

FarPlay

Setting up for your online voice lesson

FarPlay is made for musicians rather than for meetings. It leaves your voice alone instead of tidying it up, and it carries your sound to me quickly. Those two things together are what let us sing and play at the same time.

Works on: Mac, Windows and Linux computers. FarPlay has not built a version for tablets or phones yet, so we use Zoom or Google Meet when a computer is out of reach.

About the small gap between us

Every call over the internet has a gap between you singing and me hearing it. FarPlay keeps that gap small enough to sing through. If we are about 500 miles apart and we both plug into our internet with a cable, the gap is usually 15 to 25 milliseconds. A millisecond is one thousandth of a second. Here is a way to feel that: sound moves about one foot every millisecond through the air, so a 20 millisecond gap is close to standing 20 feet apart in the same room. A choir stands wider than that. Living nearer each other makes the gap smaller, and using Wi-Fi instead of a cable makes it bigger.

Before your first lesson

- **Headphones with a cord**

This one matters more than everything else on this page. With headphones on, my voice goes straight into your ears. Without them, my voice comes out of your speakers, goes back into your microphone, and I hear myself again a moment later. Wireless earbuds such as AirPods look tidy and add a noticeable lag of their own, so reach for a pair with a cord.

- **A cable from your computer to your internet box, if you can manage one**

This is called an Ethernet cable. It has a wide plug that clicks in, a bit like an old telephone cord. Running one from your computer to the box your internet arrives through gives you the steadiest connection there is. If your computer has nowhere to plug it in, a small adapter handles that for around twenty dollars. Wi-Fi works too, and it wobbles more.

- **A laptop or desktop computer**

Mac, Windows or Linux. Tablets and phones cannot run FarPlay yet.

Setting up, once

1. Download it

Go to farplay.io/download and install it, the same way you would install anything else. It costs you nothing, and you do not need an account or a subscription to come to my studio.

2. Plug your headphones in before you open it

FarPlay looks around for your equipment when it starts up, so it finds your headphones straight away this way. Do the same with a microphone if you have one. The microphone built into your computer is fine to begin with.

3. Tell it what to listen to, and what to play through

Open the settings, usually behind a gear icon. You will find two lists. Input is what FarPlay listens to, so choose your microphone there. Output is what it plays through, so choose your headphones.

4. Check that it can hear you

Say a few words, then sing a comfortable note. A green bar moves as you make sound. Aim for it to move well without shooting all the way to the end.

Joining your lesson

1. Click the link I send you

It is the same link every week, so bookmark it or keep it somewhere easy to find.

2. Click Enter Session

FarPlay opens and connects.

3. Wait for me to let you in

You will sit on a waiting screen for a moment until I open the door. That part is normal.

4. Find your own sound slider

Once we are connected you will see my name on your screen with a slider underneath it. That slider belongs to you, and it changes how my voice reaches your ears. I have my own for how your voice reaches mine. One end of it says lower latency, which means less of a gap. The other end says cleaner sound, which means fewer crackles.

5. Switch the Auto button off when we sing together

A small button marked Auto sits near the slider and glows blue while it is switched on. Leave it on while we are chatting. Click it off when we start singing. Switched on, it keeps the sound tidy by letting the gap stretch and shrink as your internet changes. Switched off, it holds the gap steady, and steady is what lets us stay together. Then drag your slider toward the lower latency end a little at a time. When you hear the sound begin to crackle, move it back one step. The green stripe on the slider shows the range FarPlay suggests.

If something is not working

- **Try this first, whatever it is**

Restart your computer. FarPlay gives the same advice, and it clears up most things on its own.

- **The sound crackles or breaks up**

Drag your slider a little toward the cleaner sound end until it smooths out. Tell me, and I will do the same on mine.

- **The gap is too big to sing together**

Check that the Auto button is off, then drag your slider toward the lower latency end one step at a time. When it starts to crackle, come back one step.

- **I hear myself, or an echo**

Someone has their headphones off, or a wireless pair is connected. Corded headphones on both ends settle it.

- **It cannot find my microphone**

Close FarPlay, plug the microphone in, then open FarPlay again.

- **My connection keeps dropping out**

A cable from your computer to the internet box solves most of this. Sitting nearer the box helps when a cable is out of reach.

- **On Windows, the sound is still rough**

In the settings, look for Audio Buffer Size and choose a bigger number. A bigger number gives your computer more breathing room, at the cost of a slightly bigger gap. Macs usually cope with the smallest numbers, and Windows machines often want a little more.

FarPlay's own quickstart guide

<https://farplay.io/quickstart/>