

Referenced from MB Quart

How Do I Properly Set Input Levels?

We'll take two systems and set the levels. The first system has a CD player/radio and a 2 channel amp. The second system will add an EQ. The third system has an EQ that has an input level control.

System 1:

Step 1: Turn the amplifier input level controls down (counter-clockwise) all the way.

Step 2: Put a CD on that represents some of the most dynamic (loudest) music that you normally listen to.

Step 3: Turn up the volume of the head unit to approximately 80% (if the max volume is 35, then turn it up to 28). Because the amp settings are low, the volume will be low. This will be your maximum volume setting. You should not need to turn it up louder than this. The reason for the extra volume is for CD's, tapes or radio signals that are recorded low. Only then should the volume go higher.

Step 4: Slowly turn up the settings on the amp (if there are separate left & right controls, try to turn them up together). Turn them up until you hear distortion (either the music "breaking up", or the speakers "coughing"). At this point, turn down the amp settings a little bit until the distortion stops. The amp input is now set to the radio output. DO NOT CHANGE THE CONTROLS AFTER THIS.

Step 5: Turn the radio back down. Your done.

***If you have a 4 channel amp where 2 channels are used for the subs, do the same for them.

System 2:

We will assume that the EQ has no input level controls. If your EQ (or other processor) has input level controls, then go to [system 3](#).

Step 1: Turn the amplifier input level controls down (counter-clockwise) all the way.

Step 2: Set the EQ flat (all controls at 0dB), or if it is another processor, set the controls to an approximation of the final settings.

Step 3: Put a CD on that represents some of the most dynamic (loudest) music that you normally listen to.

Step 4: Turn up the volume of the head unit until either an overload indicator on the EQ lights up OR you hear distortion (the "breaking up" kind). The system will not be loud, so listen carefully. (If you can't hear it well enough, you can turn up the Amp's input controls *slightly*.)

Step 5: Turn down the head unit's volume control one notch. This is the MAXIMUM volume of your system. It is the output level of the head unit that is matched to the EQ.

Step 6: Now turn up the settings on the amp. Turn them up until you hear distortion (either the music "breaking up", or the speakers "coughing"). At this point, turn down the amp settings a little bit until the distortion stops. The amp input is now set to the EQ's output. (If you have output level controls on the EQ, turn them up approximately half way. The setup is considerable trickier for this, but half way usually covers all the bases).

Step 7: Turn down the radio. Your done.

System 3:

Step 1: Turn the EQ and amplifier input level controls down (counter-clockwise) all the way.

Step 2: Put a CD on that represents some of the most dynamic (loudest) music that you normally listen to.

Step 3: Turn up the volume of the head unit to approximately 80%. Because the EQ and amp setting are low, the volume will be low.

Step 4: Slowly turn up the settings on the EQ. Turn them up until you hear distortion (the "breaking up" kind). At this point, turn down the EQ settings a little bit until the distortion stops. The EQ input is now set to the radio output.

Step 5: With the head unit's volume still at 80%, repeat Step 4 on the Amp's level controls (The distortion may now be of the "coughing" type). Once again, as soon as you hear distortion, back down the amp's controls a bit. The amp's inputs are now set to the EQ's outputs.

Step 6: Turn down the radio. Your Done!