



ESSENTIALS Getting Started Guide



ESSENTIALS is a collection of Max For Live devices that each do one thing, but do it well. With only one or two controls each, they're technically simple but conceptually vast.

They're also fun and engaging to use, destined to become essential tools in your music making toolkit.

There are 5 devices; Colour, Shift, Filter, Excite and Widen.

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Installing ESSENTIALS

Inside the folder you downloaded, you will find several .amxd files — these are Max For Live device files. To load them in Ableton Live, drag and drop them onto a Track in your project.

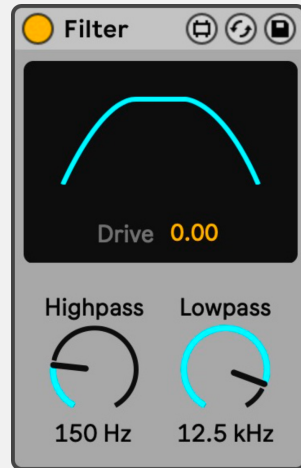
Note that you will need Max For Live installed to use ESSENTIALS. Max For Live is included with Ableton Live Suite and can be purchased as an add-on for Ableton Live Standard.

To learn more about installing Packs in Ableton Live, see the [Installing 3rd Party Packs and Content in Ableton Live](#) guide.



Using ESSENTIALS

The devices in ESSENTIALS are technically very simple, with only one or two controls each. They're designed to be quick to learn but require exploration and practice to truly master. Let's explore each device a little more.



Filter

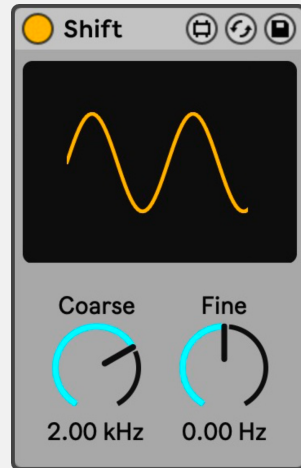
Filter is a simple high- and lowpass filter, with some analog character, if you want it.

There are no resonance controls — the resonance of each filter adapts automatically to give a smooth response across the range of the control.

Filter is designed to be used for creative filter sweeps, like you might do with a DJ mixer or hardware filter, so it works really well when paired with a MIDI controller. It also works well as a fixed filter, for example, to clean up some muddy lows with a highpass.

Use the **Drive** control to add in some analog-style post-filter colouration.

At 0, Drive is completely off and Filter functions like a simple digital filter. Turn Drive up to start getting some warm, crunchy overdrive with your filter sweeps.

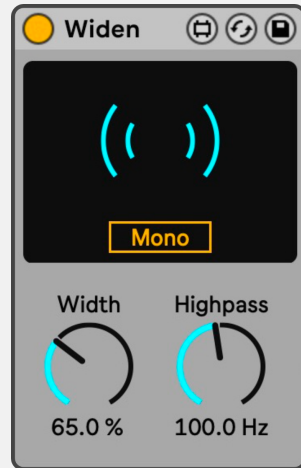


Shift

Shift is a simple frequency shifter with **Coarse** and **Fine** controls.

Frequency Shifting has many uses, but Shift has been designed specifically for tuning drums and percussion.

To learn more about how you can use a frequency shifter to tune drums, watch [this video I made for Ableton's Learn Live series exploring the native Shifter device](#).



Widen

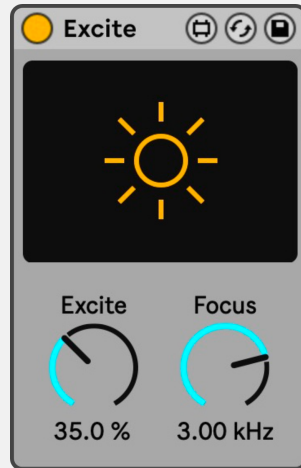
Widen is a mono-compatible stereo widening tool.

Turn the **Width** control up to add artificial stereo width to anything, without causing phasing issues.

The **Highpass** control bypasses the stereo widening on any frequencies below the cutoff.

The **Mono** switch can be used to quickly check mono compatibility.

While it can be tempting to use Widen on absolutely everything, a good mix has a balance of wide and narrow sounds, as well as sounds panned to different places in the stereo field, so its recommended to use Widen sparingly; usually only on one or two elements in a mix at most.



Excite

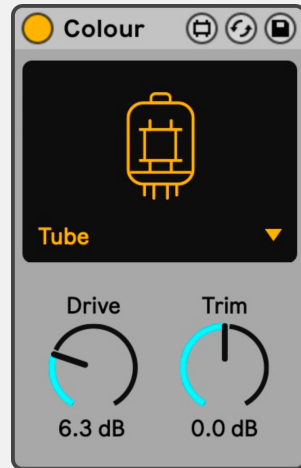
Exciters are unique tools that can be used to enhance dull sounds. They work by subtly distorting a signal to add additional harmonics. While an EQ can only cut or boost what's already there, exciting adds new frequencies and lets you brighten up sounds beyond what's possible with simple EQ.

The **Excite** control determines how much excitation is applied.

The **Focus** control determines the centre frequency around which the excitation is applied.

Set the Focus to a higher value (1kHz+) and dial up Excite to brighten up dull sounds.

Try setting the Focus to a lower value (300Hz — 700Hz) and dial up Excite to add fullness and clarity to bass.



Colour

Colour is my personal favourite and most deceptively complex and characterful of all the devices.

There are six colour modes: **Tape, Tube, Valve, Diode, Transistor and Overdrive**. These are not modelled on any particular hardware but instead evoke the 'vibe' of those kinds of gear.

Each mode has its own unique character but also, due to the nature of how distortion/colouration works, each mode will respond slightly differently depending on the signal you send into it as well as how much the signal is driven. Tube might give you quite a different kind of sound on, say, drums versus on a pad.

The **Drive** control simply drives how much the signal is going into the distortion and thus how much colouration you'll get. Its also gain compensated and will add colouration without affecting the overall level too much, so you can accurately hear the difference.

The **Trim** control lets you adjust the overall output of the device, in case you need to also manually compensate the gain.

Conceptually, because it can behave so differently on different material, Colour can be hard to master. I'd recommend spending some time exploring the different modes on different kinds of material to learn its subtleties. Once you master it, it can be a powerful tool for adding character and colour to your tracks.

Additional Info

If you have any questions or issues, please get in touch at elphnt.io/contact

ESSENTIALS is made by Ableton Certified Trainer Tom Glendinning, also known as ELPHNT. For more devices, tutorials and free music production resources, visit elphnt.io

Please read the up-to-date licensing info for ESSENTIALS at elphnt.io/licensing

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