Getting Started with Audio

Audio is an indispensable tool in multimedia/multimodal authoring, whether it's providing the sound for a video or being used standalone as a podcast. The key to creating a great audio track, however, is not being a wizard with the software - instead, it's dependent on starting with a high-quality recording. See 'Other Resources' below for some strategies to improve the quality of your recording.

Setting Your Learning Goals

Begin by taking a moment to set some goals for yourself in Unit 3: what do you want to be able to do with audio by the end of it? What steps will you take to get there? What kinds of resources will help you to reach your goals?

Before You Get Started

In order to record and edit audio, you'll need:
- a microphone*
- a recording device**
- a quiet space in which to record your audio
- audio editing software (Audacity)

* You can use the built-in microphone of your laptop or a headset microphone to experiment with audio recording and editing throughout the course. If audio is a major component of your final project, you may want to see if you can get a hold of (i.e. borrowed or bought) a better microphone as it will provide a significant improvement to the quality of your recording. You can pick up a decent microphone - enough to notice a marked difference from a built-in mic - for under $100. Make sure that it connects to your computer by USB and that it is designed for podcasting if you intend to record your voice.

** Your recording device will likely be your laptop or desktop computer with the Audacity software installed.

Required Software

As a free, open-source tool, Audacity is popular with the DIY crowd (with whom we are loosely affiliated): [Audacity software download](#)

You'll also need the LAME encoder if you want to export your audio files as MP3s (and you might): for Windows ([instructions](#), [download](#)) and for Mac ([instructions](#), [download](#))

Tutorials

[All Audacity Tutorials](#)

A wiki with tutorials developed by Audacity's documentation team, it covers everything from making your first recording to creating a ringtone for your phone; in particular, you may be interested in:

- Your First Recording - provides detailed instructions on how to connect your microphone, ensure that Audacity is using your microphone to record audio, determine optimal settings for recording, etc.
- Mixing Narration with Background Music - a good n' simple start-to-finish sequence of how to record and edit narration (which many of you may want to use in your final project), ideal for creating a podcast or an audio track for a video
- Editing a Recording in Audacity - a more detailed guide to editing your audio after you have imported or recorded your audio (you can skip over the importing step if you recorded your audio directly in Audacity)
- Removing Clicks and Pops - clicks and pops occur during the recording process when the audio is louder than what the microphone can register, and you should try to avoid them by standing far enough away from your microphone and not speaking directly at it; if you have one or two you can remove them, but if you have a lot of them in a recording, it's usually better to re-record your audio
- Troubleshooting Your Recording - a reference just in case anything goes amiss with recording process itself; you can always email us if you are having difficulties as well
- Navigation Tips - if you already have the basics of recording audio in Audacity down, you might find their navigation tips - like saving selections, using shortcut keys and more - to be invaluable time savers

The Audacity tutorials are text-based; if you prefer video, there's an abundance of tutorials about working with Audacity searchable on YouTube as well. If you're able to get into campus, you can access high-quality Lynda.com video tutorials through the Lyons New Media Centre in Mills Library.

Other Resources

Freesound.org
A large database of free-to-use sound effects and samples, released under a variety of Creative Commons licenses (remember to attribute the sounds you use or look for the Creative Commons 'Ø' symbol to indicate works that have been released into the public domain and do not need attribution).
Wikimedia Commons - Sound Category
More free-to-use sounds, with either Creative Commons or Public Domain licenses.
Tips on Recording Narration
A range of suggestions for producing better quality narration, from advice on setting up your recording space to practices that will help you record more quickly and efficiently.
Do-It-Yourself Sound Booth
A lot of background noise in your recordings? You can take additional steps to dampen the sound in the space (requires pillows).
Wikipedia - Pop Filter

If you really want to kit out your makeshift recording space, a pop filter will help to diffuse the popping sounds of plosives (heard during a hard 'p' or 'b' sound). You can see what one looks like in the Wikipedia article, but you can basically build your own using a sock or nylon over a looped coat hanger. DIY time!