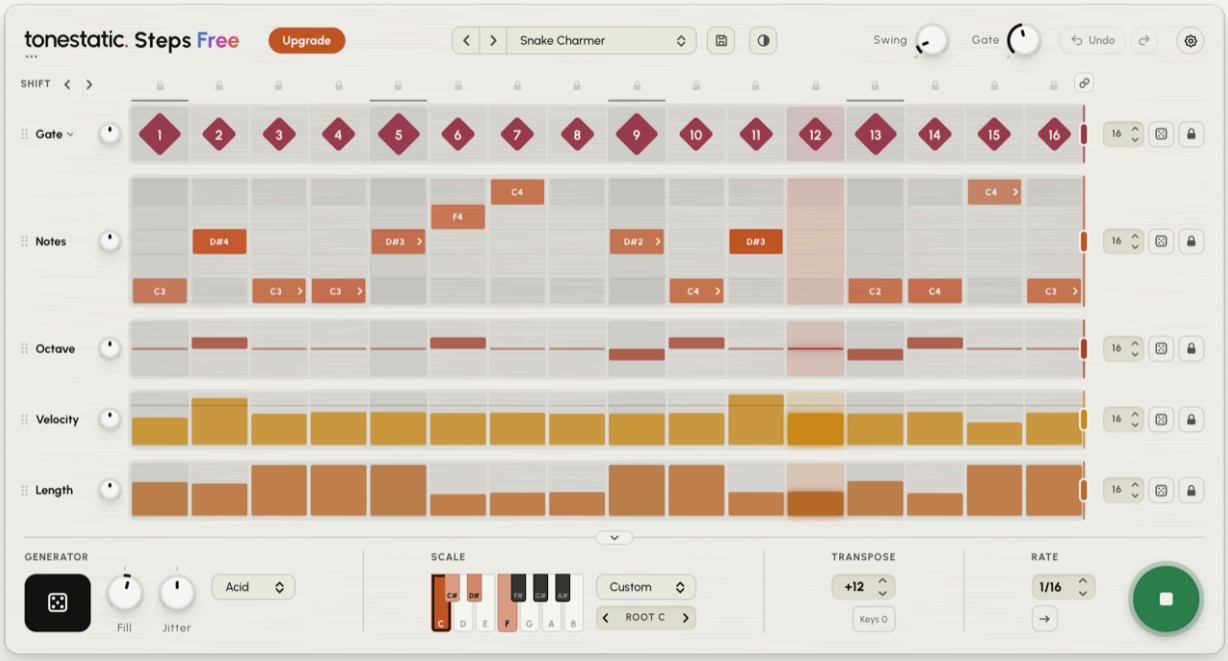
tonestatic.

Tonestatic Steps Free

Free MIDI step sequencer

MANUAL · VERSION 0.13.0



Contents

Welcome to Steps Free 3
- At a glance 3

Installing and unlocking 5
- macOS 5
- Windows 5
- Unlocking Steps Free 5
- The other plugins 6

Getting Steps Free to a synth 7
- Ableton Live (VST3) 7
- Logic Pro (AU) 8
- Bitwig Studio (VST3) 8
- Reaper (VST3) 8
- FL Studio (VST3) 8
- Cubase (VST3) 8

Quick start 10

The window 11
- The lanes 11
- Gate and Chance 11
- Generator 11
- Scale and Transpose 12
- Rate and Direction 12

Settings 13
- MIDI and the CC lanes 13
- Lanes 13

Working with the controls 14
- Knobs and faders 14
- Switches, steppers and power buttons 14
- Automation, undo and the window 14

