



SPLIT SHEETS, EXPLAINED

Split sheet: sign it there.

1 session, 2 kinds of splits. What a split sheet is, what goes on it, and what happens when there isn't one.



Split sheet:

1 page, signed by every writer.

A split sheet lists everyone who wrote a song and the share each one owns, and every writer signs it. You use it to register the song with your PRO (the organization that collects when your song is played in public) and with The MLC (the US organization that pays songwriters when their songs are streamed or downloaded).



2 copyrights, 2 kinds of splits.

- 01** Writer splits: who owns what share of the song itself (melody and lyrics). Your PRO and The MLC pay by these.
- 02** Master splits: who gets what share of the recording's income. Many distributors (the companies that send your music to Spotify and Apple Music) let you set a percentage for each person and pay them directly.
- 03** A split sheet can cover both. Mark which is which.



No formula. You agree on it.

ASCAP, a US PRO, says the percentages are up to you and your co-writers, and encourages you to agree on them in writing before you register the song. Never assume an equal split: people often see their own part differently.



The MLC's free template asks for 8 things.

1. The date
2. The song title and any other titles (AKAs)
3. Each songwriter's name and IPI number (the ID number songwriter organizations use to pay you)
4. Phone and email
5. Each writer's PRO (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC and so on)
6. Publisher, if any
7. Each writer's ownership percentage
8. Every writer's signature and the date



Sign it before anyone leaves.

Guides advise settling splits early, and at the latest before anyone leaves the last studio or writing session. Splits are hard to change later: if you ask ASCAP to cut or remove another writer's share, it may require a signed letter from that writer.



Over 100%?

The money waits.

If co-writers claim more than 100% in total (one claims 70%, the other 40%), pay sources and publishers hold the royalties until the writers agree. At The MLC, if the registered shares already add up to 100% and yours is missing, it's treated as a possible conflict, and you file an overclaim (a claim for a share when 100% is already registered) to fix it.



No split sheet?

The law decides.

In the US, people who write a song together are co-owners of the whole song, not owners of separate parts. And with no contract, US courts have long given co-writers an equal split, no matter who did more. Agreed on 70/30? Write it down and sign it.



Then everyone registers the same numbers.

Register the song with your PRO using the shares you agreed. At The MLC, each co-writer who manages their own rights registers only their own share. If the co-writers own the song through one company, that company registers 100%.



Your share, in writing.

Save this for your next session.
Send it to your co-writer.

Sources: The MLC, ASCAP, US Copyright Office, Songtrust

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- Register the song with your PRO using the shares you agreed.
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Sources

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<https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ56a.pdf>

The MLC: Song Split Sheet toolkit

<https://www.themlc.com/hubfs/MLCSongSplitSheet-Toolkit.pdf>

The MLC (home)

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

Hypebot: songwriting split sheet, a complete guide

<https://www.hypebot.com/songwriting-split-sheet-a-complete-guide/>

ASCAP: registering your music

<https://www.ascap.com/help/registering-your-music>

The MLC: co-wrote a song, who registers

<https://blog.themlc.com/resources/what-if-i-co-wrote-a-song-wiht-somone-else-who-needs-to-register-it>

Sources

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<https://help.themlc.com/en/support/how-to-register-works-in-the-mlc-portal>

Songtrust: how split sheets work

<https://blog.songtrust.com/how-split-sheets-work>

US Copyright Office, Circular 1

<https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>

Southern California Law Review: Co-creating equality (2023)

<https://southerncalifornialawreview.com/2023/07/23/co-creating-equality>

Ari's Take: session musicians and master royalties

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