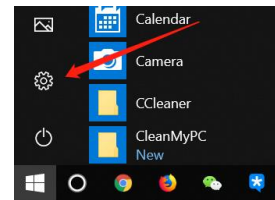# SOUND EDITING WITH AUDACITY

## Setting up your Computer

Before we get started with Audacity, you'll want to do a few preliminary things:

1. **Plug in your external microphone**, if you're recording straight into Audacity. It's important that you do this <u>before</u> opening Audacity, because Audacity will not recognize your microphone if it's already open when you plug it in.
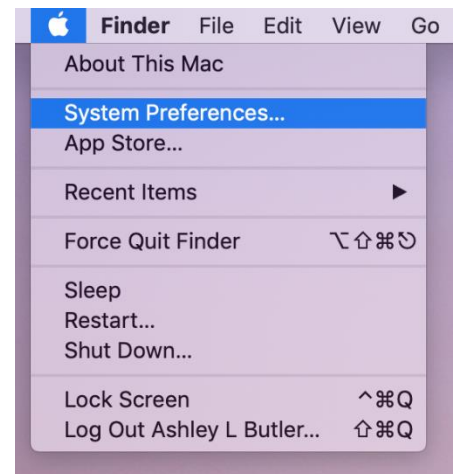2. Mute your computer's system sounds (on PC):
   a. PC:
      i. Open the start menu and click the gear shift above the power button
      ii. Select "System" and then "Sound."
      iii. Under "Sound," open the "Advanced Settings- App Volume and Device Preferences"
      iv. Move the "System Sounds" dial to 0. This will prohibit notifications and system sounds from interrupting your recording.
   b. Mac
      i. Click on the Apple logo in the top left corner of your screen and open the "System Preferences."
      ii. Click "Sound."
      iii. Move the "Alert Volume" dial to 0. This will prohibit notifications and system sounds from interrupting your recording.
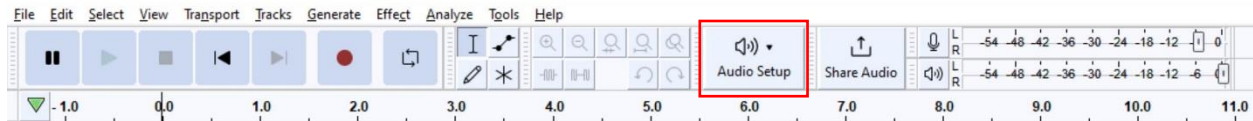
---

**Before starting an audio project, you also need to gather your media files!**

**Grab some media files here:**

**https://tinyurl.com/yc8lq4gg**

## Setting Up Audacity

Before doing anything in Audacity, you'll want to make sure your settings are set for the highest quality audio recording.



To do this, use the Audio Set Up in Audacity to make sure that:

1. **You've selected the correct microphone**—it'll likely default to your laptop or built-in mic, but an external mic is ideal and should be an option to select in the drop-down.

2. If you're doing a mostly vocal podcast, make sure **you've set your Channel to 1(Mono)**[1]. If you're creating something very theatrical or fictionalized (where you need to create depth between left and right earbud/headphone), then you might consider using 2(Stereo).

## Recording In Audacity

Recording in Audacity is straightforward. Your recording is all controlled via the **record**, **pause**, and **stop** buttons. And you can playback your audio using the **play** button.



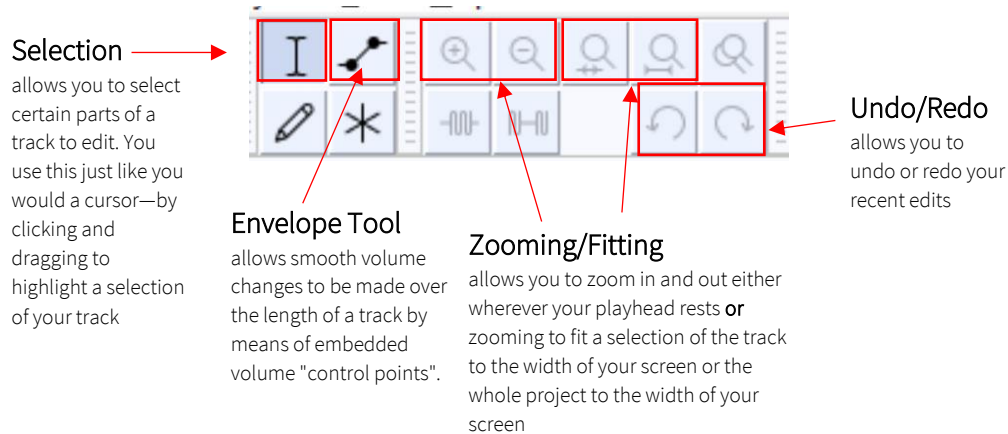| Pause | Play | Stop | Skip | Record |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| allows you to pause during playback | allows you to play what is on the timeline | allows you to stop the playback and recording | allows you to skip all the way to the beginning or end (helpful in longer projects) | Allows you to record onto the timeline. |

---

[1] "Many podcast-listeners may listen through only one ear using earbuds or Bluetooth headsets. These listeners get no benefit from stereo audio. But if you have any stereo effects, these listeners will miss them if they listen through only a single ear…Even if you have music or sound effects, the quality will usually seem just as acceptable in mono. But if you podcast audio dramas, then stereo will be a lot more important as you have to communicate location for some voices or sound effects, or you need that "surrounding" feel to the audio." (https://theaudacitytopodcast.com/tap059-should-you-podcast-in-mono-or-stereo/)

# Editing in Audacity

TOOLS

Here is a breakdown of what the different buttons in the editing tool do:

**Selection**
allows you to select certain parts of a track to edit. You use this just like you would a cursor—by clicking and dragging to highlight a selection of your track

**Envelope Tool**
allows smooth volume changes to be made over the length of a track by means of embedded volume "control points".

