

- perfectionism
- long sessions
- deadlines
- client expectations
- financial uncertainty
- isolation
- burnout

Encourage:

- breaks
- healthy schedules
- open communication
- sustainable workloads

Healthy people produce better work.

12. Artist Safety & Consent

Recording sessions often involve emotionally vulnerable performances.

Artists should never feel pressured to:

- perform beyond agreed expectations
- share personal experiences
- participate in unwanted recording
- consume alcohol or drugs
- remain in uncomfortable situations

Always obtain consent before:

- filming
- livestreaming
- photographing
- sharing behind-the-scenes content
- publishing unfinished work

Respect creative boundaries.

13. Educational Studios & Internships

Educational studios should prioritize learning.

Interns should:

- receive mentorship
- understand session etiquette
- observe professional workflows
- participate meaningfully
- receive constructive feedback

Internships should never replace paid positions.

Learning should always take precedence over free labor.

14. Freelancers & Independent Contractors

Independent professionals deserve clear expectations.

Discuss:

- rates
- payment schedules
- revisions
- ownership
- deliverables
- confidentiality
- cancellations
- overtime

Written agreements protect everyone.

Pay people promptly.

15. AI, Vocal Cloning & Emerging Technologies

Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing recording workflows.

Studios should establish transparent policies regarding:

- vocal cloning
- voice synthesis
- AI-generated music
- training datasets
- copyright
- consent
- disclosure

Artists should understand how their recordings will be used.

Respect ownership and creative intent.

16. Crediting & Metadata

Accurate credits are essential to professional growth.

Verify credits for:

- producer
- engineer
- assistant engineer
- editor
- programmer
- mixer
- mastering engineer
- dialogue editor
- sound designer
- musicians

Proper metadata improves discoverability and future employment.

17. Studio Safety

Safety includes more than electrical systems.

Studios should consider:

- emergency exits
- hearing protection
- ergonomic workstations
- safe lifting
- equipment maintenance
- late-night transportation
- building security
- visitor procedures

Safety planning protects everyone.

18. Psychological Safety

Research consistently shows that creativity flourishes when people feel safe sharing ideas.

Studio leaders should encourage:

- respectful disagreement
- asking questions
- experimentation
- admitting mistakes
- collaborative problem solving

People create their best work when they aren't afraid of failure.

19. Studio Manager's Checklist

Before Sessions

- ☐ Review schedule
- ☐ Confirm accessibility needs
- ☐ Verify equipment
- ☐ Prepare documentation
- ☐ Confirm preferred names for credits
- ☐ Review emergency contacts
- ☐ Ensure studio cleanliness

During Sessions

- ☐ Welcome everyone professionally
- ☐ Introduce participants
- ☐ Encourage collaboration
- ☐ Monitor hearing safety
- ☐ Offer breaks
- ☐ Address concerns promptly
- ☐ Maintain confidentiality

After Sessions

- ☐ Verify credits
- ☐ Back up recordings
- ☐ Deliver agreed files
- ☐ Process invoices
- ☐ Request feedback

20. Sample Code of Conduct

Every person entering this studio deserves to work in an environment grounded in professionalism, creativity, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, bullying, or abusive conduct will not be tolerated.

Studio participants are expected to:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Communicate professionally.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Respect creative boundaries.
- Credit contributions accurately.
- Support a safe and welcoming workplace.
- Raise concerns through appropriate channels.

The best recordings are created in environments where people feel safe to learn, experiment, and contribute.

21. Industry Resources

Professional Audio

- [SoundGirls](#)
- [Women's Audio Mission](#)
- [Audio Engineering Society \(AES\)](#)
- [Women in Music](#)
- [Women in Vinyl](#)
- [Recording Academy](#)
- [Music Producers Guild \(UK\)](#)

Accessibility & Disability

- [Audio Accessibility Alliance \(AAA\)](#)
- [RAMPD \(Recording Artists and Music Professionals with Disabilities\)](#)

LGBTQIA+

- [Voluminous Arts](#)
- [Spark the Noise](#)
- [Pride in Music](#)
- [Global Action for Trans Equality \(GATE\)](#)

- [Transgender Europe \(TGEU\)](#)

Mental Health

- [Backline](#)
- [MusiCares](#)

Hearing Health

- [Hearing Health Foundation](#)
- [Tinnitus Quest](#)

Final Thoughts

Recording environments shape not only the projects we create but also the careers we build. Every interaction—whether between artists, engineers, producers, assistants, educators, or clients—contributes to the culture of our industry.

The strongest studios are not simply defined by their equipment or acoustics. They are defined by professionalism, collaboration, respect, and a shared commitment to excellence.

By adopting these best practices, studios can foster workplaces where creativity thrives, technical innovation is encouraged, and every participant has the opportunity to contribute fully. In doing so, we strengthen the future of recording arts and help ensure that our industry remains a place where talent, curiosity, and collaboration can flourish.