

recording with modifiers

a guide to blooper's stranger side

hello!

Welcome to the deep end. Recording with modifiers is the most rewarding and challenging part of blooper.

This stuff is not as complicated as it might look and you don't have to understand it to bloop. But it does help, and it's actually kind of cool. blooper really is an odd, little tape machine, and getting to know how it operates will go a long way for you.

Set up your blooper, take your time, and feel amaze.

the two-headed anomaly

understanding time modifiers:

The trickiest part of working with modifiers is understanding what happens when you start messing with time. This includes obvious modifiers like Speed, but also things like Scrambler, Stutter, and Stretcher. Anything that interrupts the normal progress of the loop.



All loopers and delays use two different "heads" to achieve their effect. The name comes from tape machines – the record head puts sound information on to the tape, and the play head translates it back into sound. Even modern delays and loopers work like this, just without the tape.

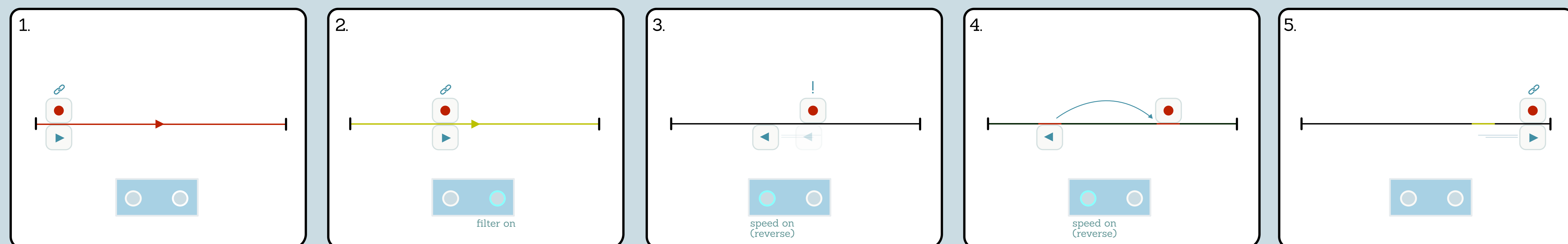
The thing is, with other loopers the two heads are always in the same place. They are basically attached together. Not blooper. When you use modifiers that mess with time, you split the two heads up.

the important rule:

The record head is always steady. It always moves forward, at real-time speed. It is dependable. Nothing you do will change its behaviour, all you can do is tell it to record, or not.

If things are getting zany, it's always the play head's fault. And the good news: that's under your control. Time-based modifiers essentially change the behaviour of the play head.

Let's look at a scenario, using ADD mode:



1. We start by recording a loop, and a couple overdubs. No modifiers are on. At this point blooper is like any other looper – the two heads are moving along together, perfectly in sync.

2. Now we turn on the Filter modifier and record a couple more overdubs. No problem, Filter – along with Dropper, Pitcher and Swapper – do not affect time. The two heads remain in sync, and you have nothing to worry about.

3. Now we turn on Speed, set to go in reverse. Uh oh. There it goes. Even though the record head is still moving steadily along, you're hearing a different part of the loop.

4. Now we record the modifier into the loop. Notice that what is recorded depends on the play head's location, but where it's recorded depends on the record head's location. They're not in the same place. You may wind up overdubbing one part of your loop into another!

5. Once the modifier is turned off, the two heads immediately go back in sync.

time-based modifiers

- Speed
- Trimmer
- Stutter
- Stretcher
- Scrambler
- Stopper (tape stop side)

non-time-based modifiers

- Dropper
- Swapper
- Filter
- Pitcher
- Stopper (fade out side)


Notes:

1. The record head is always steady, moving forward at real-time speed.
2. Time modifiers will cause the play head and record head to go out of sync.
3. The play head will always go back in sync once the modifier is turned off.

So you can see why things may get weird – even though the record head is steady, what you hear is the play head. It's a bit of an anomaly, but it's necessary to do all the fun things blooper can do. It also introduces some opportunity and flexibility. Let's talk about how to use it.

additive

This is where things get interesting. What separates Additive from Normal mode is that the Modifiers and Stability are recorded into your audio, allowing for all kinds of unique transformations and evolving loops. There are a few useful things to know.