**Zooming/Fitting**
allows you to zoom in and out either wherever your playhead rests **or** zooming to fit a selection of the track to the width of your screen or the whole project to the width of your screen

**Undo/Redo**
allows you to undo or redo your recent edits

SPLITTING A TRACK INTO CLIPS & MOVING / ORGANIZING CLIPS[2]

When you record or import audio, you get a single track. In many cases, there are natural gaps in the audio—silence between sentences or pauses between phrases. Those are good candidates for splitting the track into multiple clips, allowing you to move or otherwise manipulate those clips independently. There are several ways to create multiple clips in a track, detailed in the table below:

| INTENTION | ACTION |
|---|---|
| Remove selected audio **without** shifting the following audio. | Edit > Remove Special > Split Delete |
| Remove the selected audio to the clipboard without shifting the following audio | Edit > Remove Special > Split Cut |
| Separate into multiple clips | Edit > Audio Clips > Clip Boundaries > Split or CTRL/Command + i                    *Easiest! |
| Move the selected audio to the same position in a new track at the bottom of the project | Edit > Audio Clips > Split New |
| Create clips either side of absolute silences | Edit > Audio Clips > Detach at Silences |
| Paste from the clipboard to a vacant space in an existing track | Edit > Paste |

---

[2] For more on this, see: http://manual.audacityteam.org/man/audacity_tracks_and_clips.html

In order to better organize your clips, you can:

1. Rename your tracks so that they make sense to you upon first glance. To do this, click the down arrow next to the default name given to your track upon recording or importing and click "Rename."
2. Reorder your tracks by clicking the down arrow next to the track name and selecting the appropriate "moving" option. Depending on how many layers/tracks you have, it can be useful to move a track that you no longer need to edit down to the bottom of your project.
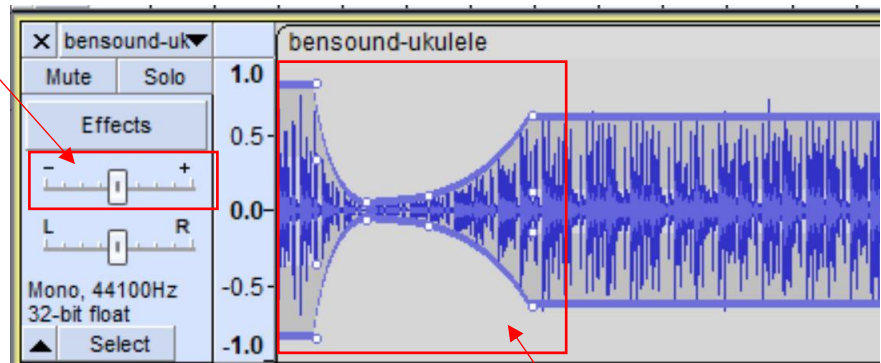
### VOLUME & AUDIO EDITING



**Editing volume** of an entire track can be done by dragging the audio marker from left (lower) to right (higher) under the track name and mute option for each track.

Applying fades is most easily done by using the envelope tool to add and manipulate sound points. Click to enable the envelope tool, and click on the track where you'd like to start your fade. You can add unlimited sound points. You'll need multiple sets for each fade as illustrated here.

To **amplify your audio**, you can use the Compressor Effect. This allows you to reduce the dynamic range of your audio and amplify it as much as possible and is useful for audio played in a noisy environment or to make a distant voice sound as loud as a close one. To compress, select the bit of audio you want to compress, then click **Effect > Volume and Compression > Compressor**. I generally accept the defaults presented in the tool and just hit "OK."[3]

If you need further audio manipulation, consult the Audacity manual which details other available effects: http://manual.audacityteam.org/man/index_of_effects_generators_and_analyzers.html

## SAVING AND EXPORTING

As with any project, it is recommended that you save often. In Audacity, to save an editable version of your project, you'll want to click **File > Save Project As**. To export as an audio file (WAV, MP3, etc.), you'll need to click **File > Export** and select the file type you'd like to save it as.

For the most up-to-date technical support, view the Audacity Wiki Manual here: http://manual.audacityteam.org/index.html

---

[3] More on the compressor tool here: http://manual.audacityteam.org/man/compressor.html

# Sample Podcast Intro Exercise

## Step 1: Recording Narration

The following is a prompt you can use to a sample podcast introduction. Record all the dialogue at once, pausing and resuming if you make mistakes--we can cut them later.

Hi! This is "_____" and I am your host _____. Today
                   Podcast Title                                 Your Name
we'll be talking about _____.
                                                 Podcast Episode Summary

## Step 2: Planning the Arrangement

After you've decided on and added music to your narration, you'll need to decide how you want to arrange your podcast intro. Some (but not all) options:

SIMPLE INTRO MUSIC:

      Option 1: [Intro Music] then [Narration]

      Option 2: [Narration] then [Intro Music]

MORE CHALLENGING (FULL LENGTH SONG):

      Option 1: [Lobo_Loco] ⎙ Cut & Fade Out ⎙ [Narration]

      Option 2: [Lobo_Loco] ⎙ Volume Down ⎙ [Narration] ⎙ Volume Up

## Step 3: Editing Your Audio

Follow along with your handout to split, fade, and arrange your project into a podcast intro!