

Church Sound Boot Camp

... from the founders of ChurchSoundcheck.com

Frequently Asked Questions

Hi, Y'all. Curt Taipale here for Church Sound Boot Camp. We are looking forward to meeting you online as you start studying the course.

The interest in this new course has been overwhelming. It's not surprising to hear that there are questions about what to expect at the class. So, we've gathered up some of those frequently asked questions, and thought it would be a good idea just to share our answers with you right here.

Q: What is the Church Sound Boot Camp?

Curt: The Church Sound Boot Camp is an online course that builds on your current understanding of all things audio and takes you to the next level of technical excellence.

The course comprises 36 video training modules, an accompanying workbook, forms, drawings, strategy sessions, spreadsheets, and additional support materials. Study the modules online, on your schedule, whenever and for however long you want. Students have **Lifetime Access** to the course.

I've included a list of those training modules at the end of this FAQ document.

Q: Who is this course for? In other words, what experience level is it aimed at?

Curt: We have taught this in-person class at host churches several times in recent years. Annual attendance is around 1200 students. As you might imagine, the experience level of our students is all over the map – from true beginners to seasoned veterans.

I always ask for a show of hands during the class to get a sense of their experience working with the sound equipment either at a church or elsewhere. Typically, about one-half of those attending have anywhere from three to ten years of experience. One-quarter of students have zero to three years of experience. The remaining one-quarter of students have anywhere from ten to twenty years of audio experience.

From a teacher's perspective, I have to aim for the middle. In other words, I don't want the more seasoned students to be bored and checking their email, and I don't want the true beginners to be completely lost.

The reality is that there is something for everyone. You might be challenged by some of what is presented, or you might find some of the details reassuring and in agreement with what you have learned. So, we leave it to God to sort out who should take our course, and He always sends the right people. If He is tugging on your heart right now to take the course, listen to Him and go for it.

Q One person asked, "I have heard that most of these church sound training classes are really just a sales thing. Are you selling stuff?"

Curt: No. We don't sell any equipment. We started this ministry in 1987, and the concept was to communicate technical excellence to the church. Our heart has always been about the education. We don't sell any gear, so you don't have to worry about that.

Q: One question that we often get asked is, “We’re a portable church plant that meets in an elementary school, which presents its own challenges. Will this be a good course for us to study? Or is it mainly for established churches who aren’t portable?”

Curt: One good thing about audio is that it applies to everything. Audio is audio, so it applies equally to the portable church as it does to those with a permanent installation, and to those on a choir tour in the summer, or the youth group going out and playing at the mall at Christmas, and similar events.

It all relates to audio basics. Broadcast studios, live streaming, anything like that. Even folks that have a home studio would benefit from this course. So yes, audio works according to physics, and God’s laws of physics are timeless and apply everywhere.

Q: Is there a minimum age requirement to study the CSBC course?

Curt: We have no minimum age requirements. It really depends on the maturity of the individual. Like most things, someone will get out of it what they put into it. As long as they stay focused and motivated to learn, they are going to do great with the material. For younger students, only a parent could really decide if their kid is ready for it.

Q: Will attending this class make me a good sound mixer?

Curt: Only a lot of time, a lot of years mixing, a lot of analytical listening, making (and learning from) a lot of mistakes is going to condition you to be a good sound mixer. You won’t “become” a good mixer. You will evolve into one.

What we can do is make sure that you are aimed in the right direction by arming you with accurate information and equipping you with an understanding of the best techniques and concepts. But getting good at that is a real challenge. I’ve been doing this professionally for over 40 years, and one day I hope to be good at it.

Q: “I’ve been doing sound in my church for nearly 20 years,” someone says. “Will I get anything out of this class?”

Curt: Refreshing the basics is always a good thing. We forget stuff, and over time we just forget some of the basics. So it’s a good thing to have a refresher. We have had folks that have been doing sound for fifteen or twenty years who tell us that they learned some things they didn’t know. There’s always something new to learn. I mean, the day you stop learning is the day you ought to just go do something else. Studying in the course is great even if you’ve been there for a while.

Frankly, if you’ve been doing sound for quite some time, I expect that you’ve got some volunteers working with you, serving with you in your church. So, it’s a great idea to study alongside those new folks to show your support and make sure that you can share those ideas. As the course progresses, discuss the topics with them, refine the conversation, and make it real by discussing how y’all can apply that knowledge to your own church.

In other words, you have experience with these things. Your fellow sound techs hear me teaching these concepts. Going forward, you can help refine their understanding and use of those concepts and those techniques on the equipment at your church.

Q: Some people have asked, “I’m the Music Minister or the Worship Pastor and I don’t operate the audio gear, so why should I study this course?”

Curt: Good question. Really, I think they should take the course for a couple reasons. One is that if you’re not familiar with some of the jargon, some of the terminology, some of the abbreviations and acronyms, you can pick those up in the class. Then also, just the basic understanding of the techniques and the concepts and understanding why it takes church techs so long to do some of the simple things you ask of them.

In fact, I tell the story in the class. When a senior pastor walks up to the tech 10 minutes before the service and asks for what seems to be a real simple request, before they finish that sentence, the tech has already thought of 17 things this affects.

Now their answer to you is, “Yes sir, I’ll take care of it.” But in their mind, in the back of their mind, they’re thinking, “Oh, okay, I’ve got to tell this person and this person and this person. I’ve got to do this, and I’ve got to do this.” So, understanding what goes on in their mind and just what it takes to pull off what seems to you like a simple request is helpful.

Also, studying the course alongside your techs is great for the bond and just showing your support of their ministry and what they do. They give up a lot of time from their families and their life in general. They do it willingly. They love giving their time to the church, but they appreciate that recognition and that support from the senior leadership.

Q: Does studying this course require us to have our sound equipment to work on?

Curt: Not at all. Sure, it can help to have, for example, your mixing console sitting in front of you to work with, but you can absolutely learn without access to your gear. If anything, you may find that studying the course and discussing things like how to operate the console is best done without the distraction of having the console right there in front of you.

Q: Changing over to gear. Someone asks, “What board do you use, and how will this be helpful if I use a different board?”

Curt: You can imagine in a large class that not everyone is going to have the same console. From a teacher’s perspective, I have to teach it in a way that applies to every console. We found a way to actually do that. The way I teach the subject can be applied to any brand and any model of console. It doesn’t matter if it’s analog or digital. So don’t be concerned about that in the least. This approach will liberate you at your console and any console that you encounter in the future.

As I developed this course, I had access to a Midas m32, a QSC TouchMix-30 Pro, and an Allen & Heath Qu-32, and. We’re not going to be able to be brand specific and teach you on your particular console; but I think when you finish the course, you will understand how to drive any console.

That’s a real benefit. If you can grasp this concept of how I teach the class on the consoles, you’ll be able to walk to any console. Any brand, any model, analog or digital, and within a few moments be able to understand how to drive it.

Q: Another person asks, “Is this class hands-on?”

Curt: Since this is an online course, and since we try to keep things non-brand specific, there are currently no brand specific tutorials to present. However, that’s a good idea. We will consider creating some homework assignments toward that end.

Q: Will this course help me learn to EQ my church sound?

Curt: We teach about channel EQ, where we focus on refining the sound character of each instrument and voice in a way that’s really fast and efficient and helps you tackle those EQ needs quickly and efficiently.

We do not teach about system EQ, also known as “tuning the overall sound system”. We offer that as an entirely different class. That’s a class that takes a full day at least to teach. We address it, we talk about it briefly in this self-guided class, but we don’t teach about tuning the overall sound system.

Q: One other question that some people ask, “Do I have to be a musician to work in the sound ministry?”

Curt: Great question. I think it helps if you’re a trained musician, a player, for a couple reasons. One, that you understand the music, you understand how it’s organized, you understand the different parts, even what the different instruments should sound like.

It also helps your relationship with the players on the stage. If they know that you’re a player, you may find that they are more quickly accepting of you as part of their group, as part of their team, because they know that you understand music.

But no, you don’t need to be a trained musician to be a good mixer. I know plenty of folks that have never studied music, but they have a real love of music, and they mix sound very well.

There’s the key. As long as you have a good love of music, you can be a good sound mixer. The technical stuff is easy to teach, and that’s what we do in the class. But having the love of music, that’s something that comes from within.

Q: Another person asks, “Who’s teaching this? Who are you?” Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Curt: My name is Curt Taipale. I’m the founder of ChurchSoundcheck.com, author of “**The Heart of Technical Excellence**”, contributing author to Yamaha’s “**Guide to Sound Systems for Worship**”, and author of over one hundred articles featured in major publications including ProSoundWeb, Live Sound International, Technologies for Worship and others.

