

THE GUITAR LOOPER PEDAL CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed as a practical reference you can return to at different stages of your looper journey.

It moves from choosing the right pedal to developing solid timing, to building clean layered loops, and finally refining performance details. You don't need to follow it all at once, just print it and use it as a checklist or a reminder when your playing starts to feel unclear or inconsistent.

Phase 1: Buying Your Looper Pedal

Reference: "Top 10 Tips to Buy the Best Guitar Looper Pedal"

Before you purchase, determine your specific needs:

- **Define Your Purpose:** Are you using this primarily for bedroom practice, songwriting, or live performances?
- **Check Loop Time:** Ensure the maximum recording time is sufficient for the length of songs you want to create. Check the fine print.
- **Verify Storage Capacity:** Do you need onboard user memory slots to save loops for future recall? If so, which is best: a USB stick or a USB cable to a computer?
- **Determine Connectivity Needs:** Do you require Stereo inputs/outputs, or is Mono sufficient for your rig? Are you plugging into a P.A. or your amp?
- **Assess Build Quality:** Look for a sturdy metal chassis if you plan on gigging. Also, consider the size if you have a dedicated pedal board.
- **Test Footswitches:** Look for "soft-touch" switches that are silent when clicked to avoid loud pops at low volumes.
- **Important "Extras":** Do you need built-in drum rhythms, a metronome, external footswitches and controller devices? Consider expandability for future uses.
- **Research:** Read reviews and watch video demos of the models you are considering before buying. Also, download the manual and actually read it.

Phase 2: The Essentials of Timing

References: "Top 10 Guitar Looper Pedal Tips" & "Guitar Looper Pedal Timing Tips Songs"

Timing is the most critical skill when looping. A poorly timed base loop will ruin everything layered on top of it.

- **Internalize the Beat:** Tap your foot or nod your head to feel the rhythm before you hit record.

- [] **Use a Guide:** Initially, practice with a metronome or a built-in drumbeat to lock in your timing.
- [] **The Golden Rule of Closing the Loop:** Hitting the switch to stop recording (and immediately start playback) must happen precisely on the "1" beat of the *next* measure. Stop too early, and you have an incomplete measure. Stop the recording too early, and you have an expanded measure.
- [] **Don't Rush the Stop:** This is worth repeating: a common mistake is clicking "stop" too early. Wait precisely for that first beat of the next bar to push the button.
- [] **Start Small:** Begin by practicing very short, simple 2-bar chord vamps until you can close the loop seamlessly every time. Note that if you use a built-in metronome or drum machine, there is a feature that quantizes (automatically corrects) the start and stop times.
- [] **Practice with Repetitive Structures:** Use songs with distinct, predictable and repeating chord progressions (like a 12-bar blues) to simplify your start/stop timing.

Phase 3: Strategic Layering (Building the Song)

References: "How to play Silent Night...", "How to make a layered loop...", & "Top 10 Guitar Looper Pedal Tips."

When building a track, having a predetermined order of operations helps keep the loop clean and defined.

- [] **Keep it Simple:** Remember that complex individual parts often lead to a cluttered final loop. Simple layers work best.

There are many workflows for the looper. You can strum a few chords, and that could be enough for your needs. However, if you want more intricate loops, having a well-thought-out plan before recording is strongly recommended. The key elements are:

- Chords,
- Melody or Riffs,
- Bass (playing low notes or adding the Octave pedal),
- Rhythm (percussive playing or built-in metronome or drum machine), and
- Extra layers (fills, hits, special looper effects like reverse, warp, etc).

Here is one example of ordering your layered loop, but they can all be reordered to fit the song and serve the music the best way:

- [] **Record Layer 1: The Foundation (Percussion):** Start with a percussive element, like tapping the body of your acoustic or muted string hits on your electric. This sets the groove.
- [] **Layer 2: The Low End (Bass):** Add a bass line on the lower strings or with an Octaver pedal. Focus on locking this tightly with your percussion layer. The chord changes will be more apparent if you lock in with the bass.

- [] **Layer 3: The Harmony (Rhythm):** Add your chord progression. Keep this layer sparse if your bass line is busy to leave sonic space.
- [] **Layer 4: The Focus (Melody):** Add your vocal melody or guitar riffs over the top of the established backing track.

Phase 4: Performance and Polish Tips

Reference: "Top 10 Guitar Looper Pedal Tips"

Once you have the basics down, refine your sound and technique.

- [] **Manage Volume:** Be aware that as you stack layers, the overall volume increases. Keep an eye on your guitar volume pots or foot pedal levels.
- [] **Leave "Air":** Don't overplay on every layer. Leave musical space so the track can breathe.
- [] **Vary Your Tones:** To prevent your loop from sounding "muddy," change pickups or tone settings or add a capo between layers to give them distinct sonic frequencies.
- [] **Experiment with Signal Chain:** Try placing your looper after or in between certain effects and the volume pedal.
- [] **Master Undo/Redo:** Learn to use the undo/redo function not just for mistakes, but creatively to bring layers in and out during a performance.
- [] **Plan the Ending:** Practice how you will end the song gracefully, whether it's a gradual fade-out or a precise stop.



© Brent Robitaille / Kalymi Music. All rights reserved.
For personal practice and educational use only.

brentrobitaille.com