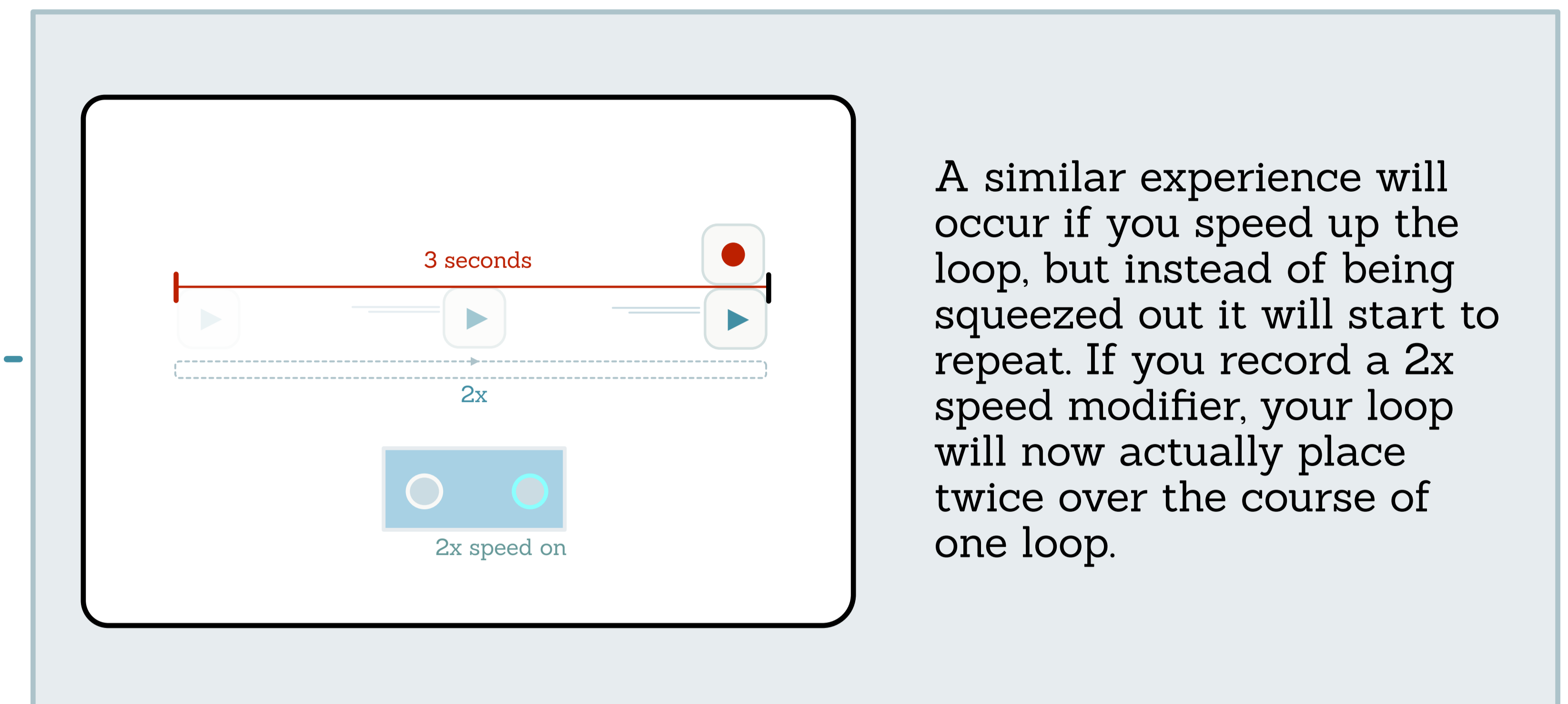
