

tonebase Academy | Recording Course

# II. The Edit



**Your Instructor:** Martin Zimny

**Suitable For:** All Levels

A tonebase Workbook

*“The editing process can be whatever you want it to be: try to make a soulless, clinically correct reproduction of the score – or, create a beautiful work of art wasn’t there until you assembled it. But the pieces are already there, like the colors of a painter.”*

## Prior Knowledge

- How to listen back to prerecorded audio material in your DAW

## Contents

03	Preparing your Tracks
05	Listening Back
06	The Edit
09	Assignments
10	Questions

## Lesson Summary

In this lesson, we will learn how to prepare our DAW and recordings to ensure maximum efficiency of the editing workflow. After creating an editing plan with our score, we will perform our first edits and create a master edit!

### What You’ll Learn:

- How to listen back to your recordings
- How to prepare your tracks for editing
- How to make cuts to your audio recordings

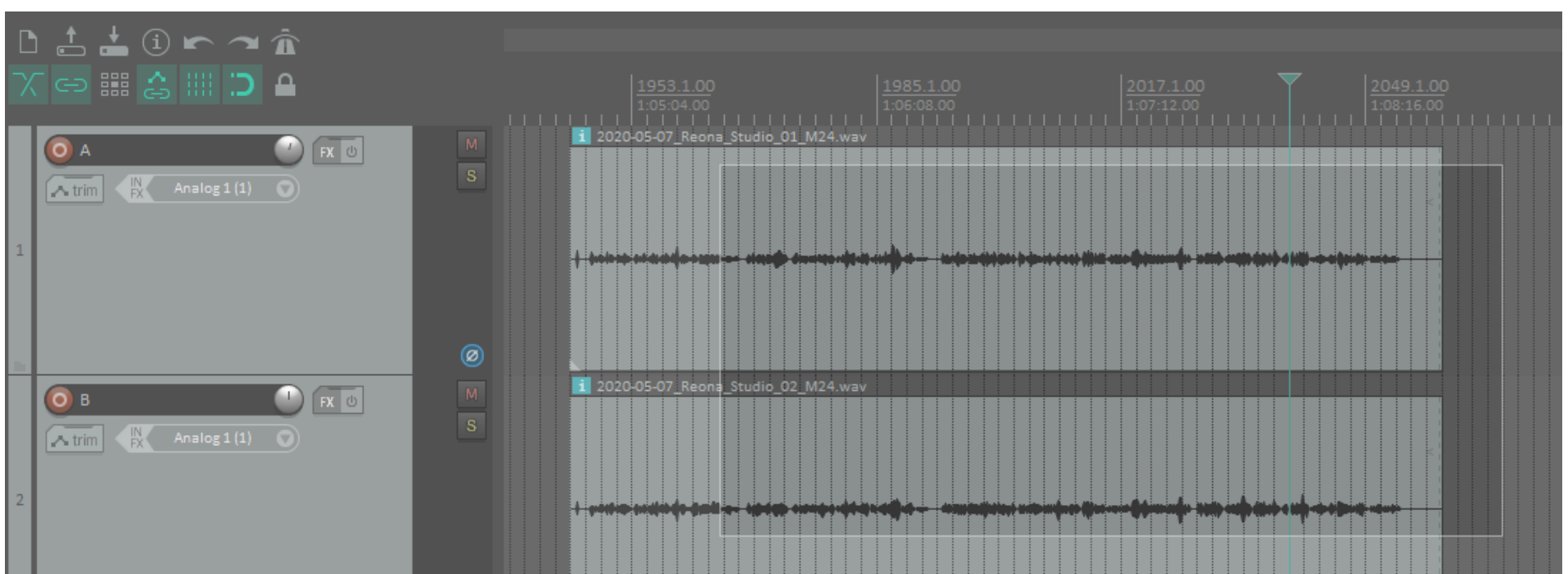
