# How to Build a Radio Station

A workshop-style course + student workbook (fillable)

**The Rod's Classic Rock Method**

**How to use this course PDF**

• Work lesson-by-lesson in order (01 → 10).
• Each lesson ends with a worksheet page (fillable) and a checklist page (print-friendly).
• Tip: Save a blank copy before filling it out, so you always keep a clean master.

**Lesson 01**

# Start With Rules, Rights, and Your Broadcast Path

Choose the station path, rights assumptions, and content standard before you load a single song.

---

**What you are building**

**Build outcome**

By the end of this lesson, you will (1) write a one-sentence description of your station, (2) choose a broadcast path (hosted platform vs self-managed), and (3) set a clear content standard (family-safe vs more permissive). You will also leave with a short checklist of rights/licensing questions to verify for your specific country and platform.
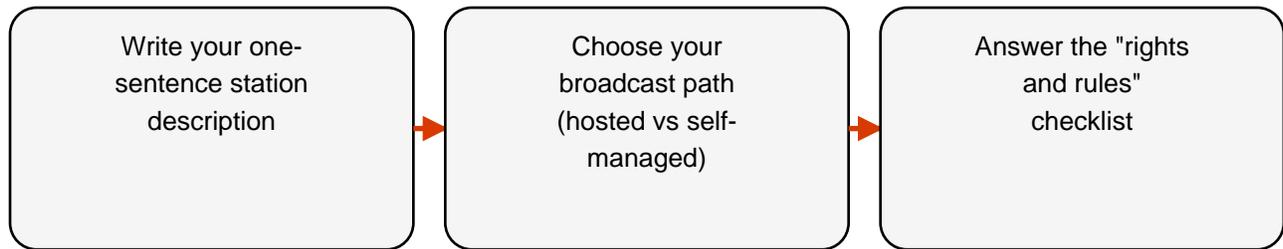
---

**Why this matters**

Most stations fail early for one boring reason: the owner built the station on assumptions they never verified (coverage region, licensing responsibilities, or content expectations).

This lesson slows the build down just enough to prevent expensive rework, takedowns, and "why did my station get blocked in other countries?" surprises.

The rest of the workshop is faster and more fun once these decisions are locked.

---

**Illustration**

| Write your one-sentence station description | → | Choose your broadcast path (hosted vs self-managed) | → | Answer the "rights and rules" checklist |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## What you need before you begin

- A rough idea of your genre and era (example: 70s/80s classic rock with limited 60s and early 90s).
- A notepad or document for your station blueprint (you will reuse it in every lesson).
- 15-30 minutes of uninterrupted time to make decisions and write them down.

## Key concepts (the quick version)

- Your station is a product with boundaries: who it is for, what it plays, and what it refuses to play.
- Hosted platform path: the platform usually handles more of the licensing/reporting and technical delivery (verify coverage and rules).
- Self-managed path: you control more, but you also own more responsibility (distribution, compliance, reporting, and redundancy).
- Content standard is a station decision, not a song-by-song argument.

# Step-by-step build

## Step 1: Write your one-sentence station description

Your one sentence is the anchor for every later decision. If you cannot say it in one sentence, your station will drift.

Format: "I run a [genre/era] station for [listener type] that delivers [core promise] without [key exclusions]."

Example: "I run a 70s/80s classic rock station for fans who want familiar hits and deep cuts, without metal, live tracks, remixes, or explicit content."

**Do this now**
- Write your one sentence.
- Circle the single most important phrase (that is your promise).
- Underline your exclusions (those become your rules in Lesson 03).

## Step 2: Choose your broadcast path (hosted vs self-managed)

There is no "best" path. There is only the path that matches your goals, time, and risk tolerance.

Hosted platform: faster launch, simpler operations, fewer moving parts. You trade some control for simplicity.

Self-managed: maximum control and customization, but you are responsible for the streaming stack and often more licensing/reporting complexity.

**Do this now**
- Pick one path and write down why (2-3 sentences).
- Write the first platform/tool you plan to use for that path (example: a hosted platform, or an encoder + streaming server).
- Write the coverage region you want (US only, US+CA, worldwide, etc.).

# Step-by-step build

## Step 3: Answer the "rights and rules" checklist

Do not memorize laws. Instead, lock in the questions you must verify for your specific build.

If you are in the United States and running a radio-style (non-interactive) stream:

- SoundExchange is commonly part of the sound-recording side.
- Musical works rights are often handled through different channels (for example, PRO licensing).

If you use a hosted platform, confirm what the platform covers, what countries/regions are covered, and what you must do inside the platform to stay compliant.