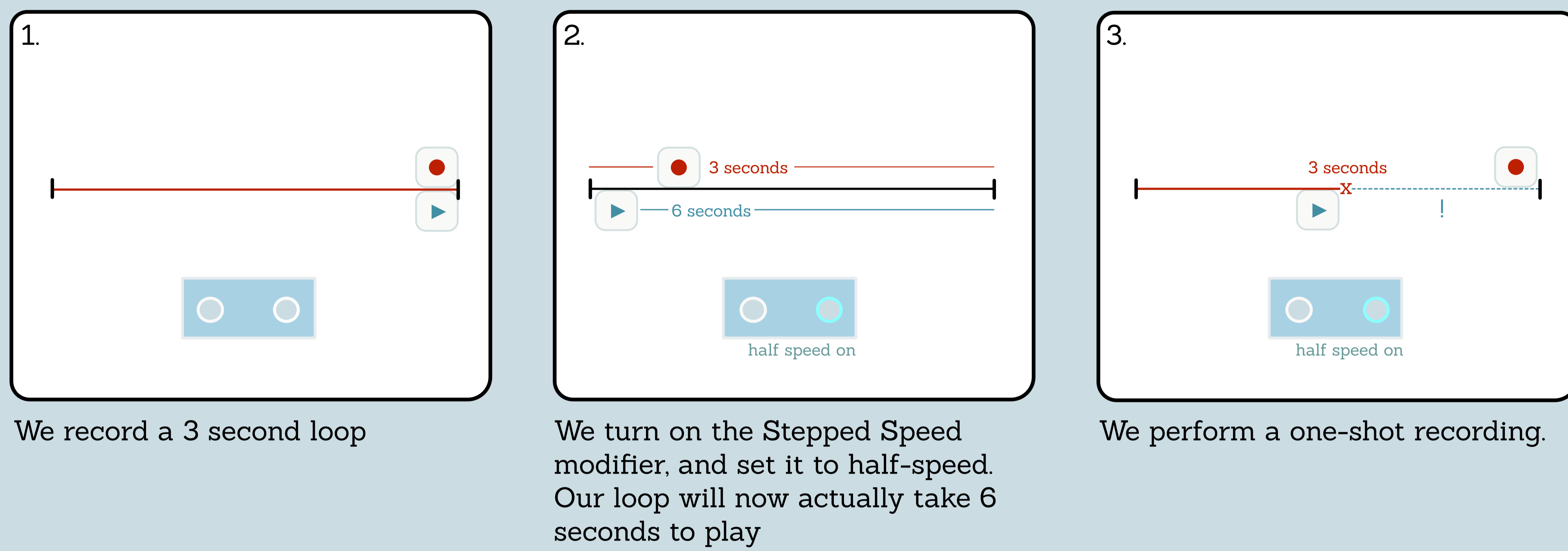
 Tip:

