



cdbaby™ Presents

Getting Your Songs on Spotify Playlists:

A streaming success guide for DIY musicians

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Say what you will about the plight of the album format. We're now living squarely in the age of digital music streaming, where **PLAYLISTS** have emerged as the most important organizing principle for songs.

Streaming music revenue has overtaken both download and CD sales, becoming the leading revenue driver for many recording artists and songwriters — and, as independent musicians like [Perrin Lamb](#) can attest, it's possible to earn a full-time living with just a single song being placed on a prominent Spotify playlist.

Yes, despite what you've probably heard, there's real money in Spotify IF you're an artist who owns both the rights to your master recordings **AND** the publishing rights to your songs. And playlists are one of the biggest drivers of song engagement on the platform.



Why playlists matter

One of the most important metrics to determine how successful an artist will be on Spotify is the number of times their music has been added to playlists.

As **Charles Alexander** of Streaming Promotions says, Spotify's algorithm is powered by "collaborative feedback," a process of crowd-curation where millions of users teach Spotify (and their editorial team) what to notice out of a nearly endless catalog of music. Playlist activity provides proof that your songs are worthy of further attention.

Prominent playlists can also provide you with instant access to a huge number of new listeners and boost your streaming revenue alongside that engagement. Those new fans discover your music while passively listening to a playlist they're interested in, and all those streams add up to earnings too.

For instance, Spotify's "**Your Favorite Coffeehouse**" playlist (curated by their in-house editorial team) has over 2 million followers. When CD Baby artist Perrin Lamb got a song placed on that playlist in 2015, he earned almost \$60k from just that one song on the platform.

But how do you get your music onto a prominent Spotify playlist?

Like most things in the music industry (and life in general) you don't just show up one day and get a song featured on a big playlist like "**New Music Friday**."

Though these kinds of playlists DO feature music from unsigned artists, you need to work your way there one step at a time, lay the groundwork, and eventually get the attention of big playlist curators. This guide will outline a strategy that puts you and your songs in a better position to succeed on Spotify.

But first, why focus on Spotify?

The streaming landscape seems to widen every month, with Apple Music, Amazon Music Unlimited, Google Play, TIDAL, and many others competing for listeners. But Spotify, with its 70+ million paid subscribers and 140+ million active user accounts, is the clear leader of the pack. They also have the prestige of blazing a trail for monetized music streaming. Put simply, success on that platform above all others will have the biggest impact on your music career.

*Note: If you're distributing your music through CD Baby, you can view a complete tally of the playlists that have placed your songs. It's updated daily within your member account's **Trending and Analytics** section.*

From zero to infinity: a step-by- step strategy for Spotify playlist success

Phase 1: Stepping onto the platform



Sign up for a Spotify account.

You gotta start somewhere, right?

Go [HERE](#)

Download the Spotify app

- Install it on your desktop
- Create an account and log in
- Familiarize yourself with the platform: search for music, browse the suggested playlists, etc.



Get your music on Spotify

With CD Baby distribution, your songs can be streaming on Spotify in a matter of days. No annual fees! Get started [HERE](#)



Visit your artist profile on Spotify

Do you have a blue checkmark icon on your profile? If not, it's time to get "verified!"

Phase 2: Getting verified and building your initial following

It's possible to get your music onto playlists without being a verified artist, but having that little blue check-mark will really help you in your efforts to be taken seriously on Spotify. Verification also unlocks Spotify for Artists, giving you access to powerful tools that will help you boost your profile on the platform.

What do I get once I'm "verified?"

Once you're verified on Spotify, you can:

- Share playlists directly with your fans
- Pin any song, album, or playlist on Spotify to the top of your artist profile (with custom images)
- Customize your header image
- List tour dates
- Access detailed analytics with Spotify for Artists (and the Spotify for Artists app)
- And More

CD Baby has partnered with Spotify to grant all CD Baby clients INSTANT artist verification. To get instantly verified, go [HERE](#).

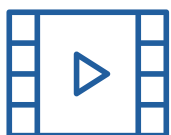
If you're not distributing your music through CD Baby, go [HERE](#).

