Preparing your audio for Mixing.

1) Make sure you love the recordings, check for timing errors, tuning and general sound quality, check that none of the stems are distorting or clipping.

2) Remove any limiters or other plugins on the tracks that are inserted just for the sake of loudness. However if there are particular plugins you have used that you feel are essential to the sound of the tracks please feel free to keep in the export.

Regarding other plugins on the master fader, if you don't 100% love what it is doing, take it off. I have a few engineer clients that send me two versions of their mixes. One version with all the plugins used to get client approvals, as well as a version without the limiter and any other plugins that aren't essential. 99% of the time, this is what I start with.

3) Avoid peak levels reaching 0dBFS. I see all sorts of suggestions on the internet about where to have your peak levels pre-mastering. There is no magic number for peak levels pre-mixing. Don't hit 0dBFS, or have a plugin acting as a limiter applying a brick-wall ceiling somewhere before 0dBFS and you'll be in good shape.

4) Export your stems at the same sample rate the tracks were recorded at, ie if they were recorded at 16 Bit - export as 16 Bit.

record at, but it is best practice to not change the sample rate when you make your final mix files for mastering. The SRC in your DAW is probably not awesome, so don't use it.

6) *Carefully* listen to the beginning and end of each track for stray noises and anomalies, and remove anything you do not want. I said *carefully*. Close your eyes, use headphones. Doing a separate more analytical listening session before sending off for mastering can be very beneficial.

7) Listen to the vocal tracks in solo mode to check for any clicks, ticks, thumps, plosives, headphone bleed, and other sounds that might be masked by the rest of the track but not intended to be in the mix. Vocals seem to be the source of most unwanted noises in a track from my experience. These things are not always easily audible prior to mastering in the context of a full mix when the mix engineer is busy worrying about more important things. But, they can become more noticeable and unnaturally loud after mastering. Take my word for it, they're much easier to hear in a mastering room with low noise floor, and a transparent playback system.

8) Check for bad edits/crossfades causing clicks and pops that you may have not noticed when you're in the mixing zone. This can be done using both your eyes and ears.

9) Give the exported tracks obvious names - such as Snare /Kick /Distorted Guitar Solo etc

10) Lastly, the most important thing:

LISTEN TO THE ACTUAL BOUNCED/RENDERED MIX FILE TO MAKE SURE A PLUGIN OR DAW GLITCH DID NOT OCCUR BEFORE SENDING TO MIXING.