# Preparing your Tracks

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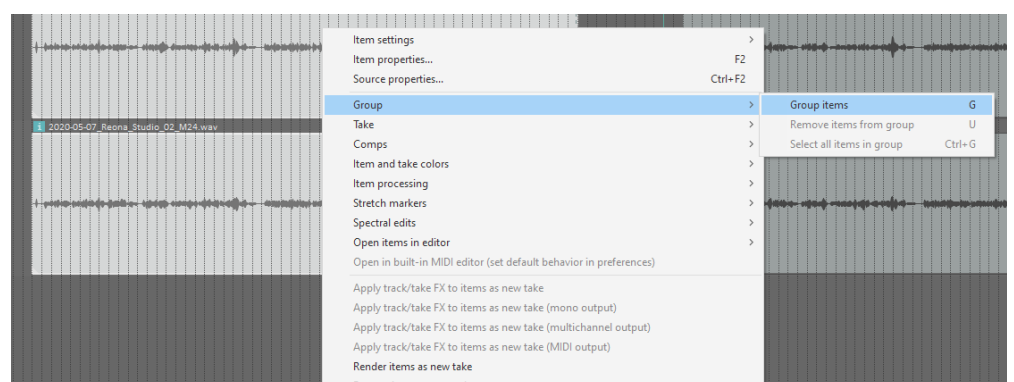
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Before we begin trimming clips with our digital scissors and gluing them back together, we need to prepare our tracks! If you recorded a single mono or stereo track, you don't need to worry about this step. If you recorded with multiple microphones onto several single mono tracks, you want to **group** the items that belong together. This is fairly easy to accomplish in Reaper:

First, create a selection of the items you want to group. Hold down the right mouse button and drag over the items you want to select.



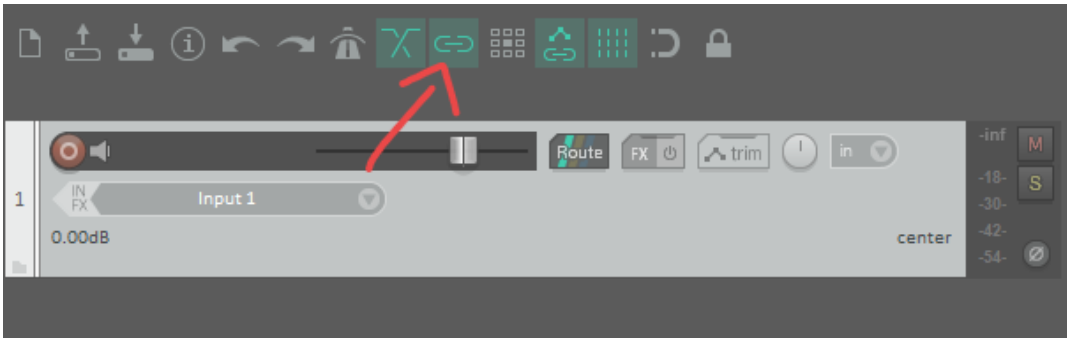
Second, make sure both items are highlighted and click the right mouse button to open the context menu. Select **Group** → **Group Items**. You can also hit the keyboard shortcut G.



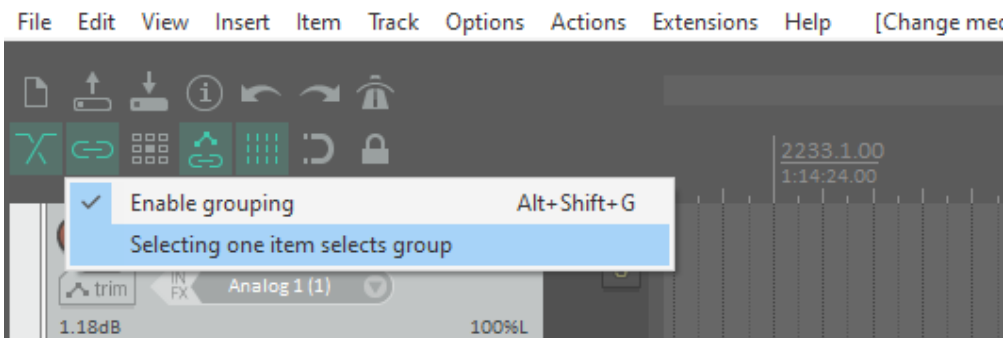
You can verify that your takes have been grouped by looking for the green chain symbol on the upper-left corner of your tracks:



Now that the items are grouped, you can perform edits to both at the same time. Let’s activate the hidden feature: **“Selecting one item selects group”**. You can open a dialog to access this option by right-clicking the group symbol, found on the toolbar on top of the window:



Now choose the option **“Selecting one item selects group”**. This will make copy and pasting items much easier!



# Listening Back

Before we start cutting, trimming, slicing, and pasting, it's best to have a plan! The best place to make that plan is your score. So, grab your pencils and open your ears for some critical listening!

1, 2, 3, 4

Präludium

Matteo Carcassi (1792 - 1853)

The image shows a musical score for 'Präludium' by Matteo Carcassi. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four systems of music. The first system has a blue circle around the first measure and a red '3+' above it. The second system has blue circles around measures 5, 6, and 7, with red '2-3+' and '3-' above them. The third system has blue circles around measures 9, 10, 11, and 12, with a red '4++' above measure 11. The fourth system has a blue circle around measure 13 and a red '2+ 2~' above it.

Listen back to your recordings one by one. Maybe you still remember the recording that felt the best; this is a strong indicator of a good take. Sometimes you may want to use a take with more mistakes or noises than another take, but which offers a broader and more vivid musical spectrum! The editor's workbench is messy; where wood is chopped, splinters must fall! So don't be afraid to use a take that needs a little bit more editing if it has greater potential. In the upper left corner of the score, I would mark all the takes I have to get an idea of all the possibilities available to me.

Then I would listen back and mark down any noises or issues by writing the take number and a minus symbol. If something is usable but somehow felt strange, I would mark it with a tilde sign (~). Remember, I usually make these markings in real-time during a production, so I will need to *quickly* decide whether a passage was good, usable, or bad. If I hear a passage that is especially sparkling or inspiring, I would indicate that on the score as well.

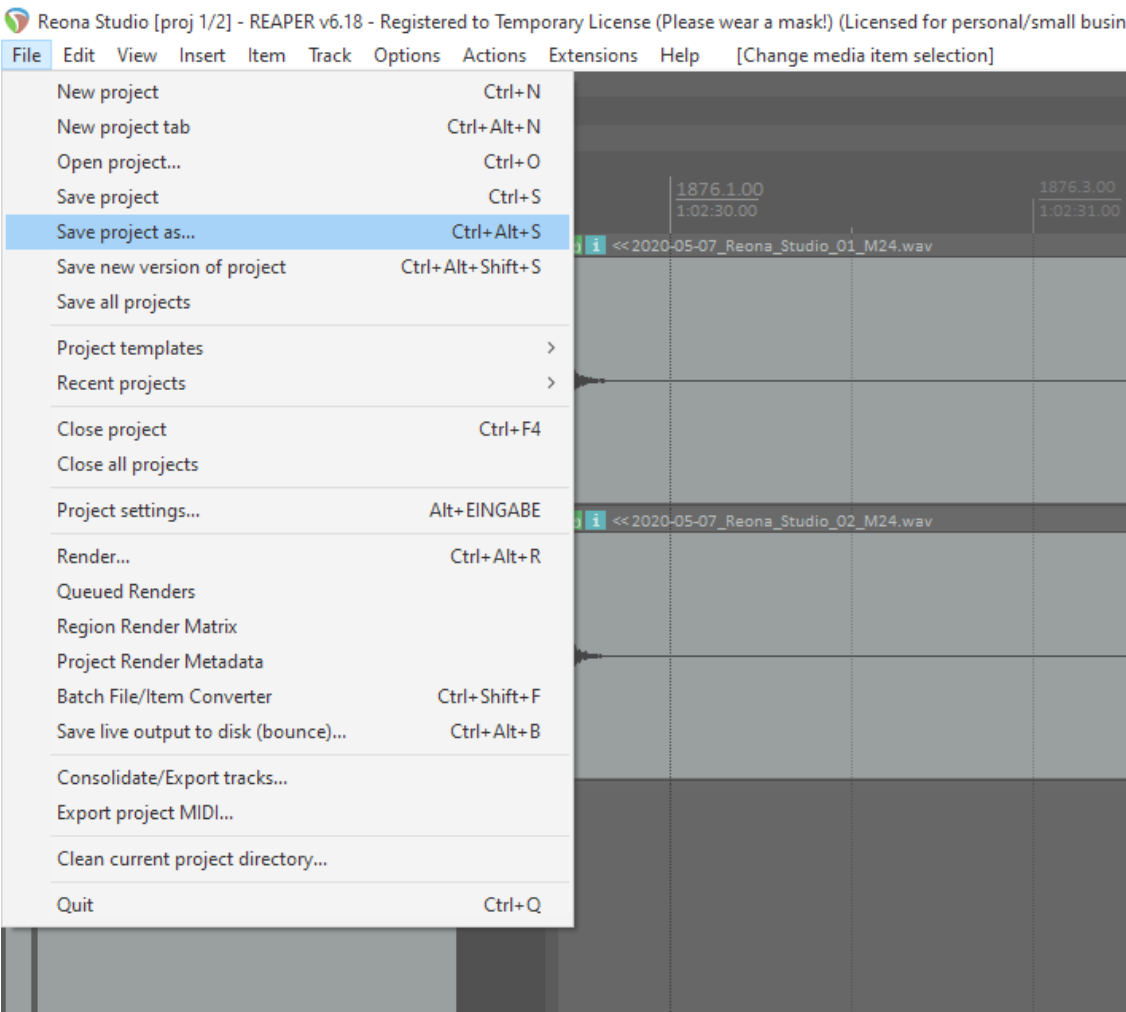
After a thorough listen through each take, I decide which takes to use. In the above example, take 3 had the most to offer, so that will be my main take. In certain places, I decided I liked a different take better, so I'll cut to that take in the final edit. The markings in blue on the previous page represent my final decisions.

Why not just edit directly in my DAW, you might ask? When I separate the creative decision-making process from the technical editing process, I work more quickly and have much more freedom with each step. I know exactly *why* I want to edit a certain section, and the rest is technical execution. Of course, your editing decisions might be informed both by your creative decisions and the technical possibilities of an edit. Working on the score first, however, ensures that you only make an edit because you want to, not simply because you can.

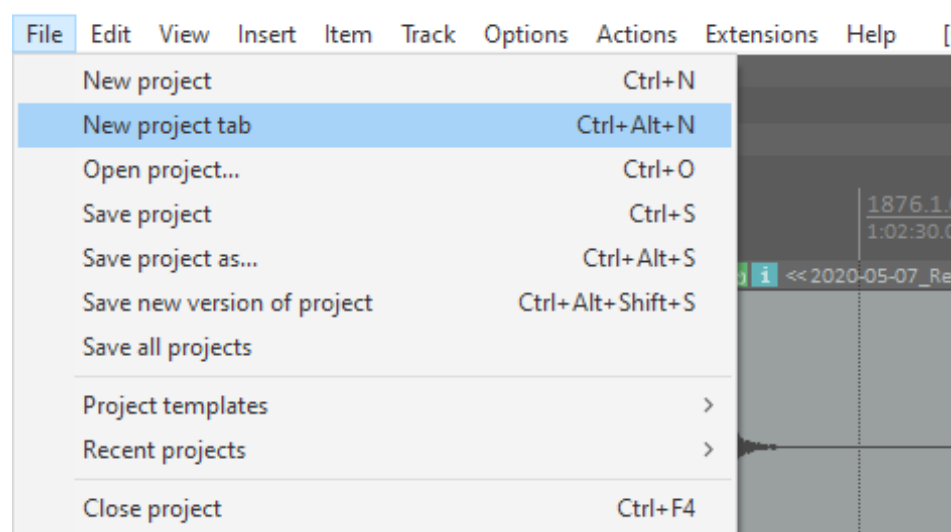
# The Edit

Now that we've made a plan, we simply need to tell our DAW to take our third take and exchange it with the other takes in the proper places. Here's how I would accomplish this:

Save the project with a new name by clicking **File** → **Save project as**. I'll be saving this new project with the name "Destination", and I'll explain why on the next page.



Then, open a new project tab:



In our new project tab, open the newly created project. You should now have two projects open at the same time, your original project and the “Destination” project. Delete everything from the “Destination” project so that you have an empty canvas. Don’t worry, deleting files in a DAW does not delete the files from your hard drive. The original project still has access to those files.

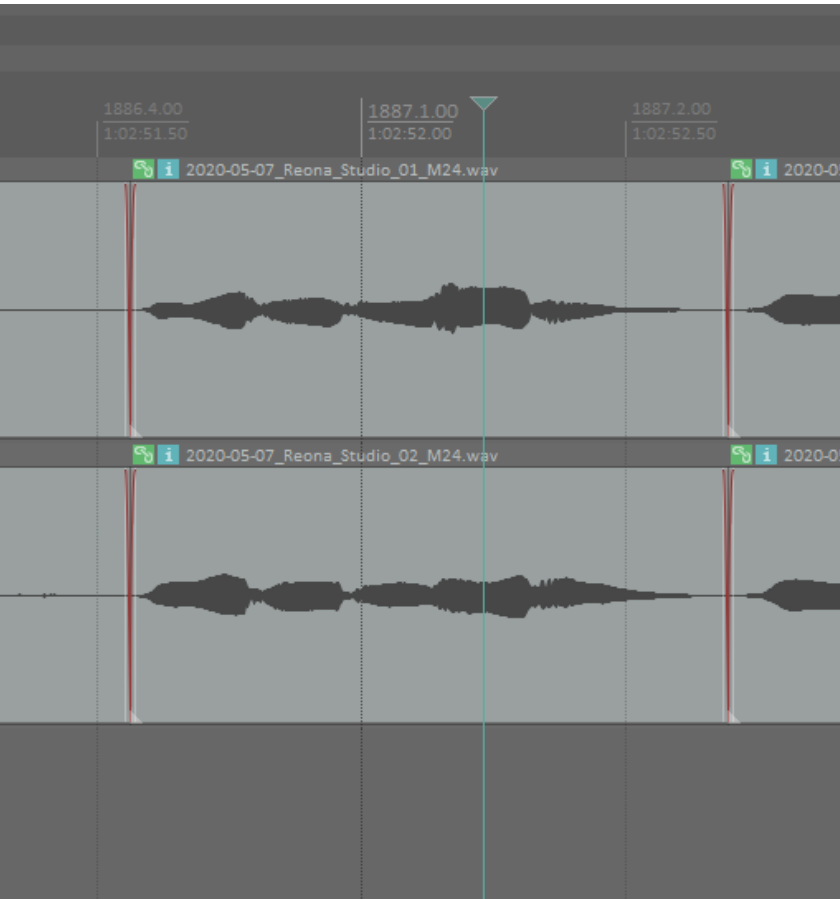
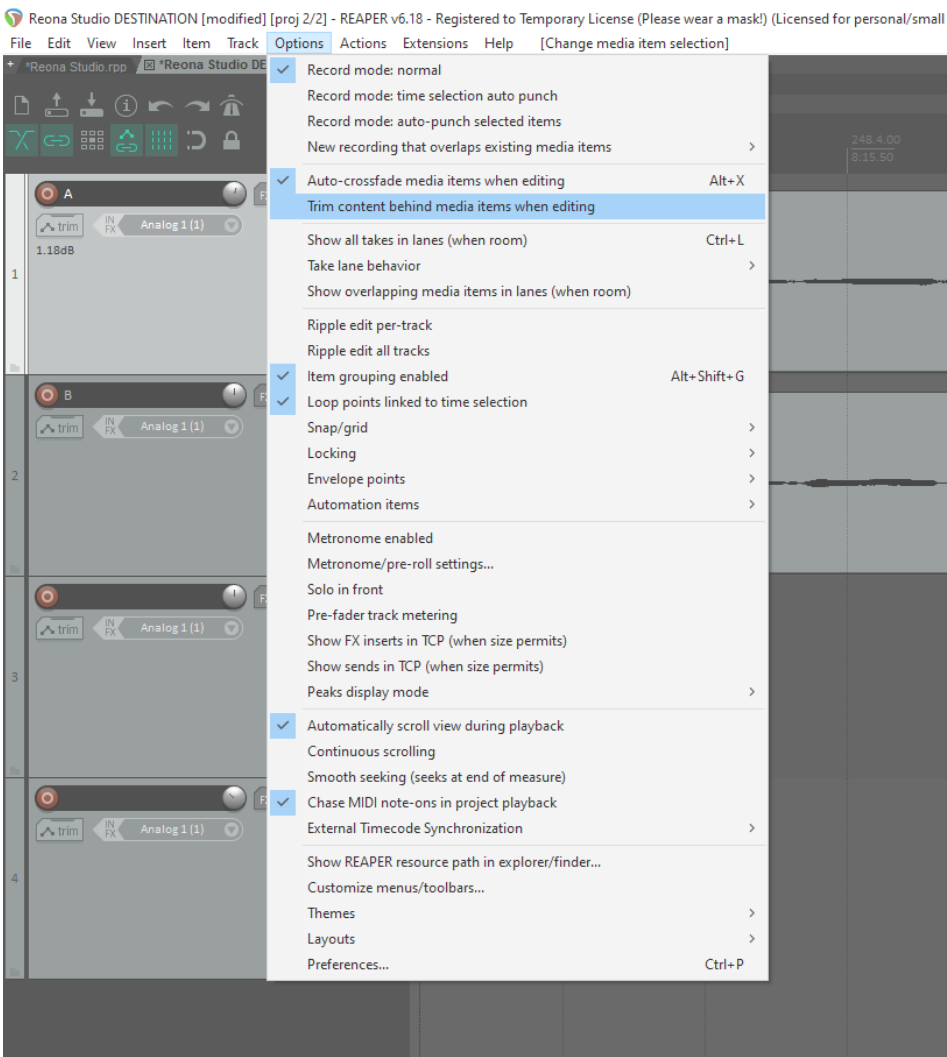
Now you can quickly switch between these two projects by clicking on the corresponding tab. One helpful feature in Reaper is that you can assign shortcuts to almost every action. I assigned the action "**Next Project Tab**" to my tab key, so switching between two projects is lightning fast!

Now we’re ready to make an edit! Copy your third recording from your original project by **1)** selecting the grouped items containing the third take, **2)** hitting the shortcut ctrl + C on Windows or command+C on Mac, and **3)** pasting them into your new project. This project now contains only your third take.



Before we insert our other takes, we want to enable an option that will help us refine the edit point: navigate to **Options** → **Trim content behind media item when editing**. This way, Reaper will automatically create cuts on the existing take when we paste in a new item.

Now that your playhead is in the right position, we need to find the take we want to exchange it with. Navigate to the corresponding take and split the item at the desired spot using the keyboard shortcut S.



Now, select that item and copy it with the shortcut ctrl/command+C. Head over to your destination project and insert the take via the shortcut ctrl/command+V. This will insert the copied item at the position of your playhead. Make sure that your first track is selected so that your items are pasted into the correct track.

**Congratulations on your first edit!**



It is perfectly possible that everything went right and the edit sounds smooth. However, it's more likely that we need to refine the edit a little bit more. If you misplaced the item, you can simply select and drag it to the desired place. You can also grab the edit point between two items and drag it around, leaving the music intact but changing the point where one take fades into the other. Finally, you can leave the edit points in place and drag the audio material underneath the item. During our live session, I will go into great detail about the particular situations in which each of these methods should be applied.

Editing audio requires meticulous work for something that you don't want to hear in the end. We don't want to hear where edits have been made—if you can hear the cut between two bars, then you probably should start over with your edit. But if you do everything right, you can create a piece of music that didn't exist moments before!

## Assignments

Each lesson in this course contains one or more assignments. These are due by next week's session (January 25th). Share these with your fellow recording artists in the [dedicated forum thread](#)—let's talk and discuss them!

- Prepare your recorded takes for editing by grouping them if necessary.
- Listen back to your recordings with your score and plan your edits.
- Edit your recording into a master take that is as good as you can get it!
- [Upload your track here](#), together with your score containing your edit markings.

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# Questions

Use the questions below to check your understanding of the material from this session. Use the dedicated forum thread to post further questions or discuss topics from this workshop. Martin will post the answers on the forum a couple of days after the live stream takes place.

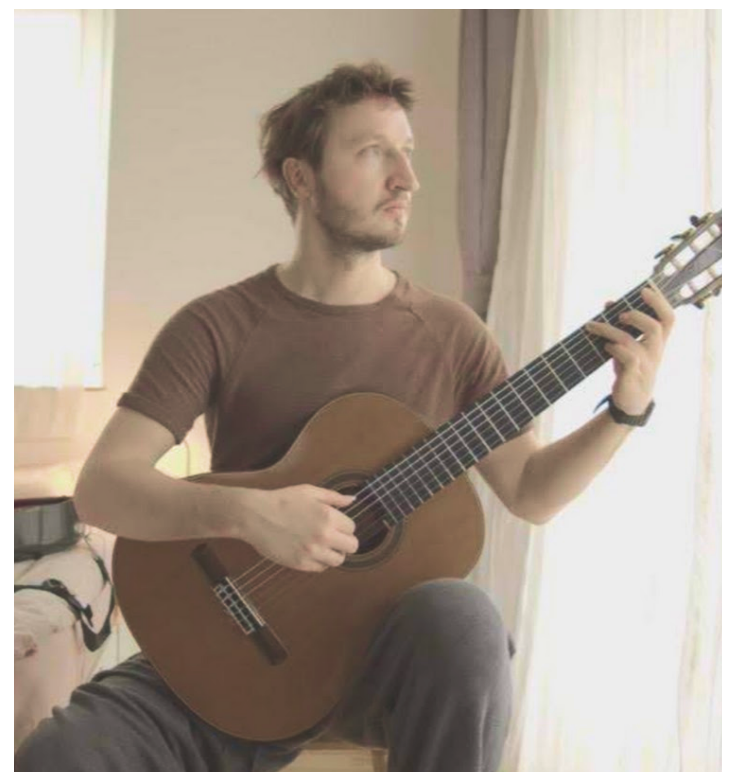
**1. Why do we group tracks?**

**2. Why should you make an edit plan?**

**3. If you delete an item from your DAW, what happens to it?**

## About Your Instructor: Martin Zimny

Martin Zimny, born in 1988 in Munich, Germany, graduated with a Master's of Music from the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf, Germany with Cuban guitarist Joaquín Clerch. He has won prizes in several national and international competitions and played concerts across Europe and India. He has taken part in festivals and workshops in Austria, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Serbia. Martin has been working as a guitar instructor for almost 10 years. After his degree in music, he studied Engineering for Audio and Video at the University of Applied Sciences in Düsseldorf. Today, he continues to perform and teach while working as a professional recording engineer.



## Notes

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