Prepare your website



Embed the Spotify Follow Button

on your website's homepage so visitors can follow you on Spotify without having to leave the page they're on. [LEARN MORE](#)



Create a Spotify-centric page on your website

where you've embedded a Spotify player (for your latest album, single, or playlist) AND a Spotify Follow Button. To do so, click the ellipses next to any song, album, or playlist on Spotify and select "copy embed code." Paste that code into any HTML page.



Integrate a Spotify Play Button

into your site as well to encourage visitors to start engaging with your music right away (again, without having to leave your website). [LEARN MORE](#)

Ask your fans to follow you on Spotify

In addition to being a verified artist on Spotify, playlist curators also want to see that you've established a following on the platform.

Perhaps it goes without saying, but the most important thing you can do to get more people to follow your music on Spotify is... ask people to follow your music on Spotify!

1. Ask your fans on social media to follow you on Spotify, and send them to the Spotify page you created on your website. This page will have everything they need to take action and engage with your music on Spotify, while you still control the experience from YOUR website. Be sure to explain that a "Follow" on Spotify is one of the best ways to show support for the artists they love on that platform, and that followers are more likely to receive automatic updates whenever you release new music.
2. Send an email newsletter with a call-to-action asking fans to follow you on Spotify. Again, be sure to tell them why it's important, and then link them to the Spotify page on your website.
3. Link to the Spotify-centric page on your website (at least while really making a push to build your following) from your YouTube video descriptions, Twitter bio, the "about" section of your band's Facebook page, Instagram bio, and more.
4. Tell your fans at shows to get out their phones and follow you on Spotify.
5. Consider digital advertising via Facebook, YouTube, or Google to attract additional followers.
6. Encourage your fans to share playlists containing your music with their friends.
7. Encourage followers of your personal profile to also follow your artist discography page.

Phase 3: Getting in on the ground floor of playlisting

Once you've become a verified artist and built your initial following on Spotify, it's time to start pursuing some smaller playlist opportunities. As your music gets added (or "seeded") to playlists, you will be instructing Spotify's system to take notice and expect more activity from you.

Ultimately, the idea is that by building your playlist resume, Spotify will eventually serve up your music in more prominent places. So let's dive into the nuts and bolts.

There are six primary types of playlists on Spotify:



Your own playlists

Just what they sound like: you create them, you promote them, and you feature them on your artist discography page!



Other peoples' playlists

Get down with O.P.P.! These could be playlists run by any of Spotify's millions of users, including other artists, bloggers, or fans.



Collaborative playlists

Anyone on Spotify can opt to create a playlist that's "collaborative," meaning any follower of the playlist can alter the list, add or delete songs, change the song order, etc.



Branded playlists

These are Spotify playlists managed by third parties, such as Pitchfork, or major-label playlists such as Topsify. Most branded playlists will try to strike a balance between established artists and emerging artists as a way of achieving tastemaker stature.



Curated Spotify playlists

These are playlists where the music is selected by Spotify's in-house editorial team. Because they are Spotify's most powerful editorial tool, these playlists get promoted like crazy within the platform.



Algorithmic playlists

These playlists, including Discover Weekly and Release Radar, are customized for each individual Spotify listener on a regular basis (often weekly), and the track list is determined based on listener activity, as well as which artists the user follows. Although in theory no two algorithmic playlists are alike, these types of automatically generated playlists are actually driving more streaming engagement than Spotify's official curated playlists. In order for your music to appear in algorithmic playlists, you need to demonstrate quality engagement with your music. More on that later in this guide!

Playlists can group songs according to:

- Genre or sub-genre
- Your friends' bands or bands you've toured with
- Your influences
- Place of origin: city, state, province, region, nation, continent
- Time, year, decade, era of its release
- Instrumentation
- Theme: dinner music, **dance party**, workout mix, Sunday morning reading, etc.
- **Lyrical focus**
- **Set lists**
- And much, much more

Create your own playlists

This is an obvious place to start once you're verified, since you have complete control over the playlist. Make your own! Playlists give you a great way to connect with fans between album cycles, and they allow you to repurpose your catalog in countless ways by putting old songs into fresh contexts.