The fixed length has its advantages. For loops that are synced or rhythmic, it allows you to freely record modifiers without worrying about your loop going out of sync. You can be sure that it stays the exact same length, no matter what kind of weird things you do.

the fixed length

This is a big one. Once you set the loop length with your original recording, it will never change. Ever, no matter what. You can think of it like a container – you can change the contents, but the container is always the same size. This can lead to some surprising behaviours when you start changing the speed of your loop.

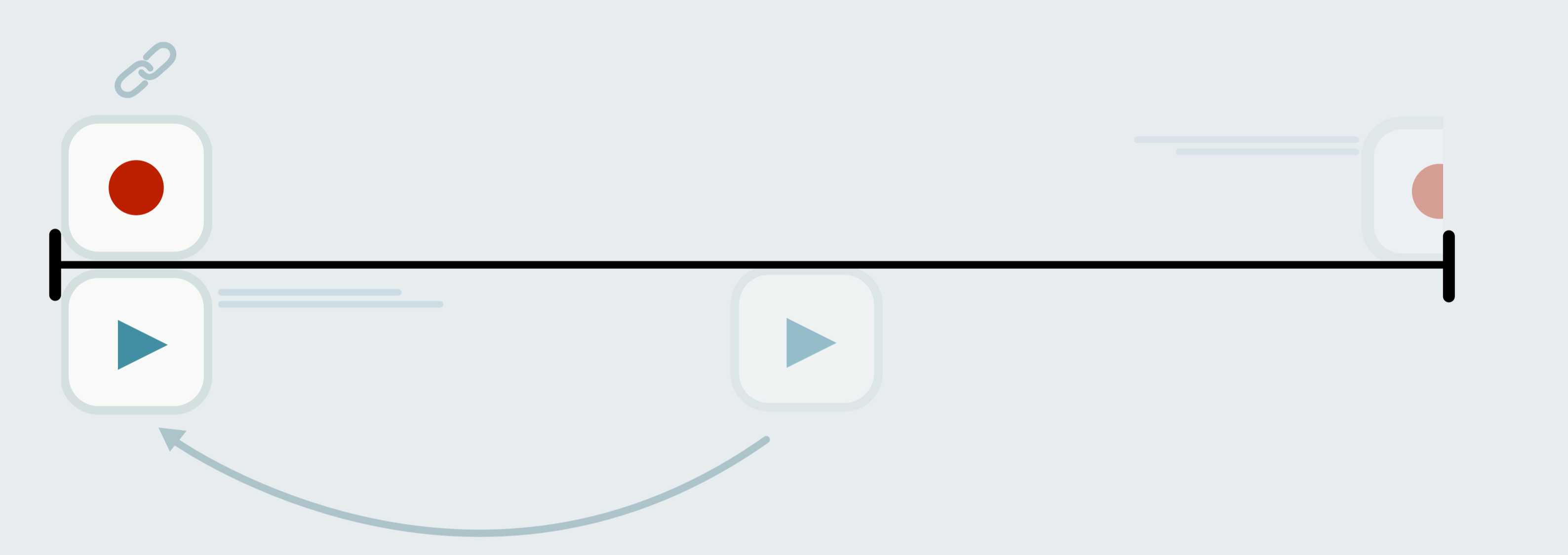
Here's why:



Because the loop was slowed by half, and the loop length doesn't change, we essentially lose half the loop when we record. It can't fit. Any time you record with the speed slowed down, a certain amount of your recording will be "squeezed out" of the loop.

We've implemented an optional feature to make this easier to navigate: Additive Assist.

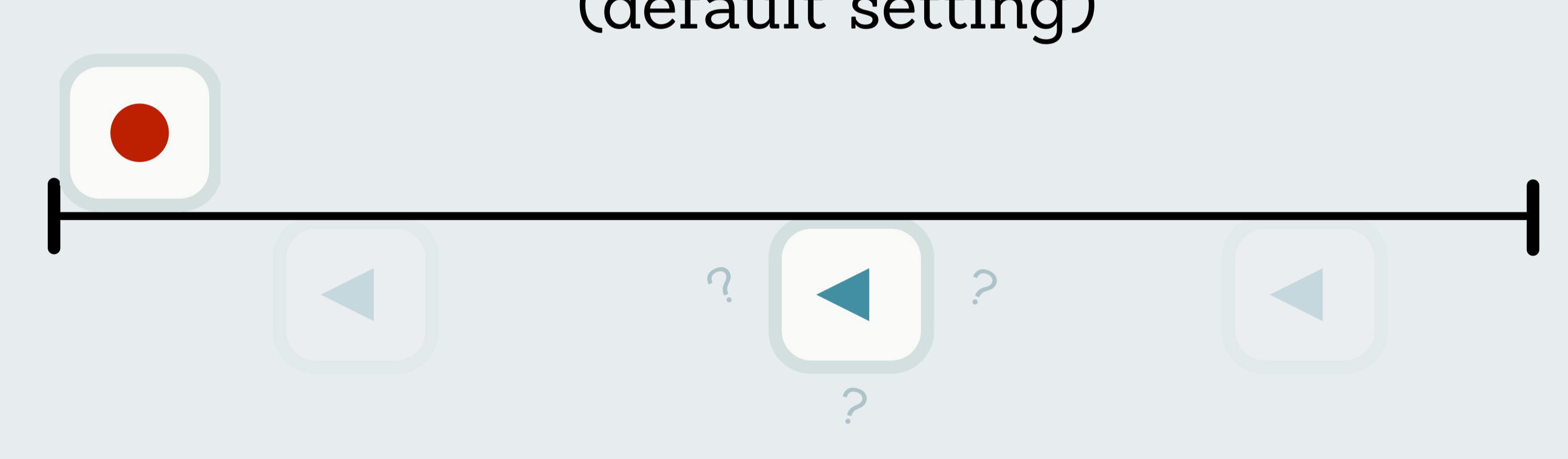
additive assist




This feature lets you preview exactly how a recording will sound when you perform a one-shot recording. It does this by resetting the play head whenever the record head reaches the beginning of the loop. This means that you essentially get a pattern – no matter what modifiers you have on, the loop will be the same each time. You can tweak the modifiers and get things just right, then perform a one-shot recording when you're ready.

