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# File Organization in Audacity

[Link to schedule a meeting with the DITI Team](#)

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## Why file storage in Audacity?

Podcasting and audio mixing often require splicing music, voice recordings, and sound effects together to make a coherent project. Navigating the different files needed for this process can be difficult. This handout offers some tips for storing and accessing files with the program Audacity. For more information on Audacity, see our [introduction to Audacity handout](#). To download Audacity, follow the steps on our [downloading Audacity](#) handout.

## Saving in Audacity

- Audacity will not automatically save your work. If you close out of Audacity, all unsaved work will be deleted. Save frequently when recording or editing.
- Save your project by going to File > Save Project > Save Project (or Save Project As, if you are first creating your podcast project).
- After recording audio in Audacity, save a separate version of any raw recorded material. Do not edit directly on raw recorded audio, always make sure to keep a fully unmodified, original, version of your recordings.

## Best Practices for File Storage

*(adapted from resources created for the NULab Project Seminar, by Sarah Connell and Julia Flanders)*

1. Create a particular place to keep audio files so you know where they live. Don't leave files in your Downloads folder; always move them immediately into an appropriate organized space for storage.
2. Think about the information that will be helpful to have in your file names; what aspects of the metadata will you want to be able to see across all of your files? You will want to consider the order of information in your file names with sorting in mind, and what information will quickly enable you to understand what audio is contained in each file.
3. Be consistent in your file naming practices and make sure all files have unique names.
4. Avoid giving "temporary" names to files in case you are interrupted when working. A permanent name will allow you to easily come back and find the audio.

5. Create an “Archive” directory to keep old/outdated audio or files you imported that you will no longer need.

### General Tips for Managing Tracks/Clips in Audacity

- The best format for importing audio in Audacity is through an MP3 file. Audacity does not import all types of file formats; importing with an MP3 ensures Audacity will recognize the sound.
- One way to save a part of an audio clip to be utilized later is through exporting the clip as an MP3 into a separate file. To do this:
  - Utilizing the selection tool, highlight the stretch of audio you want to export, or if it is in a split clip, select the clip at the top bar.
  - Go to File > Export > Export Selected Audio. Save the file with an informative name in the correct folder, and ensure that file format is selected as MP3.
  - Fill out all corresponding metadata in the box that appears, including date and title of the track.
- To import audio back into Audacity, go to File > Import > Audio, and select the correct file. When files are imported into Audacity they appear as a separate track.
- All clips and tracks in Audacity should have a separate name within the program. The names Audacity gives to clips can be confusing, so renaming clips will help you more easily navigate the program. Ensure all clips and tracks are all labeled uniquely with clear names.
  - To rename a track, click the down arrow at the top of the track, then select Name, and a box will appear allowing you to change the name.
  - To rename a clip, select the clip at the top with the gray bar, then go to Edit > Rename Clip, which will allow you to edit the clip in the gray bar.
- To organize the space within Audacity more effectively, you may need to move tracks up and down. To move a track, click on the down arrow at the top of the track, then select Move Track Up, to move the track one spot closer to the top, or Move Track Down, to move the track closer to the bottom. To move a track all the way to the top, select Move Track to Top. To move a track all the way to the bottom, select Move Track to Bottom.
- As you import tracks into Audacity, you may move them around or place them at different points in time. To align tracks together go to Tracks > Align, which gives a menu with multiple options for aligning selected tracks such as with each other, at a specific point, or at the beginning of your project.

### Converting Voice Memos to MP3

Voice memos recorded on a smartphone will typically record in a file type such as .m4a, which is not compatible with Audacity and cannot be imported. If you record on your phone and want to import the audio into Audacity, you will need to convert it into a file type such as an MP3.

Follow these steps to convert a file type using the Cloud Convert on Google Drive, which requires a Gmail account:

1. Download the voice memo onto your computer. This may be done through emailing the voice memo to yourself or transferring it through the cloud.
2. Upload the voice memo file to Google Drive.
3. