Copyright and Publishing Checklist

A step-by-step checklist to complete before you share, sell, or publish your music, plus a simple record sheet to keep with each song. Use as much of it as your plans require: a song shared with family needs only the first section; a song released on streaming services needs them all.

Song:

Fill in on screen (Adobe Reader, Microsoft Edge, or Google Chrome: click the boxes and type in the fields, then save) **or print** and complete by hand.

> **Important: please read.** This checklist reflects general U.S. principles and common platform practices as of November 2026. It is not legal advice. Laws, court decisions, platform policies, and AI company terms change frequently and vary by country. Always check current terms and policies, and consult a qualified attorney for significant commercial uses. See Chapter 19 for explanations of the terms used here.

Which Sections Do I Need?

What I plan to do	Complete sections
Share privately with family and friends	1
Post publicly (website, YouTube, social media) without earning money	1, 2
Use in a channel, podcast, or business that earns money	1, 2, 3
Make custom songs for others, paid or unpaid	1, 2, 3, 6
Release on Spotify, Apple Music, and other streaming services	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Register a copyright	1, 2, 3, plus copyright.gov

Section 1: Every Song, Before Sharing

The basics of responsible sharing (Chapters 12 and 19).

- ☐ Kindness: The song celebrates rather than embarrasses anyone named or described in it.
- ☐ Privacy: It doesn’t reveal health, financial, family, or other private details someone would prefer kept private.
- ☐ Audience: The content suits everyone who might hear it.
- ☐ Sharing: If it will be shared beyond the family, it avoids full names, addresses, and identifying details about children.
- ☐ Permission: Anyone whose voice I recorded agreed to be recorded and to the sharing I have planned.
- ☐ Honesty: I’m prepared to mention, if asked, that the music was made with AI tools.

Section 2: Before Sharing Publicly

Avoiding the most common rights problems (Chapter 19).

- ☐ Lyrics: The lyrics are my own, or AI-generated. They contain no lyrics from anyone else’s songs.
- ☐ No imitation: The song doesn’t imitate a real singer’s voice, and my prompts don’t name real artists.
- ☐ Uploads: Any audio I uploaded to the AI tool, such as humming, an instrument, or a voice, is my own or used with permission.

- [ ] Custom voice: Any custom AI voice was created only from my own voice, or with clear permission.
- [ ] Similarity: The song doesn't sound strikingly like an existing song I know.
- [ ] Public domain: If I used an old song, I confirmed it's in the public domain and didn't copy a protected modern arrangement or recording.
- [ ] Images: Cover art and video images avoid logos, brand names, and real people's likenesses, unless I have permission.
- [ ] Labels: I'll follow any platform requirements to label AI-generated or synthetic content.

Section 3: Before Any Commercial Use

Confirming you have permission to earn money from the music (Chapters 19 and 20).

- [ ] Plan: The song was created and downloaded while I was on a plan that allows commercial use.
- [ ] Terms: I've read my AI music tool's current terms of service on commercial use.
- [ ] Records: I've saved the date I created and downloaded the song, the plan I was on, and a copy or screenshot of the terms in effect.
- [ ] Human contribution: I've identified my own contributions: lyrics, vocals, instruments, edits, and selection or arrangement.
- [ ] Documentation: My prompts, lyric drafts, revision logs, and recordings are saved in the song's project folder.
- [ ] Non-exclusivity: I understand AI-generated music may not be unique, and that others may receive similar results.
- [ ] Professional advice: For significant commercial plans, I've considered speaking with an intellectual property attorney and a tax professional.

Section 4: Preparing a Streaming Release

Getting everything ready for a distributor (Chapter 20).

Choosing a distributor

- [ ] I've read the distributor's current AI music policy and can comply with it.
- [ ] I understand its fees, any royalty percentage, and what happens to my music if I stop paying.

Audio

- [ ] Final WAV files are ready (not MP3).
- [ ] Each track starts and ends cleanly, with no unwanted silence or abrupt endings.
- [ ] Volume is balanced across all tracks on an album.
- [ ] I've listened to the final files on headphones and on a phone speaker.

Artwork

- [ ] Square cover art at the size the distributor requires (commonly 3,000 × 3,000 pixels).
- [ ] Artwork includes no website addresses, social media handles, prices, or streaming-service logos.
- [ ] Artwork contains no images I don't have the right to use.
- [ ] Title and artist name on the artwork match the release information exactly.

Release information

- [ ] Artist name checked on the major streaming services to make sure no one else uses it.
- [ ] Song and album titles spelled exactly as they should appear.

- ☐ Songwriter credits list me as lyricist for lyrics I wrote.
- ☐ Genre, language, and explicit-content settings are correct.
- ☐ AI disclosure questions answered honestly and specifically, covering lyrics, vocals, instruments, and production.
- ☐ Release date set at least two to four weeks ahead.

Avoiding problems

- ☐ I'm releasing a small number of carefully chosen tracks, not mass uploads.
- ☐ I will never buy streams, followers, or plays.
- ☐ I won't enroll AI-generated tracks in automatic content-claiming systems unless my distributor confirms it's appropriate.

Section 5: After Release

- ☐ I've listened to each track on at least one streaming service to confirm it's correct.
- ☐ I've claimed my artist profile on the major streaming services and added a photo and biography.
- ☐ I've shared the release personally with family, friends, and communities.
- ☐ I'm keeping a record of income and expenses for tax purposes.
- ☐ I've added the release details to my Song Rights Record (below).

Section 6: Custom Songs for Others

For songs created for friends, clients, businesses, or events (Chapters 12 and 20).

- ☐ I've told the person honestly that I use AI music tools.
- ☐ We've agreed on what they'll receive, such as MP3, WAV, lyrics, or a video, and when.
- ☐ We've agreed on how they may use the song: personally, at an event, online, or commercially.
- ☐ If the use is commercial, the song was made on a plan that allows commercial use.
- ☐ I've gathered personal details respectfully and applied the kindness and privacy tests.
- ☐ If I'm being paid, I've considered a simple written agreement and keep records for tax purposes.

The Song Rights Record

Keep one of these for every song you share publicly, sell, or publish. Store it in the song's project folder, both printed and digital.

Item	Details
Song title	
Project / album	
Date created	
Date downloaded	
AI music tool and plan at the time	
Terms of service saved? (date of copy)	☐ Yes, dated
Lyrics by	☐ Me ☐ AI ☐ Me with AI assistance
Vocals	☐ AI ☐ My own voice ☐ Other (with permission)
Instruments	☐ AI ☐ My own playing
My edits and arrangement	
Uploaded audio used? (source and permission)	
Cover art source	
Prompts and drafts saved in	
Rights checklist completed (Sections 1–3)	☐ Yes, date
Shared or released where	
Distributor and release date	
AI disclosure given	☐ Yes, wording
Copyright registration	☐ Not registered ☐ Registered, number
Notes	

Quick tip: Fill in the Song Rights Record as you finish each song, not months later. Five minutes now can save hours of searching if questions ever arise.

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