Presets 15
- Browsing 15
- Saving your own 15

Steps Free and Steps 16

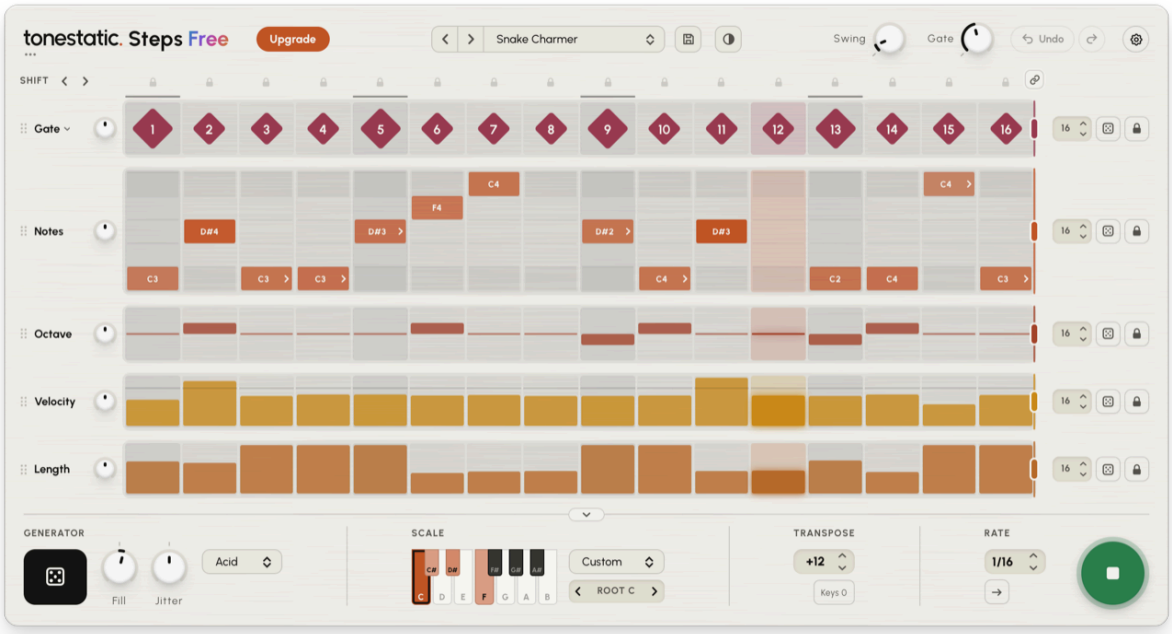
Files, folders and help 17
- Where everything is 17
- When something is not right 17
- Getting in touch 17

Welcome to Steps Free

Steps Free is a MIDI step sequencer and pattern generator, free to keep: type your email once and it is unlocked for good. It makes no sound of its own: it plays a synth — a plugin in your DAW or a hardware synth on a MIDI cable — in time with your song.

Each step has a gate, a note, an octave, a velocity and a length, each on a lane of its own with its own length, and two more lanes move any two of your synth's parameters step by step. Draw a line by hand, or press the dice for a pattern in the Acid or Arp style as a place to start, then lock what you like and roll the rest.

It is the free edition of **Tonestatic Steps**. Everything that makes the sound is here; Steps adds the workflow around it — Mutate, eight patterns and the chain, the MIDI clip drag and four more generator styles. The **Upgrade** button beside the name shows the two side by side.



Steps Free

At a glance

Formats	VST®3 (macOS, Windows) · AU MIDI FX (Logic)
macOS	11+, Universal, Apple Silicon native
Windows	10+, 64-bit
Output	MIDI: notes, velocity and two CC lanes, on any channel. Monophonic. No audio of its own.
Steps	Up to 64 per lane, each lane its own length
Tempo	Follows the DAW's transport and tempo; Rate 1/4 to 1/32, dotted and triplet

Generator	Acid and Arp styles, with Fill and Jitter
Presets	30 factory presets, plus Init and your own
Price	Free. Unlocked for good with your email: no trial, no licence key, no time limit.



Installing and unlocking

Steps Free comes in the Tonestatic installer, from **tonestatic.com/steps-free**, with the other Tonestatic plugins. The first time you open it, type your email and it is unlocked for good — no trial, no licence key.

macOS

1. **Close your DAW.**
   A host that is running will not see new plugins until it starts again.
2. **Unzip the download and open the installer**
   (`Tonestatic-0.13.0-macOS.pkg`). It shows the licence agreement, which you accept to go on. On the Installation Type page, **Customize** lets you leave out any plugin or format.
3. **Open your DAW**
   and let it find the new plugins. Logic Pro does that when it starts. In Ableton Live, open **Settings → Plug-Ins** and press **Rescan** if they do not show up.

The plugins go to `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components` (Audio Unit) and `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3`, Universal: native on Apple Silicon and Intel, and in a DAW running under Rosetta. macOS 11 or later.

