

Tiny Tweaks, Big Pay-Offs

These simple adjustments make all the difference

“Get the most out of your system!”

This is a phrase that you hear all too often. One would think that by putting in the work, reading up on products, figuring out your personal preferences, identifying compatible components and even throwing in a custom install—one would automatically be getting the most out of your beloved system. Unfortunately, not so much.

But not to worry—system “optimization” doesn’t have to break the bank. On the contrary, just a few small and affordable purchases yield evident improvements and, in some cases, could reveal a level of performance that you had not previously thought possible. And in the process of reaching this pinnacle of performance, you may find yourself having fun seeing what some seemingly inconsequential tweaks can accomplish.

Speaker Orientation...

The first element we would ask you to explore is the orientation of your speakers. You would be amazed at the difference a correctly-placed speaker can make, and consequently the damage that an ill-placed speaker can do. As many hifi enthusiasts can attest, even the adjustment of a couple of inches can totally alter the dimension, timing and faithful rendering of a piece of music.

Speaker set-up is an extremely individualized process. The variables are innumerable. In part, they depend on room size, height, isolation, acoustic character and even material of the floor, walls and ceiling! For a comprehensible guide for fine-tuning and precision placement of your loudspeakers, see our [speaker placement download](#).

All Things Set-Up...

To further check your speaker placement, integration, performance and system conditioning, Nordost offers their **System Tuning and Set-Up Disc**. This Test CD has you covered for all things set-up. It provides basic channel and phase checks as well as left, right and alternating pink and white noise tracks to check that your speakers are working properly and voiced in-room. A computer LEDR test allows you to map and adjust the soundstage and toe-in the speakers, drum tracks test dynamic range while rhythmic integration and conventional sweeps help in identifying principal room modes. Once you have completed these tests and made the appropriate adjustments, you will be sure that your speakers have finally found their proper home, and the musical enjoyment can commence!



Keep it Clean...

Speakers optimally placed and soundstage properly set, the next trick is less of a tweak and more common sense and routine practice than anything else: maintenance. Use contact cleaner on the RCA, XLR and phono jacks, phono plugs, binding posts of speakers and power amplifiers as well as speaker cable spade lugs. This will take care of the residue and oxidation that degrades connections overtime.

Treating the outer jacket of cables, racks, backs of CDs and speaker driver units with anti static spray will also yield great results. Nordost’s **ECO 3X Anti Static Treatment** disperses existing static charge as well as inhibits future accumulation which, over time, flattens perspectives, stymies dynamics and dulls the colors reproduced by both audio and AV systems. By spraying a paper towel or cotton cloth and gently applying it to whatever surface is in need of treatment, you will gain a dramatic increase in the sense of life and presence, greater transparency and wider dynamics that were lacking in your systems. These housekeeping practices are recommended once every two months or so for best results.

Eliminating Vibration...

Now the tweaks start to have an element of experimentation. It is no industry secret that vibration degrades the performance of individual components and the sound system as a whole in a big way. Enter—Isolation devices. Isolation devices, or replacement feet, are positioned under the hardware in lieu of the standard, often rubber contacts which slur timing, compress dynamics and muddle the music's integrity. Their purpose: to separate the component from outside forces that would otherwise negatively affect its performance.

Nordost, however, takes a different approach. The most harmful mechanical energy doesn't enter the equipment from the outside; it's generated internally by the audio circuits and their power supplies. Transformers, power supply caps, even the active devices themselves, all vibrate as they operate—and those vibrations occur right where the fragile signal is, creating timing errors that smear and distort the music. The larger the component, the greater the power involved and ultimately the greater problem you're left with. Nordost prescribes resonance control. Through its ball bearing construction, Nordost's **Sort Kone** provides a direct mechanical ground path so that harmful internal energy is dispersed without being able to reenter the components. Unlike other cones using wood or glass (leaving you with dull and colored sound, respectively) the Sort Kone is provided in Aluminum/Steel, Aluminum/Ceramic, Bronze/Ceramic and Titanium/Ceramic construction (listed in order of ascending quality).

The experimentation comes in the variety and placement. Of course, a complete set of Titanium Kones under all components is ideal. But while this is the ultimate solution, it is by no means the unique solution. Some would argue the bronze Kone works best on power supply. In the end, resonance control, regardless of the material used, is better

than no resonance control, and it is up to the listener's discretion (and budget) to pick what's right for him. For installation under CD players, for example, it is best to start by placing the Kone under the power transformer and transport and then slide additional Kones (use a minimum of 3 Kones per component) around until it meets resistance. Remember to only make one change at a time, and test often.

What is certain is, once your support arrangements are correct, the effects are undeniable. In fact, it is eerily similar to the effects of finally introducing quality interconnects, speaker cables and power cords. This means a freedom of dynamics, opening up of spatial information, reduction of 'glare', increase in tonal color and reduction of time smear. Now, who wouldn't want that?

Get on the good Füt...

The last tweak in our bag of tricks is in the same vein as the Sort Kone. We're talking resonance control for not only the largest component in your system, but the most egregious generator of extraneous energy: the loudspeaker.

The **Sort Füt** is a mechanically tuned resonance control device that improves upon the standard spikes and stabilizers that are provided with both speakers and racks. Like the Sort Kone, the Sort Füt creates a direct ground path, eliminating unwanted vibrations, resulting in a reduction in intermodulation distortion and an increase in musical information and tonal and textural details. Thanks to the threaded adapters that come with the Sort Füt, installation is easy. And with the results that the Sort Füt achieves, some say doubling the value of a speaker, they are a vital tweak indeed.



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