

# 5.1 or 7.something

## Objective

Your company should have a consistent message on this subject. By setting a standard and moving off it only as needed will increase confidence on both sides of the counter. Customers and your company will be the winners.

Many customers hear conflicting information about choosing how many speakers to use for surround sound. Size and shape of room can create some interesting challenges.

1. To create a compelling sense of engulfment, all listeners must have speakers beside and behind them.
2. Distance from effects channels is a huge obstacle.
3. Long gaps between front and effects channels leave voids in sound space.

## Musts

Most receivers and Pre/Pros have provisions for at least seven speakers.

- Don't get trapped by the native source question.
- Don't make the "small room room needs fewer speakers" myth mistake. (The opposite is generally true)
- Be very careful with subwoofer choice and be ready to use several whenever possible.

## Procedures

1. Try a few set ups and compare approaches prior to pitching them as standard.
  2. Use the DSP mode capabilities of the pre/pro and understand that most consumers want to be surrounded, but overwhelmed by effects channels.
  3. Use live concert events as test/demo material to make sure your surround system fully engulfs all listeners "in audience feel" without obstructing directed sound from stage. Quiet film passages with rain or other subtle ambience are also good for testing sense of immersion.
- Use more small speakers to make sure listeners are not too close to the only source of surround information.
  - Add a rear sub to increase effects impact and realism while not muddying front channels.
  - If necessary use different speakers to work around room problems (IE High side channel on one side and in-ceiling speaker on other—preferably same speaker/different format from vendor)
  - Use di/bi-pole speakers if you have to. More monopole speakers is generally a better choice.