Windows

1. **Close your DAW.**
2. **Unzip the download and run the installer**
   (`Tonestatic-0.13.0-Windows.exe`). If Windows SmartScreen says "Windows protected your PC", choose **More info**, then **Run anyway**. Pick all eight plugins, or only the ones you want.
3. **Open your DAW**
   and rescan its plugins if they do not appear.

The plugins are 64-bit VST3, in `C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3`. Their windows are drawn by Microsoft Edge WebView2, which the installer adds if your computer does not have it. Windows 10 or later.

Unlocking Steps Free

The first time you open Steps Free it asks for your email. Type it and press **Unlock**: Steps Free is unlocked on this computer for good, and stays unlocked offline. It needs the internet that once. Until then it plays nothing.

Under the field, **Email me about Tonestatic plugins and offers** starts unticked. Leave it so and your address is used for nothing else; tick it if you would like to hear about new plugins and offers.

The ··· menu under the name has **About**, **Licence** (which shows the email it was unlocked with) and **Updates**, which says when a new version is out.

The other plugins

The installer also puts Alpine, Grains, Artifact, Modulation, Delay, Reverb and the full Steps on your computer. They share one free 14-day trial, which starts the first time you open any of them and type your email — opening Steps Free does not start it. Leave any of them out while you install if you only want Steps Free.

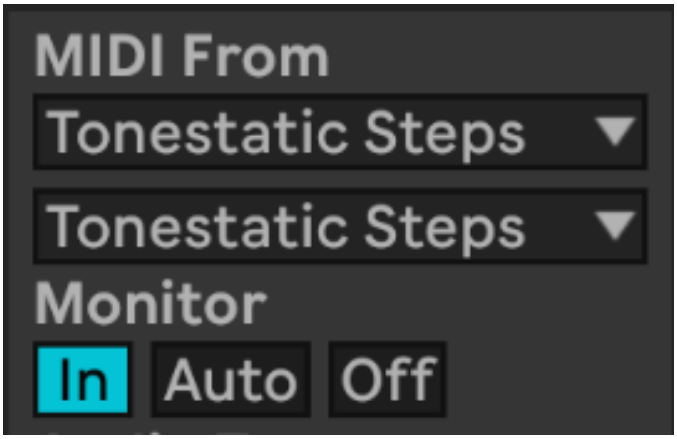
Getting Steps Free to a synth

Every DAW listens to a MIDI plugin its own way, so this is the one thing to set up before anything else. The plugin carries the same instructions: the gear button opens Settings, and its **How to use** tab has them for each DAW below. They say "Tonestatic Steps"; for Steps Free, pick **Tonestatic Steps Free** wherever they do.

> **Which format.** In Ableton Live, Bitwig Studio, Reaper, FL Studio and Cubase use the **VST3**. In Logic Pro use the **Audio Unit**: it is a MIDI FX, in the MIDI FX slot of an instrument track. Live does not load Audio Unit MIDI effects, so in Live on a Mac it is the VST3 too.

Ableton Live (VST3)

1. Make a MIDI track and drop Tonestatic Steps on it (the VST3 - Live doesn't load AU MIDI effects).
2. On your synth's track, set MIDI From to the Steps track, and in the box under it pick Tonestatic Steps.
3. Set the synth track's Monitor to In. On Auto it only listens while the track is armed.
4. Press play: Steps follows Live's transport.



The synth track's In/Out, set up

- Hardware synth: put Live's External Instrument on the synth's track and set its MIDI To to your synth.
- Stop Steps with its own Run button, not Live's device switch - switching the device off can leave a note hanging.
- With Keys on (MIDI tab), a clip on the Steps track drives it: its notes transpose the line.
- Learn (MIDI tab) needs your synth's knobs to reach Steps: set the Steps track's MIDI From to the synth's MIDI port, Monitor In.
- To record what Steps plays, arm the synth's track and record.

Logic Pro (AU)

1. On your synth's software instrument track, click the MIDI FX slot and choose Audio Units > Tonestatic > Tonestatic Steps.
2. Press play: Steps plays the instrument on that track.

> - Hardware synth: do the same on a track with Logic's External Instrument plug-in.
> - With Keys on (MIDI tab), notes played into the track transpose the line.

Bitwig Studio (VST3)

1. On your synth's instrument track, put Tonestatic Steps before the synth in the device chain.
2. Press play: Steps' notes go straight into the synth after it.