Over the past forty years I’ve experienced the pro audio industry from every perspective there is – as a church tech team leader, Audio Director and Technical Director in three churches, recording and live sound engineer, consultant, AVL system designer, integrator, educator, author, and professional musician.

I have particularly enjoyed several years training thousands of sound ministry volunteers, technical staff, worship pastors and musicians through our sound system training course known as the Church Sound Boot Camp. And I hope to meet you one day as a CSBC Grad!

If you would like to learn more, the best place to find out about me is just to go to our websites. TaipaleMedia.com has a lot of my background information. And if you go to ChurchSoundcheck.com, you can find many of my articles that I've written on various topics. It's like sitting down with me and a cup of coffee and just talking about whatever that topic happens to be. So, if you read those articles, you'll hear my heart on those different topics.

Q: Do you offer a Money Back Guarantee?"

Curt: Yes, absolutely. In fact it's a **90-Day Money Back Guarantee**. Our primary goal for this virtual course is to equip each student with the knowledge and understanding they need to succeed in their role in the church. That is a tall order, and one we take very seriously.

Understand that this course won't turn you into a seasoned audio veteran by next weekend. That takes years of study and relentless, hard work, coupled with learning from hundreds of painfully obvious mistakes.

To help you get there, we will steadily increase your confidence as an audio tech by imparting mythology-free knowledge, showing you the proper way to do key things and explaining why things are done a certain way.

Just knowing that you know that you're doing things the best way will strengthen your approach to every piece of equipment at your command.

Imagine how it will feel the next time you walk into your sound booth, ready to put that knowledge and those techniques to work.

If you're skeptical about whether or not our CSBC Course will work for you, welcome to the club! You're in good company. The great majority of our students were at one time skeptics just like yourself.

The reality is that those very same people are now our most enthusiastic supporters. They took a chance that just maybe we could share with them something that would make a difference in their weekly service in the audio ministry of their local church, and man are they glad they did!

In fact, we're so convinced that this course will make such a major impact on you that we're willing to go out on a limb so that you can rest easy.

Join us for the course. Do the work. Study and complete the lessons. If by the end of the course you find that it hasn't met your expectations, if you can't honestly hear improvements in the sound quality of your worship services as a result of studying and putting into practice the techniques and principles that we have so willingly shared, then just contact our Support Desk for a complete refund of your registration along with our genuine Thank You for giving it a solid try.

How can we afford to offer that guarantee? The reality is that we have thousands of CSBC Grads. (I lost track after we went over 5,000 Grads.) And over the past several years I can only think of four students who asked for a refund. The only downside is that you would lose access to the course materials.

You may be skeptical now, but that won't last long. Dig into the course and you'll soon discover why your fellow CSBC Grads are so excited about what they've learned and how they can apply it in their work this week, and the next, and the next ...

How can you say no to a business proposition where we take all the risk!?! With that kind of better-than-risk-free offer, there's no way you can afford to miss this virtual course.

Thank you for your interest in the Church Sound Boot Camp

We love hearing progress reports back from our CSBC Grads. They write to tell us about how they learned a new technique in the course, applied that technique in their next service, and had members of their congregation coming up to them after the service asking them what they did differently, telling them that the sound was so much better.

And that is one reason why we developed the course. Those who apply what they learned will go on to improve the communication of His Word in their own church, and that will make a difference in people's lives.

I hope those responses have been helpful to you. If you have any further questions, please feel free to either email us or contact us through the chat line on our websites. We're always available to answer your questions.

We would love to see you online studying our Church Sound Boot Camp.

Curt Taipale

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CSBC teaching modules			
#	Title		
		18	Connecting Your Sound System, part 3
1	Mic Construction	19	Connecting Your Sound System, part 4
2	Mic Polar Patterns	20	Console Signal Flow
3	Cupping the Mic	21	Console Gain Structure
4	Earworn vs Lapel Mics, plus Brixen experiment	22	Using Submasters, VCA's & DCA's
5	Phantom Power & Polarity	23	Analog vs Digital Consoles
5a	More Fun With Polarity	24	Channel Equalization
6	Off-Axis Coloration & Handling Noise	24a	Channel EQ Listening Examples
7	Mic Stands & Windscreens	25	Effects Processing, Reverb, Echo
8	Phase Cancellations	26	Compressors
9	Drum Shields	26a	Compression Listening Examples
10	Wireless Mics	27	Gates & Expanders
11	Wireless Spectrum	28	Getting a Great Mix
12	Miking Drums	29	Sound Mixing Levels
13	Miking Guitars	30	Loudspeakers
14	Miking Piano & Leslie Speaker	30a	Bonus - the Value of Ceiling Height
15	Miking Brass, Woodwinds & Choir	31	Subwoofers
16	Connecting Your Sound System, part 1	32	Dealing with Feedback
17	Connecting Your Sound System, part 2	33	Stage Monitors

