AC-1 Adaptive Compressor

User Manual | Version 1.0.1

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1. Overview

- **Learn**: choose a SOURCE (the type of track) and a subtype, press LEARN, and play 8 seconds of audio. THRESHOLD, RATIO, ATTACK, RELEASE, KNEE, MIX, AUTO GAIN, AUTO REL, the compressor type (CHARACTER), and the DRIVE type and amount are then set from the measurements.
- **Three compressor types** (OPTO / FET / VCA). With CHARACTER set to AUTO, one of them is selected automatically after Learn.
- **TARGET**: after Learn, drag the marker on the gain-reduction ring to set the amount of gain reduction you want (1 to 20 dB). RATIO, KNEE and THRESHOLD adjust to match.
- **DRIVE**: four saturation types (TUBE / XFMR [TRANSFORMER] / TAPE / FET). The type and amount are set automatically after Learn, but you switch DRIVE on yourself.
- **AUTO GAIN**: matches the perceived loudness of the output to the input, so you can judge the effect of the compression by ear.
- **Linear phase throughout**: no signal path in AC-1 introduces frequency-dependent phase shift. The compressor itself applies only a time-varying gain, and DRIVE uses a linear-phase oversampler.
- **Mono and stereo** support.
- **Latency**: 44 samples at 48 kHz (about 0.92 ms).

2. System Requirements & Installation

Item	Details
OS	Windows 11 (64-bit) / macOS 13 (Ventura) or later (Apple Silicon and Intel)
Format	VST3 (Windows / macOS) / Audio Unit (macOS only)
Supported hosts	Any DAW that supports VST3 or Audio Unit
Internet	Required to activate a serial number, and then for a license check at least once every 30 days (performed automatically, normally about once a day). Computers that are never online can use offline activation (section 3)

Installation Steps (Windows)

1. Download the installer (AC-1_Installer_v1.x.x.exe) from aideaudio.com and run it. It is available from the "Download (Windows)" button on the AC-1 product page, or from the "Win" button in the license row under "Licenses" on your account page (the dashboard).
2. Windows asks for administrator permission. Allow it, and the installer window opens.
3. The End-User License Agreement (EULA) page appears. Read it and accept it to continue.
4. On the destination page, choose the installation folder.
5. Review your choices and start the installation. When it has finished, start your DAW and rescan your plugins. AC-1 appears in the plugin list.

To uninstall, use "Installed apps" in Windows (AC-1 is listed as AIDE AUDIO AC-1 ver1.x.x), or run AC-1Uninstaller.exe in the installation folder. Uninstalling does not remove the trial and license records (%APPDATA%\AIDE AUDIO), so reinstalling neither restarts the trial nor removes the activation.

Installation Steps (macOS)

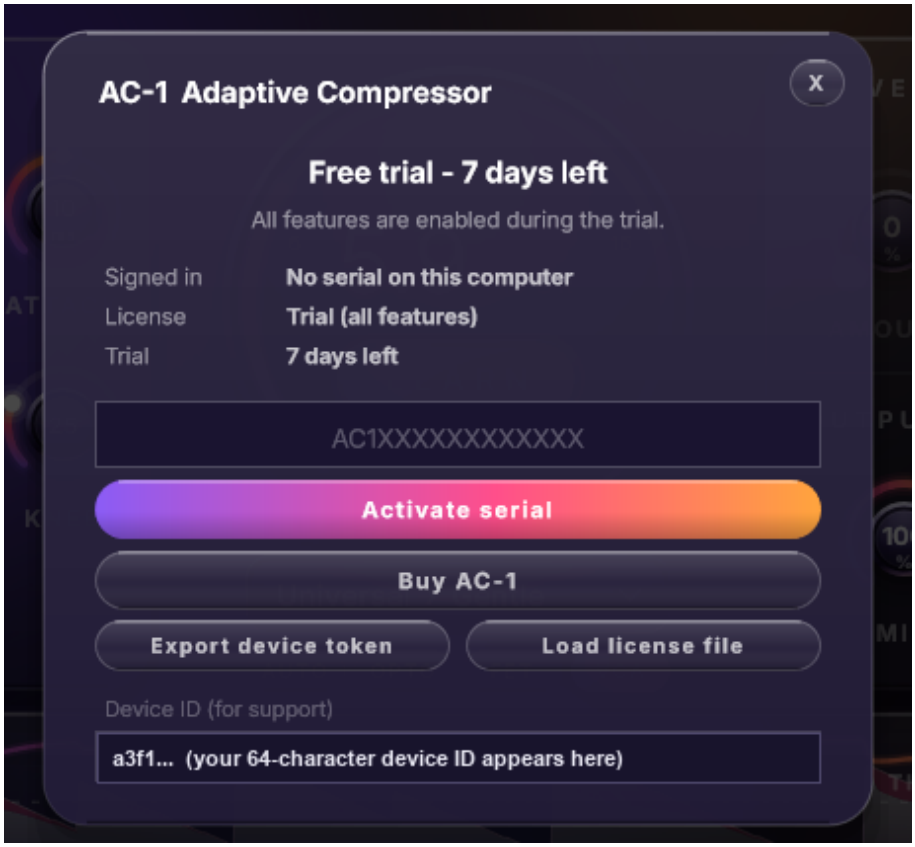
1. Download the installer (AC-1_Installer_v1.x.x.pkg) from aideaudio.com and open it. It is available from the "Download (Mac)" button on the AC-1 product page, or from the "Mac" button in the license row under "Licenses" on your account page (the dashboard).
2. The End-User License Agreement (EULA) page appears. Read it and accept it to continue.
3. Follow the on-screen steps to install. Enter an administrator password when asked. The VST3 goes to /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3 and the Audio Unit to /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components.
4. When it has finished, restart your DAW and rescan your plugins. AC-1 appears in the plugin list.