> - Hardware synth: put Bitwig's HW Instrument after Steps instead of a synth.

Reaper (VST3)

1. Open a track's FX chain and add Tonestatic Steps first, then your synth below it in the same chain.
2. Press play: Steps' notes go down the chain to the synth.

> - Hardware synth: on that track's Routing, set MIDI Hardware Output to your synth's MIDI port.

FL Studio (VST3)

1. Add Tonestatic Steps to the Channel rack.
2. Open its wrapper settings (the gear at the window's top left, then Processing) and set the MIDI Output port to a number - say 1.
3. In your synth's wrapper settings, set the MIDI Input port to the same number.
4. Press play: Steps follows the song position.

> - Each Steps needs its own port number, matched by the synth it plays.

Cubase (VST3)

1. Add an Instrument track with Tonestatic Steps on it.
2. On your synth's track, set the MIDI input to Tonestatic Steps (Cubase lists it once Steps is loaded).
3. Turn on Monitor (the speaker button) on the synth's track, or arm it.

4. Press play: Steps follows Cubase's transport.

- Hardware synth: a MIDI track with its output set to your synth, input set to Tonestatic Steps.

Quick start

1. **Route Steps Free to a synth**
   as your DAW wants it — see *Getting Steps Free to a synth*.
2. **Press play**
   in your DAW. Steps Free follows the transport; the **Run** button at the bottom right lights while it plays.
3. **Load a preset**
   : click the name in the header and pick one, or press the **dice** in the generator for a new pattern in the style beside it.
4. **Make it yours**
   : click and drag on a lane to draw, and the lock on a lane to keep it while you roll the rest.
5. **Keep it**
   : save with the disk button beside the preset name.

The window

The lanes fill the top of the window, one row per lane. Under them, a strip of controls from left to right: the generator, the scale, Transpose, and Rate with Direction, and the Run button. The header has the **Upgrade** button, the preset bar, Save and the theme switch, and on the right:

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
Swing	50 to 75 %	Every other step played late; 50 % is straight.
Gate	10 to 200 %	Every note's length, against the length its step sets; 100 % at twelve o'clock.
Undo, Redo		Take back the last dice or edit to the steps, and bring it back. Your DAW's undo covers the knobs; this covers the steps, which are not parameters.
Gear		Settings: Lanes, MIDI and How to use.

The lanes

From the top: **Gate**, **Notes**, **Octave**, **Velocity** and **Length**. Click and drag across a lane to draw it; Alt-click a step to put it back. Each lane has, on its right, its **length** (drag the number, or the line at the lane's end), a **dice** that rolls that lane alone, and a **lock** that keeps it while the rest are rolled. Right-click a step to lock just that step.

The small **Lift** knob by a lane's name moves the whole lane up or down together and keeps its shape, so turning it back brings the line back. On Notes it moves every note up or down the scale, down to the root alone.

Lanes of different lengths loop against each other: a 6-step Gate under 16 steps of notes lands its rests on different notes every time round, so a short pattern keeps changing.

Gate and Chance

The top lane says whether each step plays. Click its name to choose what it is:

Gate	Each step is on or off — click a step to flip it, drag to set several. A step that is off is a rest, and the note under it is drawn as an outline.
Chance	Each step has a chance of playing, from never to always — draw it like any other lane.

Switching never changes what plays: a Gate step is a Chance of 0 or 100 %. A preset whose steps all either play or rest opens as a Gate.

Generator

Press the **dice** for a new pattern in the style beside it — **Acid**, a 303-style line of roots, octaves, accents and slides, or **Arp**, chord tones over a progression. Steps has four more: Acid 2, Techno, Bass and Melodic.

CONTROL	WHAT IT DOES
Fill	How many steps a dice plays: the style's own in the middle, one note at the left, every step at the right.
Jitter	How far the notes spread up and down: the style's own in the middle, the root alone at the left, wider at the right.

A lane's own dice rolls just that lane. Locked lanes and steps are left alone, and Undo takes a roll back.

Scale and Transpose

Pick a **scale** and a **root**. Every step you draw and every generated pattern uses only those notes. Click a key on the keyboard to take a note out of the scale or put it back. **Transpose** moves the whole line up or down, Shift for an octave.