How to create a playlist

1. Within the Spotify app, click "(+) New Playlist"
2. Give your playlist a name and description. Be sure to use rich keywords that mention the style of music, specific artists within the playlist, or other organizing principles for the songs contained within.
3. Upload a custom image for your playlist.
4. Add a URL to the "insert link" field linking to a pre-order page or music store. (Be considerate and don't link to a competing streaming service.)
5. Click "Create."
6. Add songs! You can do this by searching for the song on Spotify and dragging it into your playlist in the left-hand sidebar, or by clicking the ellipses next to any track and selecting "Add to Playlist."

Playlist best practices

Build playlists around your interests.

If you're enthusiastic about the playlist, you'll make it awesome! If not, you'll lose steam and neglect it. Which brings us to...

Update your playlists on a regular schedule.

To make a playlist that's worth following, it should be dynamic and change over time. Otherwise a user can just listen once and be done with it. Choose a day to make updates each week and keep it consistent to build expectation amongst followers.

Only ONE song per artist.

Unless a playlist's sole purpose is to highlight the music of one artist, it's best to make the song list diverse. Spotify's algorithm can downgrade a playlist that is too heavily weighted towards one artist.

Seed your own songs!

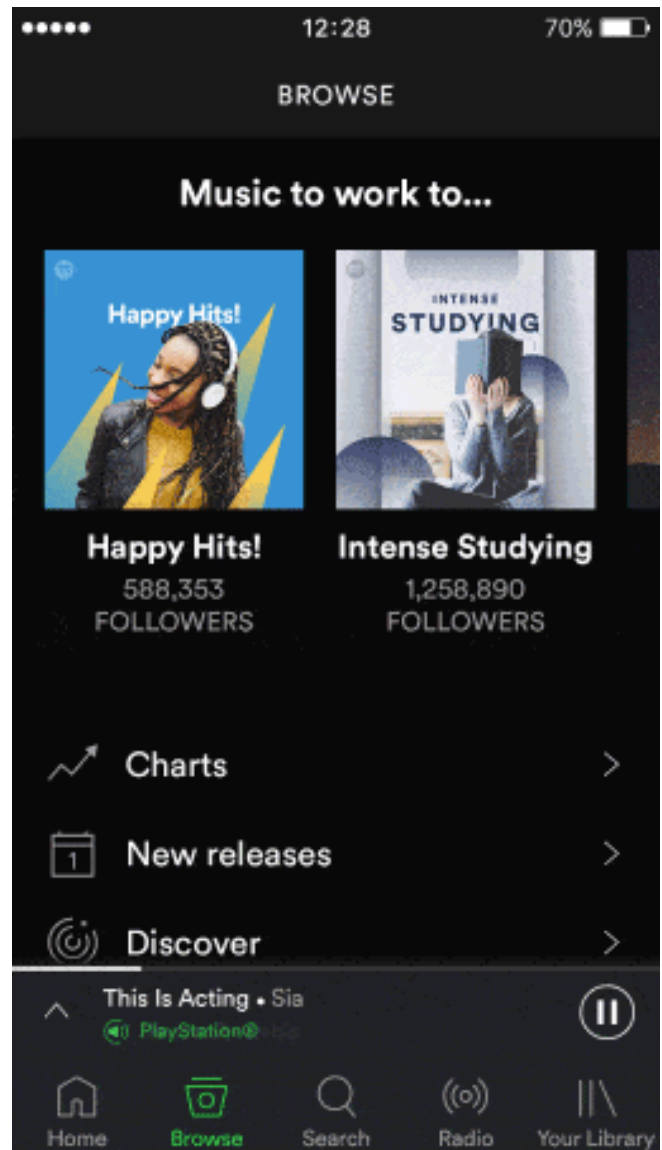
Nestle your song perfectly amongst a bunch of great tunes by other artists. But remember: just one song per playlist, unless it's a playlist organized around your music alone.