You can engage / disengage Additive Assist using the BLIP interface: (Link forthcoming)

free recording (default setting)




In this case, the play head and record head will continuously drift apart. This means that the longer a modifier is on, the harder it is to know exactly where you're recording. This approach is useful if you want to embrace the unexpected.

 Tip: If you prefer Free Recording, you can use the loop reset LED to help keep track of the record head. It will blink whenever the record head reaches the beginning of the loop.

overdubbing techniques

There are a few different ways to approach overdubbing in Additive mode. Each one is useful in its own way.

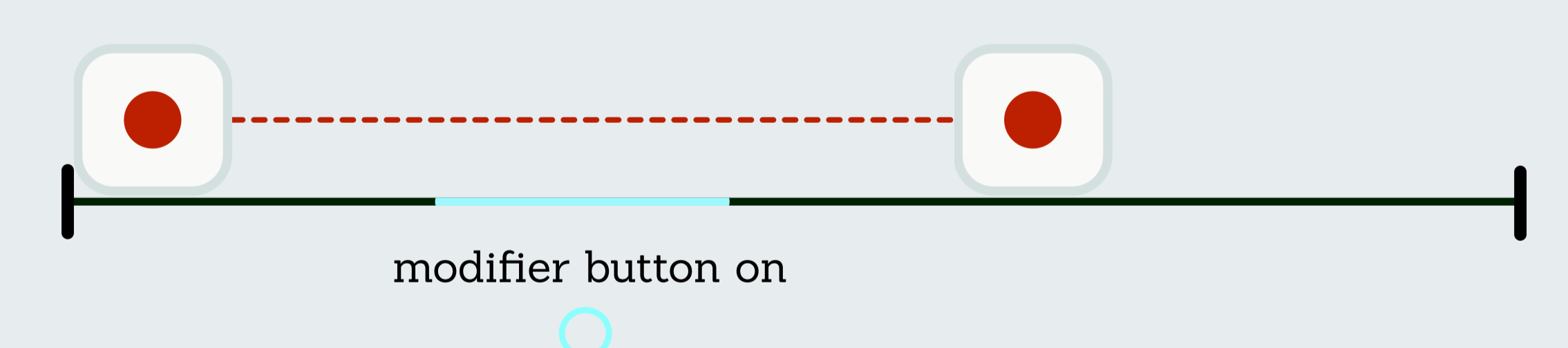
one-shot



One-shot essentially allows you to print modifiers neatly into your loop. It overdubs for exactly one loop length, then automatically stops recording and turns the modifier off. This way you can precisely record effects without having to get the timing just right.

(One-shot recording is engaged by holding the record footswitch briefly. You'll know it's on if the record LED is blinking).

punch-in




A way to guarantee precise results in Additive mode is to perform a punch-in. A punch-in is a short overdub, best performed in this order:

1. Start overdubbing
2. Briefly engage modifier
3. Stop overdubbing

Start recording first, then engage the modifier. You can be relaxed about when you start and stop overdubbing, because the audio won't be altered until you turn the modifier on. The benefit of this approach is that you know exactly where the record head is, allowing you to put the modified audio specifically where you want it. Great for placing unique moments and blips into your loop.

accumulation



This approach involves leaving a (generally mild) modifier on while you overdub, causing your loop to steadily evolve over time.

1. Record a loop
2. Turn up Stability
3. Start overdubbing

In this case, Stability will gradually make your loop sound older and more disheveled. It will begin to wobble, lose frequencies, and get noisier, like a tape machine wearing out in real-time.

