

Cut through the noise: *Music licensing made simple*

Music rights can feel like a maze—but one wrong turn can cost you strikes, takedowns, or worse. This cheat sheet breaks down the essentials of ownership, social media rules, streaming, and ad use, so you can create with confidence and stay compliant. With Soundstripe's all-in-one licensing, you skip the legal headaches and keep your content live, safe, and monetized.

1 Rights ownership: Who holds what?

Two key rights:

- **Composition** (melody & lyrics) → owned by songwriters/publishers
- **Master recording** → owned by performers or record labels
- Freelancers & agencies should **assign licenses directly to the client**.
- Soundstripe's wholly-owned music means you deal with a **single rights holder**, reducing DMCA strike risks.

2 Social media: When personal becomes business

- Business use includes: Paid partnerships, ads, shopping links, monetization tools, or indirect financial gain.
- Using mainstream music without proper licensing can result in **muted videos, removals, bans, or lawsuits**.
- Opt for **pre-cleared, royalty-free music** (e.g. via Soundstripe).

3 What happens if you don't license properly

Consequences include:

- Muted content, takedowns, or strikes
- Account suspension or demonetization
- Lawsuits
- Content ID systems will detect infringement—even accidental infringement.
- Copyright holders may seek **maximum statutory damages**.

4 Licensing for live streaming

- Most platforms may cover **Public Performance Rights (PPR)**, but you still need **sync rights** for background music.
- Use **Soundstripe's royalty-free music** to ensure sync compliance.

5 Cover songs: Composition & performance rights

Covering a song requires:

- **Composition rights** (melody/lyrics): Rights holders typically include the songwriter(s) and/or the music publishers
- **Master recording rights** (if using an existing recording): Rights holders typically include record labels, independent artists, or production companies
- DIY covers still need a **composition license**.

Public domain songs may still have protected recordings:

- Even if the composition rights are in the public domain, the master recording rights might still need to be obtained (e.g., The composition rights for Jingle Bells is in the public domain, but Frank Sinatra's version of it is not.)

[Soundstripe's custom sync options →](#)

6 Cue sheets: Why they matter

- A **cue sheet** tracks music usage in TV, film, or ads—ensuring proper credit and compensation for the artists.
- If your project airs on TV/cable, **submit the cue sheet within 30 days**.
- Soundstripe supports automated cue-sheet templates.

7 Music licensing for social media

- Ads and promotional content always require **proper licensing**—personal-use tracks won't cover business needs.
- Platforms may **mute or block ads** using unlicensed mainstream music.
- Soundstripe provides **pre-cleared tracks** designed for commercial use, simplifying ad campaigns.

8 Assign the right licensee

- **Rights are split between composition and recording**, and having a license doesn't automatically give permissions to everyone—only the named licensee can use it.
- **Freelancers and agencies should assign music licenses directly to their clients**, not themselves, to ensure clear ownership and protect everyone from future legal issues.
- **Choose licensing services with transferable or client-named license options** (like Soundstripe's Digital, Expanded, and All Media licenses) or go enterprise for legal peace of mind.

Staying compliant: Pro tips

- Use **Soundstripe's fully-licensed, exclusive music** to avoid Content ID conflicts.
- Automate Content ID disputes with **codes or channel listing**.

Opt for the **Enterprise Plan** for indemnification coverage and legal guarantees.

Quick reference checklist

- ✓ **Know the rights** → Every song has both composition and master rights
- ✓ **Assign licenses** → Always put a license in the client's name when applicable
- ✓ **Social posts** → Always use a business account and properly licensed music for any kind of post
- ✓ **Live streams** → Confirm PPR and secure sync rights with royalty-free music
- ✓ **Cover songs** → Get both composition and master rights
- ✓ **Broadcast projects** → Submit cue sheets within 30 days
- ✓ **YouTube claims** → List your channel or use provided codes to auto-clear
- ✓ **Business protection** → Enterprise plan adds indemnity + legal coverage