Knowledge Base

Do I have to disable my onboard soundcard?

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It depends, however in most cases it is **not** needed and it can often even be helpful to keep it enabled when using one of our audio interfaces.

You might have read somewhere that it is important to disable the onboard soundcard when using a professional audio interface, no matter if it is a PCI, PCIe, USB or FireWire interface. In the past when system resources (like IRQs or DMA channels) were a critical issue to get an accessory running in a computer, it was often a good advice to disable any devices that you don't really need, including the onboard soundcard of your computer's mainboard. Many texts from magazines, online resources, discussions forums, etc. will tell you to disable onboard sound, often no-matter-what. However, in most cases modern computers no longer have any problems with the available resources and it can in fact be a nice advantage to keep the onboard audio hardware enabled. For example, you could use it for things like internet phone calls , speech recognition software, payback of system sounds via computer speakers , etc. - it is often the best option not to do this with the audio interface which you would want to use for professional applications and recording instead. Because of that, we often recommend our customers in technical support to actually keep it enabled.

Obviously there are exceptions to any rule - for example, some PC mainboards do not allow you to keep onboard sound enabled once a PCI or PCIe audio hardware is installed. The mainboard's BIOS automatically disables onboard sound sometimes even. You might want to check the manual of your PC mainboard to get more information about this.

Please keep in mind that if you decide to keep it enabled, make sure to install the drivers for the onboard soundcard before you install and start using your ESI audio interface. Also you need to decide which audio device, your onboard soundcard or the ESI audio interface, should play the system sounds and be used as default device for standard applications such as Windows Media Player, iTunes, etc.

If you decide to disable it, please double check with the manual of your PC mainboard on how to disable it in BIOS. It is not enough and we strongly advise against simply disabling it in the *Device Manager* - it has to be disabled in BIOS and in some cases even more than one setting must be changed there. Your PC manufacturer or the vendor of your PC mainboard will have the required information for it.

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