



# **Essential Guide: Peak Time Techno Production**

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# Introduction

This guide helps beginners create clean, powerful, club-ready peak-time techno in any DAW. All plugins listed are recommendations only, not requirements. Your DAW's stock plugins can achieve the same results. Numbered terms refer to the Technical Glossary at the end.

## 1. Gain Staging (1)

Gain staging means keeping audio levels controlled at every stage so sounds hit plugins correctly. It prevents distortion (2), maintains headroom (3), and allows your mix to stay punchy and clean. Why it matters:

- Plugins behave better with proper levels
- Reduces noise and unwanted saturation
- Creates space for mastering

How I use it:

- Tracks peak at -12 to -9 dB
- Keep the master at -6 dB
- Mix at low volume

Recommended Plugins:

- Kilohearts Gain
- FabFilter Pro-Q3
- Waves VU Meter

## 2. Kick and Bass Balance (4)

The kick and bass define the weight and movement of techno. They must complement each other without overlapping. Why it matters:

- Creates a powerful low-end
- Prevents mud
- Allows louder mastering

How I use it:

- Keep both mono (5)
- High-pass non-bass elements
- Use multiband compression (6)
- Add saturation (7) for harmonics

Recommended Plugins:

- FabFilter Pro-Q3
- OTT
- Saturn 2

## 3. EQ Basics (8)

EQ is the most important tool for creating clarity and removing frequency masking.

Why it matters:

- Prevents buildup in the mix
- Lets leads and stabs stand out
- Controls harshness

How I use it:

- Cut 200-500 Hz mud
- Tame 2-5 kHz harshness
- Use EQ sweeps (9) to find resonances (10)

Recommended Plugins:

- FabFilter Pro-Q3
- Waves F6

## 4. Mid Side Processing (11)

Mid Side lets you control the mono center separately from the stereo sides (12). Why it matters:

- Adds width safely
- Keeps low-end focused
- Creates space for atmosphere

How I use it:

- Boost highs on sides
- Cut lows on sides
- Center leads

Recommended Plugins:

- Ozone Imager
- Pro-Q3 MS mode

## 5. Compression (2)

Compression shapes dynamics (13) and controls transients (14). Essential for punch.

Why it matters:

- Adds punch to drums
- Controls uneven levels
- Glues percussion

How I use it:

- Slow attack on kick
- Medium attack on snares
- Light hat compression

Recommended Plugins:

- Glue Compressor
- Pro-C2
- 1176 emulations

## 6. Parallel Processing (15)

Parallel processing blends a dry signal with a heavily processed one. Why it matters:

- Adds aggression safely
- Thickens drums and synths
- Keeps clarity

How I use it:

- Parallel compression on drums
- Parallel saturation for weight
- Parallel reverb for depth without mud

Recommended Plugins:

- Decapitator
- R-Comp
- Valhalla Room

## 7. Saturation (7)

Saturation adds harmonics (16) that create warmth, presence, and analog character.

Why it matters:

- Helps sounds cut through
- Adds tone and color
- Reduces digital harshness

How I use it:

- Tube for warmth
- Tape for glue
- Multiband for aggressive tone

Recommended Plugins:

- Saturn 2
- Abbey Road Saturator

## 8. Clean Highs

Techno uses sharp metallic percussive sounds. Controlling harshness keeps the mix powerful but smooth. Why it matters:

- Avoids ear fatigue
- Allows louder masters
- Prevents painful frequencies

How I use it:

- Reduce 2-5 kHz peaks
- Dynamic EQ (17)
- Soft saturation

Recommended Plugins:

- Soothe2
- Pro-Q3

## 9. Panning

Panning creates groove, interest, and an immersive stereo field (18). Why it matters:

- Prevents sounds clashing
- Creates motion
- Widened FX increase impact

How I use it:

- Center kick/bass
- Pan percussion lightly
- Use wide FX for texture

Recommended Plugins:

- Panpot
- MicroShift

## 10. Mastering

Mastering shapes the final tone and loudness. Why it matters:

- Ensures translation on all systems
- Creates competitive loudness
- Balances frequency spectrum

How I use it:

- Light EQ
- Soft saturation
- Limiting (19)
- Keep subs mono

Recommended Plugins:

- Pro-L2
- Ozone Maximizer

## Additional Creative Concepts

- Use strong synth stabs. Serum preset packs help.
- Call and Response phrases add movement.
- Groove comes from microdynamics (20).
- Turn percussion loops to MIDI for melodic ideas.
- Contrast matters: silence vs loudness, narrow vs wide.

# Technical Glossary

1. Gain Staging - Managing levels.
2. Distortion - Clipping.
3. Headroom - Space before clipping.
4. Kick and Bass Balance - Low-end relationship.
5. Mono - One-channel audio.
6. Multiband Compression - Band-based compression.
7. Saturation - Harmonic enhancement.
8. EQ - Frequency shaping.
9. EQ Sweep - Searching frequencies.
10. Resonance - Ringing tone.
11. Mid Side Processing - Mid/Side control.
12. Stereo Field - Left/right placement.
13. Dynamics - Volume changes.
14. Transients - Initial attacks.
15. Parallel Processing - Dry/wet blending.
16. Harmonics - Added frequencies.
17. Dynamic EQ - Level-reactive EQ.
19. Limiting - Preventing peak overs.
20. Microdynamics - Tiny timing/volume variations.



**Hope you enjoyed this guide and found it helpful. Good luck  
on your techno production journey!**