Playlists should have between 20-60 songs.

Spotify's algorithm favors playlists with more than 20 songs and less than 60. Aim for 25-30 when you first create the list, and then add more songs on a regular basis. Once you're approaching 60 songs, shuffle the oldest tracks off the list.

Promote your playlists.

Share the playlists you create with your fans on social, email, etc. Ask them to follow your playlists, and ask for their suggestions for songs or artists you can add to your playlists in the future.



Ask your fans to save a song from your playlist to their own playlists.

Again, Spotify's algorithm takes special notice whenever a user is motivated to move a song from a playlist they follow to one of their own playlists. This is the MOST IMPORTANT action a fan can take to support you on Spotify. So provide a link to your playlist and ask your fans to do just that!

Notify other artists who've been added to your playlists.

Reach out via Twitter, Facebook, or email. Let them know you love their music, have added a song to your playlist, and ask them to follow the playlist and promote it to their fans.

Experiment with some of these other playlist ideas:

Catalog playlist — This is a playlist of your entire catalog, or a selection of your best tracks. Catalog playlists are also a great tool for releasing a single; instead of linking your fans to just one song, link them to the playlist where that new single plays first, and then your fans will have something else to listen to when that song is over (your entire catalog!). Remember to add new tracks as they're released.

Check out an example of this kind of playlist [HERE](#).

"What I'm listening to" — Update this kind of playlist regularly with whatever you like from the infinite world of streaming music. It's a great way to build a deeper relationship with your audience; they can get to know you as an artist and as a person who loves other artists' music, too. It's also a great way to promote friends or bands you love.

One tip: when you add new tracks to your playlist, be sure to post a link to the playlist on social media and tag @Spotify as well as the artists you're adding to the playlist. Sometimes you can get retweets from big names!

To see an example of this kind of playlist, click [HERE](#).

Playlist contests — Challenge your fans to make their "dream setlist" or a "Greatest Hits" collection from your catalog. Offer a prize to the best one, and require they share the playlist on Twitter or Facebook. It's a great way to reach friends of your fans that might not otherwise hear your music.

Use the buddy system — You probably have quite a few friends in your music scene who are at a similar place in terms of growing their Spotify presence. Ask if they'd be interested in "trading" songs on playlists. You add one of their songs to your playlist. They return the favor.

Add bonus material and commentary — Upload an album's worth of commentary tracks to CD Baby with a slightly different artist name than your usual name (for instance: "Tom Petty Commentary" or "Chris Robley Spotify Radio"), distribute this material exclusively to Spotify, and then [create a playlist that pairs your commentary tracks with the album tracks](#). It's a really creative way to expand the listening experience with stories from the studio, an analysis of the lyrics, or anything else that'd get fans deeper into the songs.

Make collaborative playlists — This is a great way to add a layer of interactivity and engagement on Spotify because anyone who follows the playlist can make changes. For instance, you can ask your fans to help you make a "Tour Van Tunes" playlist or a "Tonight's Set List" collection by adding songs.

Add your songs to collaborative playlists — While we're on the topic, there are countless collaborative playlists out there. Find them, follow them, and add your best song (JUST ONE though).

Here's a collaborative playlist to get you started: [CD Baby Mixtape!](#) Feel free to add a song, and please follow the playlist in return.

Increasing your chances of appearing in algorithmic playlists

Curated playlists are great, and getting a song added to a popular playlist can have a huge impact. But there's something more important than curated playlists: algorithmic playlists like Release Radar and Discover Weekly.

- **Release Radar** automatically serves a customized playlist to listeners every Friday with up to two hours of new songs and relevant tracks from artists the user has shown interest in (or that are related to their genre and artist preferences).
- **Discover Weekly** is updated every Monday with new tracks and deep cuts selected by the algorithm based on the user's listening history.

Bryan Johnson, director of artists and management at Spotify UK, says "What we are seeing is that (algorithmic playlists like Release Radar are) becoming a huge driver of streams – more than any of our programmed editorial playlists, which are the ones that everyone pitches for. It's (the algorithmic playlists which are) driving listens."