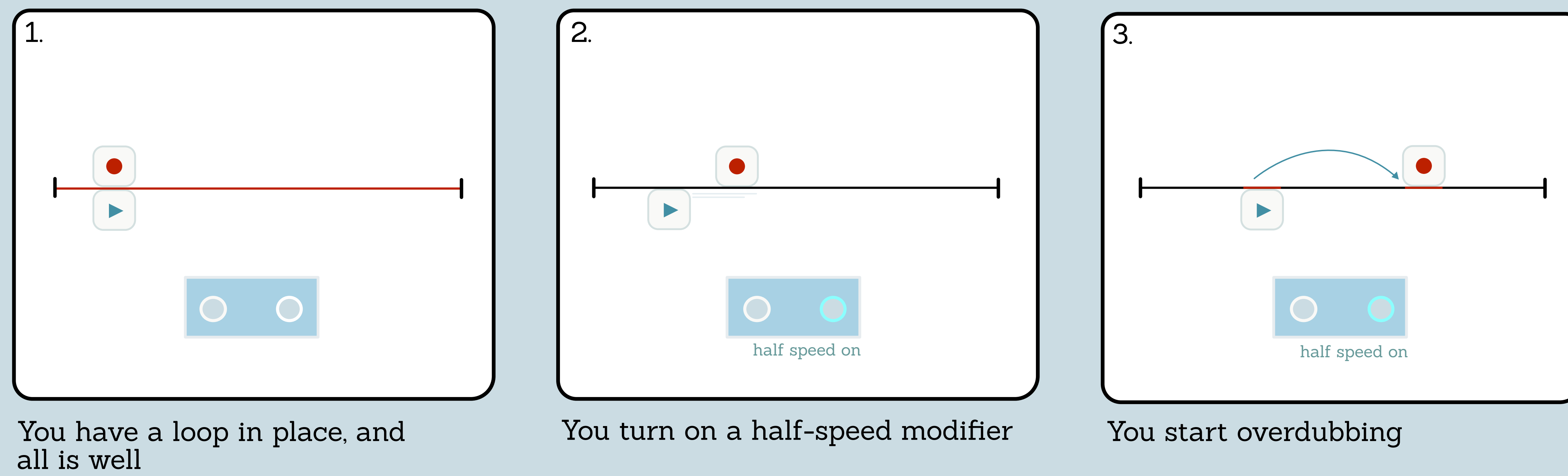
You can also apply this approach in more radical ways. For example, steadily recording Stutter or Trimmer will cause your loop to be sliced into smaller and smaller parts.

What's interesting about this approach is that you can play new notes as you go, which will appear fresh and start the cycle all over, an interesting alternative to Frippertronics-style looping.

normal

Things are more straightforward in Normal mode. Modifiers will not be recorded into your loop, which means that it will always be stable. But if you're overdubbing with time modifiers on, you will likely find your new audio lands in unexpected places. This is because the play head – the thing you are playing along to – will be in a different place than where you're recording.

Let's look at a good ol' scenario:

