**Unit 5 Creating Digital Audio**

**Testing audio products**

It is important to test and refine the audio products you have created. There are two main areas you need to test: the technical suitability of your product and how well your product meets your original intentions and audience requirements.

**Test for functionality**

You will need to test the functionality of your audio products to ensure they work properly. You should check that the sound levels are appropriate and that the different assets are edited together correctly with no long pauses or cut off words or music. You also need to check that the products meet the purpose you stated in your design documents and that they will appeal to your target audience.

**Gather feedback from others**

Before you started work on your audio products, you should have been clear about the purpose and audience for your products. You now need to consider if you have achieved your original intentions and how well your final products match your audience requirements. These questions are more subjective than the technical ones, so it is often a good idea to ask other people to comment on these issues.

To gather feedback from others about the quality and suitability of your products, you could create a questionnaire for people to complete or you could interview people and ask them a series of questions from a script. Here are some examples of the sort of questions you could ask:

* How do you rate the sound quality?
* Was the dialogue clear and audible?
* Are the different assets (dialogue, music, sound effects, etc) mixed together effectively?
* Do you think the product will appeal to its target audience?
* Does the product meet its original requirements?
* What are the strengths of the product and how might it be improved?

It is also useful to have some questions that use a numeric scoring system, as this makes the results easier to collate. For example, you might have questions like ‘Rate the overall quality of the product in a scale of 1 to 5. 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = OK, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent.’

If you use the interview method, you should record the interviews so you can listen to them later.

You should aim to gather feedback from around eight to ten people. Gathering feedback from too few people could mean that the views of one particular person take on too much importance. The more people you interview, the more likely it is that the results you get will be fair and accurate.

Once the questionnaires or interviews have been completed, you need to collate the results.

The final step is to write up a review of your product, based on your experiences and the feedback you received from others.

**Exporting and compressing your finished audio product**

Once you are happy that you have completed the editing of your audio product, you should compress and export it. This will make it suitable for other people (who perhaps don’t have the same editing software as you) to listen to.

Choosing a format such as MP3 to export your audio clip will mean that it can be played on almost any computer or music player. It will also compress the file to reduce its size, which will make it much quicker to download the file from a website.

**How to export an audio clip**

1. Go to the File menu and choose Export.
2. A dialog box will appear. In the dialog box, choose the file name, location and the format the file will be saved in. Click Save.
3. You will be asked if you want to edit any of the metadata saved with the file. Click OK.
4. Your software program will remind you that the various assets you have edited together will be mixed to a single stereo track. Click OK.
5. If it is the first time you have exported an MP3 file, the software program will ask you where the codec for the MP3 conversion is located. Some programs use a free MP3 codec called LAME, which you can download. Once your software program knows where the MP3 codec is, it will not ask you again and your project file will be converted to an MP3 file.
6. If you want to adjust the quality (and therefore the file size) of the MP3 file, you can click the Options button in the Export File dialog box and choose a different quality setting (bit rate).

**Technical testing of your audio product**

When carrying out your technical testing, ask yourself the following questions:

* Does the audio clip actually run?
* Is the sound audible (loud enough to be heard)? Is the volume equalised throughout the clip or are some parts louder than others?
* Is the clip of adequate quality? (With a low level of background noise, there is no noticeable distortion).
* Are the different assets edited together in a professional manner? For example, are there any long pauses or sudden changes in quality or volume between the assets?
* Is the clip of the right length? (Remember: you are required to produce clips that are at least three minutes long.)
* Does the clip meet the original requirements of the brief?

You can use a simple test plan to make sure you have checked for each of these points. Below is a simple test plan table that could be used:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Runs? | Clip quality? | Edit quality? | Correct length? | Fits brief? |
| Clip 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 6 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 7 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 8 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 9 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clip 10 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Documenting improvements to refine your product**

If your product fails any of the technical tests, you will need to correct the problem(s) and test the clip again. At the end of your test plan, add in details of any changes you made to your product as the result of testing. You may also need to update the table of ready-made assets you used if you have to make any changes to these.