To uninstall, use the Finder to move AC-1.vst3 and AC-1.component from the two folders above to the Trash. Uninstalling does not remove the trial and license records (~/Library/AIDE AUDIO), so reinstalling neither restarts the trial nor removes the activation.

3. Free Trial, Serial Activation & Account

3.1 Free trial

- AC-1 comes with a **7-day free trial with all features enabled**. The 7 days (168 hours) are counted in real time from the start of the trial, not by how long you use AC-1.
- Hover over the account button (the person icon) to the right of ? at the top of the window to see the current status: **TRIAL: 7 DAYS** (the number is the days remaining), **LICENSED**, **TRIAL ENDED** or **ONLINE CHECK**. The icon turns amber when action is needed. Click it to open the account screen.



The account screen during the trial. The Device ID at the bottom is a placeholder here.

> **Warning**: If the trial has ended and no serial number has been activated, AC-1 **passes audio through unprocessed (bypassed)**, and the account screen appears when you open the plugin window. To keep using AC-1, enter a serial number (see the next section).

In this state, the LEARN button is still shown, but pressing it does not start Learn.

3.2 Activating a serial number

- Click the account button, enter your serial number (AC1 followed by 12 letters or digits) and click **Activate serial**.
- If you do not have one yet, click **Buy AC-1** to open the product page in your browser.
- When activation succeeds, "Licensed - thank you!" appears and the account button's status changes to **LICENSED**.

3.3 Up to 3 computers per serial number

One serial number can be activated on up to **3 computers**. To move AC-1 to another computer, first sign out on the old computer to free its slot.

- Open the account screen and click **Sign out**. The license is removed from this computer and its slot is freed on the server ("Signed out. This device slot is free again.").
- If AC-1 cannot reach the server, it shows "Signed out here, but the slot is still used. Free it under Activated Devices on your account page." In that case, open your account page at aideaudio.com, expand the license row, and deactivate that computer in the "Activated Devices" list.

3.4 Offline activation

To activate a computer that cannot connect to the internet, use a second computer that can.

1. On the offline computer, open the account screen, enter your serial number and click **Export device token**. Save the small text file (AC-1-device-token.txt).

2. On a computer with internet access, sign in to your account page (the dashboard) at aideaudio.com. Click the arrow on the license's row to expand its details, then click the "Offline activation" button below the "Activated Devices" list. Select the device token (.txt), and a license file (extension **.aidelicense**) is saved. This button appears only for AC-1 licenses.
3. Copy the license file to the offline computer, click **Load license file** on the account screen and select the file.

An offline license works only on that one computer. The account screen shows "Full version (offline license)".

3.5 Device ID

The bottom of the account screen shows this computer's **Device ID** (64 characters). If your serial number cannot be activated, please send this ID to support. Click the ID to select it for copying.

4. The Screen

The default window size is 960 x 540 pixels.



AC-1 after Learn. The numbers correspond to the table below.