What can you do to get Spotify's algorithm to take notice of your music?

Concentrate on growing your following

The more followers you have on Spotify, the more algorithmic playlists will surface your music. So the lesson is simple: get your fans to follow you on Spotify. That will be a smarter use of your time than pitching to popular playlisters, at least early on.

BEWARE VANITY METRICS!

When an artist's "stats" are public, there's a tendency to worry about the wrong things. **Your play count doesn't matter if nobody is adding your songs to their playlists or sharing it with friends.**

Just like with YouTube, **where average watch-time is more important than views**, the key to getting your music added to more of Spotify's algorithmic playlists is QUALITY ENGAGEMENT.

Forget about how many streams you have overall, and worry more about getting the people that ARE listening to your music to actually save it to their own playlists.

Do NOT artificially boost your stream count

Many musicians have been caught streaming their own music on repeat to boost their stats. It's a bad idea, firstly, because if your user activity is public, followers can see you doing it and that looks lame. Second, you can get penalized for it. Some artists have even had their music removed from Spotify because they were caught trying to game the system.

Also, steer clear of paid click-farm services that generate “guaranteed” plays. Any and all of these activities can be viewed as fraud, since streams on Spotify are monetized.

NEVER share a link to a single

It’s a wasted opportunity. Once the listener has heard your song, Spotify will start playing something else (and it might not be your music). Instead, create a playlist of your music with your latest single at the top. Share THAT link and the listener will hear more of your tunes.

Run a pre-save campaign

Don’t wait until a song is released to get fans engaged with it on Spotify. As soon as you start teasing new music with tweets, cover art reveals, Facebook posts, or whatever else, be ready to also share a pre-save link alongside those updates so your fans can actually DO SOMETHING with the soon-to-be-released music right then and there.

With a pre-save campaign on [Show.co](https://show.co), people can click a button and add the unreleased song to their queue. On the drop date, it’ll automatically be added to their listening library on Spotify, which can have a big impact on your first day streaming activity (and that, of course, looks good to the algorithm).

For more info, read “[How to boost streams with a pre-save campaign on Spotify](#)”

Release music more frequently

Don’t just think in terms of albums. An album only gives you ONE chance to get your new music out there (and onto the Release Radar playlist).

When it comes to boosting your standing in the eyes of Spotify’s algorithm, singles are your friend. In our world of “attention economics,” you can’t disappear for a year or more to make your next album. In order to stay on your fans’ radar, you need to either release a series of singles leading up to that bigger release, or hold some bonus tracks in reserve to trickle out in between EPs or LPs.

The more frequently you drop singles (in conjunction with pre-save campaigns), the more those activity spikes can prompt your music to be introduced to new listeners via algorithmic playlists.

Keep your ISRCs consistent

If you release a series of singles that are later included on an EP or LP, those songs can retain the same ISRCs (unique digital identifier codes for individual songs) as long as the sound recordings are identical. This allows the play-counts for the previously released songs to automatically carry over when they appear on an album.

Phase 4: pitching to curated playlists

Now that you've laid the foundation and done as much DIY playlisting as possible, it's time to reach out to other playlist creators. But here too, start slow: approach independently curated playlist creators first. After some success you can work your way up to the big playlist curators.

Who should you be pitching to?

It's impossible to recommend specific playlists in a guide like this, since it'd differ dramatically for every genre. But rest assured that opportunities are out there — hundreds (even thousands) of solid playlists exist for every genre.

