

Pro Tools Basics Guide to Setting Up Pro Tools for the First Time

You can simply watch and take notes during the tutorial, and do not need to have the software open to follow along. If you would like to have the software open and try it out yourself during the tutorial, there are some steps you will need to take in advance in order for it to work:

1. Create an Avid Account (free).
2. Create an iLok Account (free).
3. Decide which Pro Tools version to download:
Pro Tools (paid version w/free trial) or Pro Tools First (free version)
4. Check your system compatibility.
5. Download Avid Link (free).
6. Install Pro Tools or Pro Tools First.


First, it is recommended that you watch the tutorial on a separate device, such as a phone or tablet (or second computer) while you have Pro Tools open. So plan on having zoom installed on your phone/tablet/second computer and Pro Tools installed on your main computer.

Please note, there are multiple versions of Pro Tools, so decide which one is best suited for you:

Pro Tools First - This is the free version and has limited functionality, but is sufficient for the purposes of this tutorial and there is a lot you can do with this including basic edits, mixes, and it also comes with a number of basic plugins, all of which are free.

Pro Tools - This is the version most people end up using and would be most appropriate for a music supervisor or composer, who does not need a lot of tracks or Atmos mixes. You can purchase or subscribe for a monthly fee. You can also download a free trial.

Pro Tools Ultimate - This version allows more tracks as well as added functionality and plugin support. It is most useful for sound designers, mixers, and those with very large sessions. Most music supervisors will be fine *without* this version.

Before downloading, check that your computer is compatible with the system requirements for the version you plan to use. On a Mac, you can click on the Apple  in the upper left corner of your screen and choose "About this Mac" (first option) and it will show you something like this:

macOS Catalina

Version 10.15.7

iMac Pro (2017)

Processor 3.2 GHz 8-Core Intel Xeon W

Memory 32 GB 2666 MHz DDR4

Startup Disk Macintosh HD

Graphics Radeon Pro Vega 56 8 GB

Pro Tools Basics Guide to Setting Up Pro Tools for the First Time

Avid maintains a Pro Tools system compatibility grid or chart:

https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/en_US/compatibility/Pro-Tools-Operating-System-Compatibility-Chart

Pro Tools First system requirements:

<https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/Compatibility/Pro-Tools-First-System-Requirements>

Pro Tools (regular version) system requirements:

<https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/compatibility/Pro-Tools-System-Requirements>

Even if your system shows that it is not compatible, it does not mean it will not work, it only means it is not supported. You can still try and download and install, but you may encounter bugs and other errors while running. On a Mac, it is recommended that you are on Catalina or an earlier operating system (*not* OS 11 Big Sur) and have at least 16GB of RAM (32GB or more is preferable). It is possible to run on less or you may end up needing more for your workflow.

Sweetwater has a great installation guide for Pro Tools for Mac or Windows:

<https://www.sweetwater.com/sweetcare/articles/how-to-download-and-install-avids-pro-tools-12-2018/>

Avid also has some installation guides:

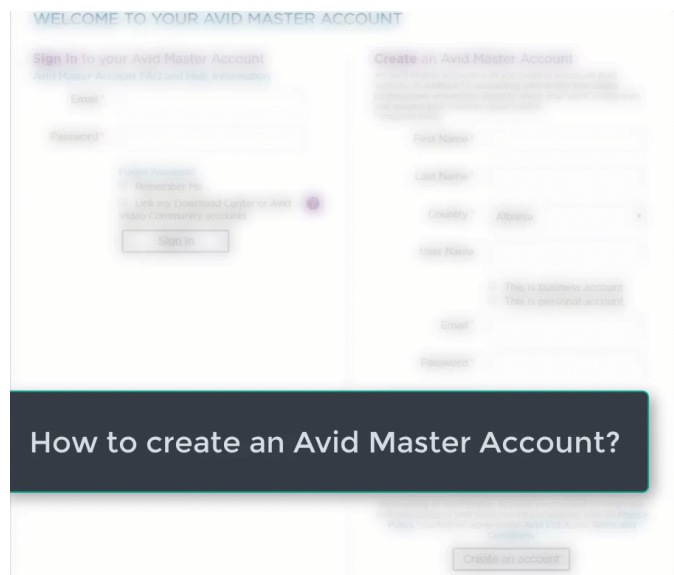
https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/how_to/Pro-Tools-Installation

https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/en_US/How_To/Pro-Tools-Installation-Guide

http://akmedia.digidesign.com/support/docs/Pro_Tools_First_Installation_Guide_85130.pdf

Before downloading Pro Tools, you will need to create a free Avid account:

https://avid.secure.force.com/pkb/articles/en_US/User_Guide/Tool-Tips-Creating-Avid-Account



Pro Tools Basics Guide to Setting Up Pro Tools for the First Time

You will then need to create an iLok account (<https://www.ilok.com/#!registration>) and link it to your Avid account. The iLok account holds the license that will allow your computer to open Pro Tools. The software itself is free to download, so when you pay for a subscription you are actually purchasing a license that is authorized by iLok and connected to Avid. Without the iLok authorization, Pro Tools will not open.

If you are familiar with Pro Tools, you may know that in the past you needed to own a physical iLok (USB stick) to use Pro Tools. You can now use Pro Tools with a free iLok cloud account, without purchasing a physical iLok. The only catch is that you must be connected to the internet to use the iLok cloud. With a physical iLok, you can open the software from anywhere in the world without an internet connection. This is especially useful if you are in transit or working in a remote destination where you cannot rely on a connection.

Once you have your Avid and iLok accounts set up, you will then need to download Avid Link, which is the download manager for Pro Tools: <https://www.avid.com/products/avid-link>

With Avid Link installed, you can now download and install Pro Tools and any Avid plugins.

If you choose to purchase the software or subscribe, it is recommended you go through an Authorized Reseller, such as [Sweetwater](#), [B & H Photo](#), or [Alto Music](#) so they can help you choose the correct download and help assist you with installation in case you should run into any issues. You can also purchase directly from Avid, although support may be limited.

Please note that Pro Tools has two ways of working: **Sessions** which are stored on your computer and **Projects** which are primarily online and connect to Pro Tools Cloud Backup and Collaboration. Pro Tools First only uses Projects, not Sessions, so it is mostly for use online.

Pro Tools Resources on the Web:

Avid Tutorials:

<https://www.avid.com/pro-tools#Tutorials>

Pro Tools 101 on LinkedIn by Frank Cook:

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/pro-tools-2019-essential-training-101-the-basics-2>

Pro Tools Expert:

<https://www.pro-tools-expert.com>

Pro Tools Training:

<https://www.protoolstraining.com/>

Avid Pro Tools Instructors and Certification Courses:

<https://www.avid.com/education/find-a-certified-professional>