No.	Part	What it does
1	**?** button	Opens a menu: Send feedback..., Manual, Support, and the version (section 9)
2	Account button (person icon)	Opens the account screen. Hover over it to see the trial or license status
3	Undo / Redo	The two arrows at the top right (section 7)
4	COMPRESSOR panel	THRESHOLD, RATIO, ATTACK, RELEASE and KNEE
5	AUTO (under RELEASE)	AUTO REL: automatic release that adapts to the material
6	Gain-reduction ring	The large number is the peak gain reduction over the last second, in dB, updated 8 times a second. The ring itself shows the current gain reduction. The scale runs from 0 to 20 dB
7	TARGET marker	The orange line and triangle on the ring. Appears after Learn
8	LEARN button	Starts and cancels Learn. Shows the progress during Learn
9	SOURCE menu	Choose the track type and subtype from a single cascading menu
10	CHARACTER chips	AUTO / OPTO / FET / VCA
11	DRIVE panel	On/off switch, AMOUNT and the four DRIVE types
12	OUTPUT panel	MIX, OUTPUT and AUTO GAIN
13	Level history	Scrolling display of level and gain reduction
14	IN / OUT meters	Input and output levels, with clip indicators

Level history

- The filled area is the **output** level, and the line is the **input** level.
- The band hanging down from the top is the **gain reduction**.
- The dashed line is the **THRESHOLD**.
- Scroll the mouse wheel over the display to switch the vertical range between 60, 36 and 24 dB.

Meters and clip indicators

The IN and OUT bars show the input and output levels. When the signal reaches 0 dBFS, the small red indicator above the bar lights up and **stays lit until you click the meter**. If the OUT indicator lights up, lower OUTPUT or turn AUTO GAIN off.

5. Using Learn

5.1 Steps

1. Choose the track type in the **SOURCE** menu. If you are unsure, leave it at **Universal**.
2. Start playback in your DAW, using a reasonably loud section of the track.
3. Click **LEARN**. The ring shows LEARNING and the progress.
4. Keep playing until the progress reaches 100 % (8 seconds of audio). The knobs glide smoothly to their new values, and the TARGET marker appears.



The SOURCE menu. Types on the left, subtypes on the right.

6. Controls

The tables below list each parameter's range and its default value before Learn.

6.1 COMPRESSOR

Control	Range	Default	What it does
THRESHOLD	-60 to 0 dB	-18 dB	The level at which compression starts
RATIO	1:1 to 20:1	4:1	How strongly the signal above the threshold is reduced
ATTACK	0.1 to 200 ms	10 ms	How quickly compression kicks in
RELEASE	10 to 2000 ms	200 ms	How quickly compression releases
KNEE	HARD (0) to SOFT (100)	25	How gradually compression sets in around the threshold

Control	Range	Default	What it does
AUTO REL	On / Off	Off	Automatic release that adapts to the material (see below)

Double-click the center of a knob to type in a value. Hold Shift while dragging to adjust in fine steps, about one sixth of the normal speed (dragging the TARGET marker works the same way).

AUTO REL. When AUTO REL is on, the RELEASE knob is disabled and the release works in two stages: a fast stage and a slow stage. The fast stage has a fixed time for each compressor type (OPTO and VCA: 100 ms, FET: 70 ms), and the slow stage comes in only after long, heavy compression. The gain recovers quickly after short peaks and slowly after sustained compression. Learn turns AUTO REL on only for SOURCEs and subtypes in which several sounds are mixed together.



AUTO REL on. The RELEASE knob is disabled.

6.2 CHARACTER

CHARACTER selects the compressor type. Hover over a button to see a short description.

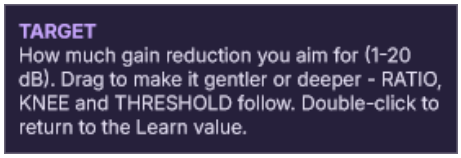
Type	Character	Suited to
AUTO	One of the three types is selected automatically after Learn.	Default
OPTO	Slow and smooth. The release is always two-stage and adapts to the material	Vocals, bass, strings
FET	Fast and punchy; catches every peak. Adds subtle harmonics at heavy gain reduction	Drums, rock guitar
VCA	Clean and neutral, with no coloration of its own	Buses, mixes

6.3 TARGET

TARGET sets the amount of gain reduction you want, in dB.

- It appears **once Learn has finished**.
- **Drag** the marker along the ring to make the compression lighter or heavier (1 to 20 dB). RATIO, KNEE and THRESHOLD follow; ATTACK and RELEASE stay where they are.
- **Double-click** the marker to return to the value set by Learn.
- The current target is shown inside the ring, for example "TARGET 6.0 dB". A mark on the ring shows the deepest target your material can reach.

• If you adjust THRESHOLD, RATIO or KNEE by hand after Learn, or change CHARACTER, the marker fades. Your settings stay as they are, but the gain reduction is no longer guaranteed to match TARGET. Drag the marker again to re-apply TARGET.



The TARGET tooltip.

6.4 DRIVE

The DRIVE panel at the top right adds saturation after the compressor.