**Do this now**
- Will my station be non-interactive (radio-style) or will listeners pick songs on demand?
- What countries will I allow listeners from, and does my path/platform actually cover those countries?
- If I use a hosted platform, what does it bundle (licenses, reporting, distribution) and what does it NOT cover?
- Will I post show replays, podcasts, or full songs on social media? (Those uses may require different permissions.)
- Who is responsible for logs/reporting: me or the platform?

# Step-by-step build

## Step 4: Set your content standard (and write it as a policy)

A content standard removes drama and saves time. You are not "judging" art; you are protecting a consistent listener experience.

Two common standards: family-safe all day (recommended for broad reach) or more permissive late-night (requires extra controls and clear disclaimers).

Even for online radio (which is not regulated the same way as over-the-air broadcasting), FCC definitions are a useful reference point for what audiences mean by obscene/indecent/profane.

**Do this now**
- Choose your standard and write a 2-4 sentence policy.
- Write your permanent exclusions (example: no explicit sexual content, no slurs, no shock-jock segments).
- Decide how you will handle borderline tracks (clean edit only, or exclude entirely).

# Student deliverables

Save these somewhere you can find later. They become your station blueprint.

- One-sentence station description.
- Broadcast path choice (hosted or self-managed) + 2-3 sentences explaining why you chose it.
- Coverage region you want to reach (and whether you will geo-block).
- Content standard policy (2-4 sentences) + your permanent exclusions list.
- A "rights and rules" checklist with your answers (even if some answers are "need to verify").

# Knowledge check

Answer without looking. If you miss one, re-read the section that covers it.

- 1) What is the purpose of the one-sentence station description?
- 2) Name one tradeoff of a hosted platform path.
- 3) Name one tradeoff of a self-managed path.
- 4) Why must you decide your content standard before building the playlist?
- 5) Give two questions from the rights/licensing checklist that you must verify for your build.

---

**What to do next**

- Lesson 02: Write the station promise and define your lane lines (what you are and are not).
- Do not buy or import music yet. Wait until Lesson 03 rules are written.
- If you chose a hosted platform, locate its licensing-coverage page and note the covered countries.

---

**Rod's Classic Rock method note**

Use the station promise as the referee. When a decision is hard, ask whether the choice supports the promise and the listener you are building for.

---

## Suggested resources (optional)

- FCC consumer guide: Obscene, Indecent and Profane Broadcasts (reference definitions).
- SoundExchange: Licensing 101 (US non-interactive webcasting reference).
- PRX: A guide to broadcast obscenities and issuing content advisories (helpful reference).
- Your platform's licensing coverage page (example: Live365 licensing coverage).

**Course Notice**
This workshop is educational and software-agnostic. It does not provide legal advice. Licensing, rights, and content

standards vary by country, platform, and distribution method. Always verify requirements for your region and your platform before going live.

**Copyright © 2026 Rod's Classic Rock. All rights reserved.**

# Lesson 01 Worksheet

Start With Rules, Rights, and Your Broadcast Path

**Student name:** _____          **Date:** _____

---

**Deliverables (fill these out)**

**1. One-sentence station description**

```
[                                                                ]
```

**2. Broadcast path (pick one) and why**

☐ Hosted platform          ☐ Self-managed          ☐ Not sure yet

Why this path fits me:

```
[                                                                ]
```

**3. Content standard (pick one) and always-excluded list**

☐ Family-safe all day          ☐ Mixed standard (time-based) ☐ Not sure yet

Always excluded (list):

```
[                                                                ]
```

---

**Knowledge check (short answers)**

**1. Hosted vs self-managed: what changes?**

```
[                                                                ]
```

**2. Why choose your content standard before building a playlist?**

```
[                                                                ]
```

**3. Name one "rights/coverage" question you must verify.**

```
[                                                                ]
```

**4. True/False: Online streaming is regulated by the FCC the same way as AM/FM.**

```
[                                                                ]
```

**5. What is one risk of skipping this lesson?**

```
[                                                                ]
```

# Lesson 01 Checklist

Start With Rules, Rights, and Your Broadcast Path

Check each item when complete. Print this page if you prefer paper.

---

**Completion checklist**

☐ I wrote a one-sentence station description.

☐ I chose my broadcast path (hosted or self-managed).

☐ I listed which countries/regions I plan to serve.

☐ I verified licensing/coverage responsibilities for my path/platform.

☐ I decided my content standard (family-safe vs permissive).

☐ I defined what is always excluded (profanity/explicit sexual content, etc.).

☐ I wrote down how I will handle "borderline" songs (clean edit only, skip, etc.).

☐ I saved these decisions in my station blueprint folder.

---

**Quick reflection (optional)**

What went well?

_____

What will I improve next?

_____