Rate and Direction

Rate sets the length of a step, from 1/4 to 1/32, with dotted and triplet values. The arrow under it sets which way the steps play: forward, reverse, ping-pong (there and back) or random.

Settings

The **gear button** in the header opens Settings: **Lanes**, **MIDI** and **How to use**.

MIDI and the CC lanes

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
Synth		Pick your synth and the CC lanes show its parameter names. **+ New synth** keeps a list of CCs of your own for one that is not there.
Channel	1 to 16	The MIDI channel Steps Free plays on.
CC 1, CC 2	0 to 119	What each CC lane moves. **Learn** beside a lane takes the number from the next knob you turn on a hardware synth or controller whose MIDI comes into Steps Free's track.
Keys	Off, Transpose, Gate	What notes coming in do. **Transpose**: a key transposes the line and stays until the next. **Gate**: the line plays only while a key is held, transposed by it, like an arpeggiator.

These are about your setup, not the pattern, so loading a preset never changes them.

Lanes

Settings > Lanes lists every lane. Turn off the ones you don't use and drag the rest into the order you want. The two CC lanes and Ratchet start hidden; a CC lane sends only while it is shown, and a hidden Ratchet lane plays one hit per step. The lane setup is saved with each preset.

Working with the controls

Knobs and faders

- **Drag** up or down to turn a knob, or to move a fader. The pointer is hidden while you drag, so you can go as far as you like.
- Hold **Shift** while dragging for fine adjustment.
- **Double-click** to send a control back to its resting position: the middle of its travel for most knobs, unity for the level faders.
- A knob that has been clicked also answers the **arrow keys**, with Shift for smaller steps.
- The value shows while you turn a control. A knob that works either side of a middle position (Tone, for instance) draws its arc out from twelve o'clock.

Switches, steppers and power buttons

Buttons that stay lit — Run, a lane's lock — switch on and off with a click. **Steppers** — a value between ‹ and › arrows, like a lane's length — step with the arrows, Shift for bigger steps. **Menus** (Style, Scale, Root, Rate) open with a click. Steps Free has no power button: **Run** is how it starts and stops.

Automation, undo and the window

Every knob, fader, switch and stepper is a parameter your DAW can automate and map to a controller, under the name it has on the face (inside a module, with the module's name in front: "Delay Feedback"). A move made on the face lands in your DAW's undo history like any other.

Drag the **grip at the bottom-right corner** to make the window larger or smaller; it keeps its proportions.

The **half-filled circle** in the header switches the window between its dark and light looks. It changes nothing in the sound.

The window's size and its theme are saved with your project, so each instance reopens the way you left it.

Presets

Tonestatic Steps Free comes with 30 (plus Init) factory presets, in 5 categories: Acid, Acid 2, Arp, Bass and Techno. Your own presets sit beside them in the same list.

Browsing

The preset bar is in the middle of the header. Click the name to open the list: **Essentials** first, with Init at the top, then the categories. The ‹ › arrows beside it step through the presets in the order they are listed. Loading a preset changes the sound at once, and you can play through the change; the knobs and faders glide to their new positions over a moment, so you can see what moved.

When you move a control after loading a preset, a **dot** appears after its name: what you hear is no longer exactly the preset. Put the control back and the dot goes. A preset holds the pattern, the scale, the generator settings and which lanes are shown. It does not hold the MIDI settings — channel, CC numbers, Keys — which belong to your setup.

When you reopen a project, the plugin comes back with the preset's name and your changes as you left them. A new instance starts on **Init**.

Saving your own

The **disk button** right of the preset bar opens **Save Preset**. Type a name and save. Your presets are listed with the factory ones and step with the arrows like them. Saving under a name you already have replaces that preset. The factory presets are part of the plugin and cannot be changed: saving under a factory name gives you a preset of your own with that name, and the original is still there.

