

The Soundproofing Starter Guide

Decibels, target sound levels, and what common solutions typically cost — in plain English.

Noise problems feel overwhelming mostly because nobody explains the numbers. This short guide gives you the three things you actually need: how loud things are, how quiet your space should be, and what fixing it usually costs.

1. The decibel chart — how loud is that?

Decibels (dB) measure sound level. Two rules of thumb: every +10 dB sounds about twice as loud to the ear, and prolonged exposure at 85 dB or above can damage hearing.

Sound	Typical level
Barely audible / a quiet bedroom at night	30 dB
Whisper at arm's length	30–35 dB
Library, soft rainfall	40 dB
Refrigerator hum	45 dB
Normal conversation	60 dB
Vacuum cleaner, busy restaurant	70–75 dB
Shower, dishwasher (next room)	75–80 dB
Alarm clock, city traffic from inside a car	80–85 dB
Garbage disposal, blender	85–90 dB
Lawn mower, motorcycle at 25 ft	90–100 dB
Leaf blower, factory floor	95–105 dB
Car horn, ambulance siren nearby	110–120 dB
Jet takeoff at 300 ft	130 dB

2. How quiet should your space be?

These are the background-noise targets acousticians design to (approximate, in dBA):

Space	Target (dBA)
Bedroom at night	30–35
Home office / study	35–40
Classroom	35
Private office	40–45
Open-plan office	45–50
Place of worship	35–40
Restaurant (conversation-friendly)	50–55

Hotel guest room	35–40
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If your bedroom measures 45 dBA at night with the window closed, that is roughly why you are awake — it is 10 dB over target, which your ears hear as about twice as loud as it should be.

3. What common solutions typically cost

Ballpark 2026 Southern California ranges for planning only. Your actual quote depends on measurements, materials, and site conditions — which is why we quote per project.

Solution	Typical range
Acoustic wall panels (installed)	\$12–\$30 per sq ft
Ceiling baffles / acoustic clouds (installed)	\$15–\$35 per sq ft
Mass loaded vinyl, material only	\$2–\$4 per sq ft
Door seal kit (perimeter + door bottom)	\$150–\$450 per door
Acoustic window inserts	\$400–\$900 per window
Soundproof interior door (installed)	\$1,800–\$4,500
Sound masking for offices	\$2–\$4 per sq ft of area
On-site noise study / consultation	from \$450

4. The three-step fix that actually works

1. Measure first. Guessing wastes money; a short measurement session tells you the level, the frequency, and the path.
2. Find the path. Sound travels through air gaps, structures (flanking), and vibrating surfaces — each needs a different treatment.
3. Treat source, path, or receiver — in that order of value. Sealing a 1% gap can matter more than doubling wall mass.

Ready when you are

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