



## Basic Music Editing For Dance with Dance Designer

### Music Editing 101

Whether there is a one minute guitar solo that needs to be removed from a song or the competition only allows a certain length for a dance, most choreographers, at some point, need to have their music edited. We have all heard bad edits and that is really the point, when you do it right, no one ever hears a good edit.

### Music Edits

An edit can be as simple as picking a point in the middle of the music that you want your dance to end, fade out the music at that point and remove the rest of the music. Or picking a point in the middle of the music to start your dance and removing the music prior to that point. However, most of the time we want to remove a section out of the middle of the music and sometimes we want to mix 2 or more songs together for a dance. This is where it becomes a little trickier. Music editing is similar to dance in that it has technical and creative elements. With practice the process can be learned and you are only limited by your imagination.

### What is different about Music Editing with Dance Designer?

There are a variety of music editing programs available today ranging in price from free to thousands of dollars. We have discovered in talking with choreographers that these programs tend to be too complicated for their basic music editing needs. They require a more technical knowledge and are certainly not developed with the choreographer in mind; they are developed for audio engineers.

Many choreographers pay companies or individuals to do their music editing. This can be quite expensive, especially if you are a studio owner editing many songs.

Dance Designer has made audio editing much easier by incorporating dance counts with music. This means, you have a reference that you are familiar with, dance counts. You can edit your music from the 4th count of 8 to the 12<sup>th</sup> count of 8, just the way you count the music in dance class. You no longer have to only look at wav images or time. Trying to find edit points 1:12.65 seconds to 1:42.54 seconds and looking at wav images is not intuitive for most of us.

Dance Designer has also made music editing easier by developing tools with choreographers in mind, like one-click editing. You do not have to dig through menus to find the editing tool you need. Select the counts you want to remove from your music and click delete. It is that simple. If you make a mistake or don't like the edit click undo and try again. It is all non-volatile editing which means you can try as many different edits as you want.





## Basic Editing Guide Lines

### What are Edit Points?

There are 2 edit points when removing or deleting a section from your music the “Out-point” and the “In-point”. The Out-Point is the beginning of the section you want to remove. The In-Point is the end of the section you want to remove.<sup>3</sup>

### Choosing your edit points

There are 5 main elements to consider when choosing editing points in your music.

- 1 The Count
- 2 The Beat
- 3 The Vocals
- 4 Sustained Sounds
- 5 Key or Pitch Changes

### The Count

Dance Designer is the only software that allows you to reference “Dance Counts”. Dancers sometimes count differently than musicians; dancers tend to count in phrases of 6, 8 or 12. When choosing edit points, you want to try and keep the counts the same. So, if your “out-point” is on count 1, you want your “in-point” to be on count 1. (See image below) Sometimes it is not possible to edit on count 1 for reasons discussed below. The main consideration with counts is your out-point should be on the same count as the in-point. These are only guidelines, if the music works for the dance and sounds good going out on count 2 and coming in on count 6 then do it



## **The Beat**

The beat or tempo is an easier issue for most choreographers. To make a good edit it's important that the tempo stays the same. When you highlight or select the section of music to be removed you also need to look at the "wav image". This image shows the amplitude of the music over time. Generally the "down beats" are louder, and you can see them in the wav image because they are larger. This is called the "attack" of the beat, the portion after the attack is called the "decay" of the beat. You want to select just in front of the attack on the out-point and the in-point. (See image below) If you select in different locations of the beat for the out-point and in-point, your edit will be out of time or tempo. To test your edit, tap your foot to the rhythm, if it jumps ahead or you have extra time between the beats, you need to try a different edit point.

Beat is also important when you want to edit multiple pieces of music together. The tempo of the music is called BPM or beats per minute. Usually, it is easier to edit or mix music together if the BPMs are the same. Dance Designer will analyze the music and display the BPMs. You can also slow down or speed up the music changing the BPMs. This is more advanced music editing; try it after you have mastered the basics.

## **The Vocals**

Working with the Vocals tends to be the easiest way to make a good edit. You want the song to make sense with the section removed. If the out-point is the beginning of a chorus or verse it is best if the in-point is the beginning of the chorus or verse. If it is a "story song" it can be a little trickier you will just have to use your creative license.

## **Sustained Sounds**

Sustained sounds cause trouble sometimes. You can have the perfect edit points with regard to counts, beats and vocals but the edit doesn't sound good because a vocal, guitar, horn or keyboard had a sustained note through the out-point and it is not continued on the in-point so it is cut off on your edit. Many times it can be as simple as changing the out and in point from being on count 1 to being on count 5 or use a word in the middle of the chorus that is repeated. This is when referencing dance counts is very helpful. Since Dance Designer is non-volatile editing you can undo and try different points.



## Key or Pitch changes

If the Counts, Beats and Vocals are correct you should have a good sounding edit. However, when you need to edit in the middle of a verse or chorus due to a sustained sound, key changes can make the edit sound bad. You need to listen to the out-point pitch and the in-point pitch and make sure they are the same. It sounds the worst in the middle of a verse when the key shifts down. Sometimes key changes can work if they are on a down beat that makes sense in the music. The vocals, sustained sounds and key changes are the creative part that you can play with until you get what works for your dance.

**Hint:** When you will be removing several sections of your music and you have noted the times of the in and out points for all your edits, begin editing from the end of your music (or by doing your last edit first). Otherwise, editing from the beginning first will change all of the times from that edit on and your edit times you noted will no longer be accurate.

It may sound a little complicated, but people actually have fun editing and mixing songs together. Some of you may remember record players and editing music on cassettes; times have certainly changed.

**With Dance Designer, dance counts, and one-click editing it is easier than ever to edit your own music!**