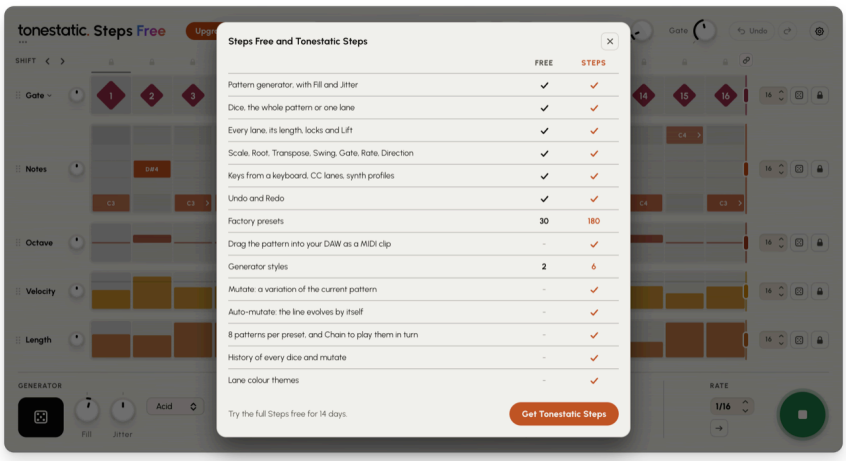
Each preset is one file, in a folder you can back up or copy to another computer:

macOS	`~/Library/Tonestatic/Tonestatic Steps Free/Presets`
Windows	`%APPDATA%\Tonestatic\Tonestatic Steps Free\Presets`

Steps Free and Steps

Steps Free is the full sound engine of Tonestatic Steps, with the workflow around it left out.

FEATURE	STEPS FREE	STEPS
Pattern generator, with Fill and Jitter	✓	✓
Dice, the whole pattern or one lane	✓	✓
Every lane, its length, locks and Lift	✓	✓
Scale, Root, Transpose, Swing, Gate, Rate, Direction	✓	✓
Keys from a keyboard, CC lanes, synth profiles	✓	✓
Undo and Redo	✓	✓
Factory presets	30	180
Drag the pattern into your DAW as a MIDI clip	–	✓
Generator styles	2	6
Mutate: a variation of the current pattern	–	✓
Auto-mutate: the line evolves by itself	–	✓
8 patterns per preset, and Chain to play them in turn	–	✓
History of every dice and mutate	–	✓
Lane colour themes	–	✓



The Upgrade window

The **Upgrade** button in the header shows the same table, and opens Steps' page at tonestatic.com. Steps comes with a free 14-day trial.

Files, folders and help

Where everything is

macOS

Audio Unit plugins	`/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components`
VST3 plugins	`/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3`
Your presets	`~/Library/Tonestatic/Tonestatic Steps Free/Presets`

Windows

VST3 plugins	`C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3`, or the folder you chose in the installer
Your presets	`%APPDATA%\Tonestatic\Tonestatic Steps Free\Presets`

`~/Library` is the Library folder in your home folder; in the Finder, hold Option and open the **Go** menu to find it. `%APPDATA%` can be typed into the File Explorer address bar as it is.

When something is not right

The plugin does not appear in my DAW

Restart the DAW, or rescan its plugins (in Ableton Live: **Settings → Plug-Ins → Rescan**). Check that your DAW looks in the folders above — most do, some let you add folders of your own. On a Mac, make sure you installed the format your DAW uses: Logic Pro and GarageBand load Audio Units only.

"Could not be opened" or a failed validation on a Mac

Run the installer again; it replaces whatever is in the way. The plugins are Universal, so it does not matter whether your DAW runs natively or under Rosetta.

The window is blank on Windows

The faces are drawn by Microsoft Edge WebView2. The installer adds it if it is missing, but it can be removed or broken later: install the Evergreen runtime from Microsoft's WebView2 page and reopen the plugin.

The synth plays nothing

Check that **Run** is lit and your DAW is playing, and that the synth's track takes its MIDI from the plugin as the chapter on getting it to a synth describes — in Live, with Monitor on In.

Getting in touch

Questions, ideas or a bug to report: email **help@tonestatic.com**, or choose ··· → **Send feedback** in the plugin. With a problem, tell us your DAW and its version, your system (and on a Mac, Apple Silicon or Intel), the plugin and whether it is the AU or the VST3, and what you did, what you expected and what happened. A screenshot or a short screen recording helps a lot.

The latest version, the changelog and the answers to common questions are at **tonestatic.com**.

VST® is a registered trademark of Steinberg Media Technologies GmbH. Audio Units and macOS are trademarks of Apple Inc. Windows is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation. Tonestatic Steps Free © 2026 Paweł Witkowski, trading as Tonestatic.