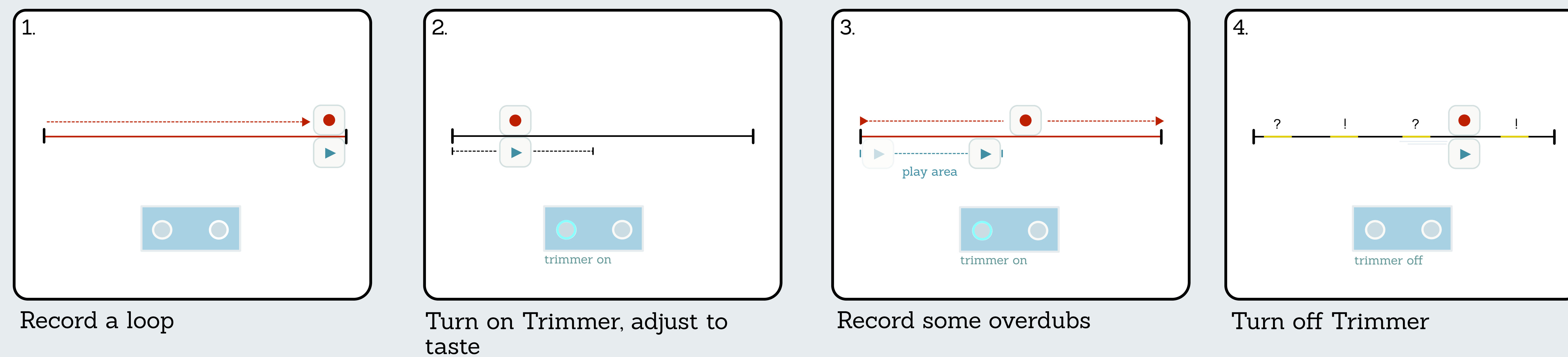


Naturally, you will be playing along to what you hear. But look where the record head is – this is where your playing is actually being recorded. There's a disconnect.

For straightforward looping, the best way to manage this is by turning off time-based modifiers before you overdub. But using this to your advantage can be an interesting process of discovery.

Normal mode presents some unexpected experimental possibilities:

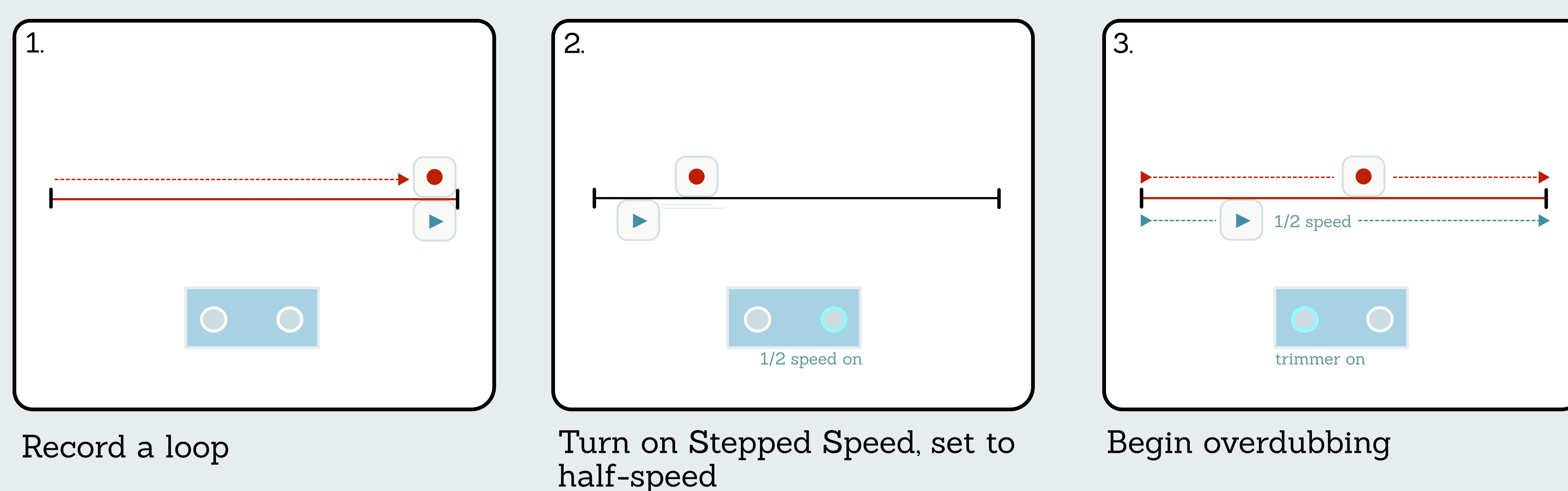
mystery looping



Turning off Trimmer suddenly reveals your whole loop, and the overdubs you've been recording. They could be anywhere! It's a great way to build surprise and chance into your looping process, but in a structured way.

Here's another idea that puts a spin on a popular technique:

all slow



Notice that everything – including your new overdubs – play at half-speed. This behaviour is unique to Blooper, allowing you to build up a slow soundscape over time while you live playing naturally stays in the forefront.

end

There you have it: Recording with modifiers. There's a lot to discover, and this stuff just takes time and experience. Try out the different scenarios, and see where they lead you. Hope this was helpful.