Topics

Microphones

Capturing the best sound character of any instrument or voice starts with understanding microphones. Toward that end, we devote several study modules to learning about how mics work with a major focus on how to place them and use them. No matter if your church has just two mics or twenty-two mics to use, you will find this section very helpful.

Wireless Mics & the Disappearing 600 MHz Band

The quality of wireless mic systems has dramatically improved in the past couple of years. But there can still be problems with RF dropouts and interference. We will discuss ways for you to keep your systems operating clearly.

And just as a reminder, if you have any wireless systems (mics or IEM systems) that operate anywhere from 608 MHz to 806 MHz, those are now ILLEGAL TO USE in the US. The final date was 7/13/20. Hopefully you replaced your wireless systems while the manufacturers were still offering rebates.

Channel Equalization (EQ)

Too many church sound techs are uncomfortable adjusting the EQ on a voice or instrument. You might have even been told “never touch the EQ”. We can teach you a simple technique that will ease your concern and put you on the fast track to understanding exactly how to use EQ to improve the sound character of the vocals and instruments you work with each week.

Maximizing Your Console

Maybe you’ve seen the T-shirt with the caption “I’m the sound engineer and yes, I do know what all those buttons do.” Truth be told, just how comfortable are you driving your console?

We have a way of teaching both beginners and seasoned sound techs how to understand their console like the back of their hand, how all those knobs and faders interrelate. Once you understand this concept, you will be able to walk up to any console, even one you’ve never seen before, and within moments understand how to drive it.

That is a bold statement, I know. But this is also one of the most important sections of this class. This segment alone is worth taking the course.

Using Compressors and Expanders

Any sound techs that are working with a digital audio console will have access to a compressor and expander on every single channel. Used properly, they can do an amazing job of smoothing out your mix.

Used incorrectly – as frankly most church sound techs do – and they can make your mix sound lifeless and even prone to feedback. We will discuss this topic in depth and demonstrate how to use them correctly.

Tasteful Use of Effects

A refined mix makes great use of effects like reverb or echoes, and they are tucked into the mix in a way that your listener has to listen “deep” into the mix to know that they are there. There aren’t intended to be overt or in your face, that is unless of course that is called for (and sometimes it is).

Building a Great Mix

There are eight key properties to a great mix. We will be discussing each of those elements and will invest time listening analytically to some great mixes to point them out. Knowing what those goals are will help you every time you build your mix.

Proper Cabling Solutions

The inescapable reality is that “doing sound” is a combination of art and science. A seasoned sound tech has a love of music, and an ear for a great mix, but also must understand at least the basics of the technology to efficiently deal with problems.

Do you know when to use a passive direct box and when you should use an active DI?

Do you understand the difference between polarity and phase?

How long can you run an unbalanced cable versus a balanced cable without hearing the sound quality degrade?

We will share all the basics that each church sound tech must know to deal with the unexpected technical problems that WILL show up one day.

Stage Monitors & In-Ear Monitors

Still playing with the volume wars on the platform each week? Are your monitors so loud that you can turn off the house loudspeaker system and it's still too loud for the congregation? We will show you solutions that can make everyone happy.

Dealing with Feedback

A well-designed loudspeaker system using quality microphones driven by an astute sound tech will allow each and every instrument and voice on the platform be heard clearly, in a balanced musical mix, without issues with feedback. Now if YOU are dealing with feedback issues, there is a reason. Present your concerns in class and we'll talk about solutions.

Power Amps & Loudspeakers

The reality is that most church sound techs are not very concerned about the system equalizer (DSP), or power amps, or loudspeakers that they listen to each week. Once that loudspeaker system has been properly installed and tuned, the church tech simply makes the needed adjustments to their mix at the console to make it sound the way they want it to.

We think that even the casual once-a-month sound tech should have a basic understanding of loudspeakers. We won't have time to go deep into system design or system tuning during this course, but our students will know how those systems work.