Control	What it does
Switch (top right of the panel)	Turns DRIVE on and off
AMOUNT	0 to 100 %. 0 % is a clean pass-through, and the effect increases smoothly from there
TUBE	Warm and thick, mainly even-order harmonics: vocals, bass
XFMR	Short for TRANSFORMER. The lows saturate slightly more and the highs are slightly rounded off: bass, kick, mixes
TAPE	Softened peaks and gently rounded highs: drum buses, harsh material
FET	Bright and hard, odd-order harmonics: drums, rock guitar

• DRIVE processes the compressed signal, and MIX then blends the result with the dry signal, so MIX also sets the balance between the saturated and dry sound. On a stereo signal, DRIVE saturates only the Mid component: the Side component gets no added harmonics, and its level changes by the same amount as the Mid. As a result, driving the signal does not change the panning or the stereo width.



DRIVE switched on.

6.5 OUTPUT section

Control	Range	Default	What it does
MIX	0 to 100 %	100 %	Blend of the dry and compressed signals (parallel compression)
OUTPUT	-24 to +24 dB	0 dB	Manual output level, separate from AUTO GAIN
AUTO GAIN	On / Off	Off (on after Learn)	Compensates for the level lost to compression

7. Undo, Redo & Resizing

7.1 Undo and Redo

- Click the arrows at the top right of the window, or press **Ctrl+Z** (Undo) or **Ctrl+Shift+Z** / **Ctrl+Y** (Redo). On macOS, use **Command** instead of Ctrl. Click the AC-1 window first so that it has focus.
- Each step is a single action in the AC-1 window: one knob drag, one SOURCE change, one Learn, or one drag or double-click of the TARGET marker. Learn's measurements and TARGET are undone and redone along with each step.

7.2 Resizing

- Drag the grip in the bottom-right corner. The 16:9 aspect ratio is kept, and the size ranges from 720 x 405 to 1280 x 720 pixels (default 960 x 540).
- The size is remembered.

8. FAQ & Troubleshooting

LEARN shows "Waiting for audio" or "Signal too low". Start playback and play a section whose level at AC-1's input is above -60 dBFS. Learn counts only actual audio and waits until it has collected 8 seconds.

My settings changed when I changed SOURCE. This is by design: AC-1 recalculates the settings from the stored measurements. Knobs you have adjusted by hand keep their offset from the Learn values. To go back, use Undo.

"Invalid serial format (AC1 + 12 characters)." Check the serial number for typos. It is AC1 followed by 12 letters or digits; 0 (zero) and O (the letter) are easily confused.

"Activation failed: ..." The text after the colon is the server's response. If you have reached the limit of 3 computers, sign out on a computer you no longer use, or expand the license row on your account page and deactivate that computer in the "Activated Devices" list.

"Still checking the saved license. Try again in a moment." AC-1 is re-verifying the saved license. Wait a moment and try again.

"This license was issued for another computer." An offline license file works only on the computer that created the device token. Export a new device token on this computer (section 3.4).

"This license has expired. Connect to the internet to renew it." Connect to the internet and open AC-1; the license is then renewed.

"Could not save your free trial" / "Could not remove the license from this computer" AC-1 could not write to your user folder. Check that the folder (%APPDATA%\AIDE AUDIO on Windows, ~/Library/AIDE AUDIO on macOS) is writable.

9. Support

Help menu

Click the **?** button at the top left of the window (next to the AIDE AUDIO logo).

- **Send feedback...** opens a screen for sending comments or bug reports to AIDE AUDIO (see below).
- **Manual** opens the manual in your browser. It always opens the English PDF.
- **Support** opens the AIDE AUDIO contact page.
- The last line shows the version. Please include it when you contact support.

Sending feedback

Choose **Send feedback...** to open the feedback screen on top of the plugin window.

1. Choose a type: **Feature request** / **Bug report** / **Other**.
2. Write your message (up to 4000 characters).
3. Click **Send**.

Only your message, the type, the product name, the AC-1 version, the OS name and the DAW name are sent. **Your serial number and Device ID are not sent.**

Contact and website

- **Website**: https://aideaudio.com/
- **Account page**: license management, installer downloads, and the list of activated devices (for deactivating computers).
- **Support**: the contact form at https://aideaudio.com/contact (also reachable from Support in the plugin's **?** menu), or support@aideaudio.com. For activation problems, please include your serial number and the Device ID shown on the account screen.

About the license

Redistributing or sharing this plugin is prohibited. One serial number can be used on up to 3 computers. To activate, renew and deactivate a serial number, AC-1 sends the serial number, the product name, the Device ID (a one-way hash of your computer's identifier) and the computer name to the AIDE AUDIO server. The computer name is used to identify your computer in the list of activated devices on the dashboard. Trial and license data are stored on your computer and are not saved in your DAW projects.