



# Beginner's Guide to Recording Clean Vocals at Home

by Honeycomb Lab



"Your first mic doesn't matter — your first 50 reps do."

— David Cody



## 1. What You Need (And Nothing More)

### ✂ Hardware Checklist (Ultra-Budget Edition)


| Item   | Free/Cheap Options                       |
|--|--|
| Microphone   | ! Your phone's mic (surprisingly usable) |
|  Old headset / laptop mic            |  |
|  FIFINE K669B (\$30 if you upgrade) |  |
| Pop Filter   | Pantyhose + wire hanger                  |
| or paper towel over mic  |  |
| Headphones   | Any wired headphones (earbuds OK)        |
| Avoid: Bluetooth (latency ruins takes)   |  |
| Mic Stand  | Books + socks. Seriously.                |
| Just raise mic to mouth level.   |  |



### Recording Software (Free DAWs)

| Platform                         | Free Option                                  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Windows                          | Cakewalk by BandLab – full DAW, pro features |
| Audacity – basic, limited mixing |  |
| Mac                              | GarageBand – clean UI, beginner-friendly     |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Platform | Free Option                                   |
| Browser  | BandLab.com – record, mix & master in-browser |

 **All include built-in plugins:**  
**EQ, compressor, limiter, etc. You don't need to download extras.**

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## **2. Setting Up Your “Studio” for Free**

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### Find Your Quietest Space

#### **Ideal spots:**

- Bedroom corner with thick blankets
- Closet full of clothes
- Car (parked, not moving)
- Under a blanket fort (for real)

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### Treat the Space with What You Have

|                         |                                   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Problem                 | Free Fix                          |
| Room echo               | Hang thick blankets behind you    |
| Put mattress behind mic |                                   |
| Background noise        | Turn off fridge, AC, loud laptops |
| Record late at night    |                                   |
| Reflections             | Put pillows or coats around you   |
| Record facing clothes   |                                   |

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### **Mic Positioning (No Matter the Mic)**

1. Mouth height: don't point up/down
2. Distance: 5–8 inches away
3. Pop filter: pantyhose or tissue in front
4. Angle: Tilt slightly off-axis (45°)

5. Stillness: Stay centered – don't sway or spin
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### 3. Vocal FX Chain with Stock Plugins Only

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This is how you clean up your vocals *inside* your DAW — no extra downloads, just what comes built-in.

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#### If Using Cakewalk or GarageBand

| FX                | What It Does                                    |
|-------------------|---|
| Noise Gate        | Cuts background noise between words             |
| EQ                | Roll off low end (rumble), add brightness       |
| Compressor        | Levels volume, makes vocals pop                 |
| Limiter           | Stops clipping on peaks                         |
| Reverb (Optional) | Add just a bit of space — never while recording |

💡 Tip: Turn off ALL effects during recording.  
Record DRY. Add FX afterward.

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#### If Using Audacity

Step Effect

- 1 Select silence → Noise Reduction
  - 2 EQ → High-pass at 80 Hz, boost 5k–8k lightly
  - 3 Compressor (default settings okay)
  - 4 Normalize
  - 5 Reverb (just a sprinkle if needed)
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### Settings Cheat Sheet (For All DAWs)

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Plugin     | Suggested Settings                      |
| EQ         | HPF at 80 Hz, small boost 4k–8kHz       |
| Compressor | Ratio 3:1, Threshold -20 dB, Gain +3 dB |
| Limiter    | Ceiling -0.5 dB                         |
| De-esser   | If available, target 5–8kHz             |

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## 4. Recording Technique (What No One Tells Beginners)

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### Before You Hit Record:

- Close all apps: Save CPU
- Drink water: Room temp, not cold
- Warm up: Hums, lip rolls, tongue stretches
- Do a test take: Listen for background noise, clipping

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### During Recording:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Tip                  | Why                                    |
| Multiple takes (3–6) | You'll perform better after warming up |
| Stay still           | Movement ruins volume consistency      |
| Speak clearly        | Enunciate, don't mumble                |
| Check volume         | Stay around -12 to -6 dB. Never red.   |

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### File Tips:

- Save with clear names: Verse1\_Take2.wav
  - Record in mono (not stereo)
  - Keep dry backups of every take
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## 5. Top Mistakes & Easy Fixes

| Mistake                | Fix                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Clipping / red peaks   | Lower input gain, speak softer |
| Echo-y vocals          | Treat the room, not the mic    |
| Recording with effects | Always record DRY              |
| Popping “P” sounds     | Use ANYTHING as a pop filter   |
| Loud breaths           | Trim or fade them in DAW       |

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## 💡 6. Final Tips from Honeycomb Lab

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- 🧴 Dry first, effects later: Always record dry, mix wet.
  - 🐝 Repeat takes: The first one rarely sounds best.
  - 🪞 Use a mirror: Watch your posture.
  - 🎧 Test on multiple speakers: Phone, laptop, headphones.
  - 🔊 **Volume ≠ quality: Clear and emotional > loud and muddy.**
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## 💖 You're More Than Ready

If all you have is:

- a phone mic
- a pair of wired earbuds
- and a quiet blanket fort...

You can still record vocals that connect.

Clean vocals are not about money — they're about focus, preparation, and good habits.

You've got this.

Now go record something dope. 🎤 🐝

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