No matter the genre though, the same pitching principles apply:

- 1. Google is your friend** — A good genre playlist (and the contact info for its creator) isn't hard to find online. Do a simple search and you'll be quickly on your way.
- 2. Do your research** — Browse around. Get lost on Spotify. Ramble from playlist to playlist. Takes notes on the ones that really leave their mark. What kinds of artists and songs do they include? Which of your songs might fit best on that playlist?
- 3. Follow the playlists you want to pitch to** — Be a good citizen. Don't just spam them. Follow them. You like the music anyway, right?
- 4. Build a relationship with the playlist creator** — Follow them on Twitter or Facebook if they have a profile. Leave comments on their blog. Communicate. Compliment.
- 5. ... THEN pitch your music** — Once you've shown yourself to be interested in and knowledgeable about the kind of music the playlist features, write to the curator and politely (and briefly) suggest one of your songs that'd be perfect for their playlist.
- 6. Cross your fingers** — If they add your song, awesome. If they say no thank you, don't unfollow them or get snippy. Your NEXT song might be the winner!
- 7. Bonus:** if you're having trouble contacting Spotify playlist curators, [watch this quick video](#) outlining a 4-step process for finding and reaching out to playlists.

Phase 5: Success!

More playlist activity, more listeners

Once your music begins to perform well through your own branded playlists, collaborative playlists, and independently curated playlists, the Spotify algorithm may begin to suggest your songs to Spotify's in-house editorial team. That's the real path to getting a song onto a playlist such as "Your Favorite Coffeehouse" or "Fresh Finds."

Money, Money, Money: The streaming license fee, plus publishing royalties

Any of these more prestigious placements should boost your plays AND streaming income significantly. When that happens, not only will you be paid for each stream through your distributor (hopefully CD Baby), but — if it's your original music — you'll also generate publishing revenue in the form of mechanical royalties.

This money is owed to you as the songwriter, and it is paid by Spotify to collection societies like Harry Fox. **However, these royalties can be difficult or impossible for you to collect on your own from those societies without the help of a publishing rights administrator such as [CD Baby Pro](#).**

For every \$100 in streaming revenue you generate, you're owed, on average, an additional \$15 in publishing royalties. It's YOUR money. With [CD Baby Pro](#), we'll help you claim and collect what's yours. **[Sign up today.](#)**

Bonus tips to aid your playlisting efforts

Let the outside world in

Spotify isn't an island unto itself. What you do in the "real world" and elsewhere online matters to listeners, playlist curators, and Spotify's team. So be sure to tour, make videos, get your music reviewed on blogs, or anything else that helps you grow your fanbase outside of the streaming platform. That momentum and buzz will drive playlist activity and streaming engagement within Spotify.

Don't ignore Facebook

A huge number of Spotify users have integrated their Spotify accounts with Facebook to share their listening habits, favorite playlists, and more. If your Facebook page is a ghost town, and if your engagement on Facebook is low, that looks bad to not only those listeners, but also Spotify.

The "music industry" cares about your stats

Numbers create an impression, and impressions matter. If you're looking to attract label attention, a manager, a booking agent, or a publisher, an impressive play-count on Spotify, along with a robust history of playlist activity, is one way of demonstrating you're worth investing in.

What are your Spotify "stats" as of today?

If you're distributing music through CD Baby, you can view Spotify trending reports and analytics within your members account.

These reports, updated daily, give you a detailed look at:

- ✓ Total streaming activity
- ✓ Your best performing tracks
- ✓ Demographic info for your fans (age, gender, device usage, etc.)
- ✓ Where your fans live
- ✓ Which playlists are featuring your music
- ✓ And more

This data can be super helpful when it comes to assessing the effectiveness of your Spotify promotions, online marketing, and playlisting strategy, as well as help you make smarter decisions when it comes to tour routing, targeted ads, and more.

Conclusion

We hope this guide provides a clear strategy for you to start making an impact on Spotify through playlisting.

It's not going to be an overnight win, but with great songs, a clear step-by-step plan, and the help of your fans, you'll be able to establish a greater presence on the most powerful and popular music-streaming platform for years to come.

GET YOUR MUSIC ON SPOTIFY, APPLE MUSIC, ITUNES, AMAZON, AND MORE!

For a one-time setup fee, CD Baby offers:

- Digital distribution to popular streaming and download services
- CD and vinyl sales
- YouTube monetization
- Sync Licensing
- Music promotion tools
- And more

Get started today at members.cdbaby.com.

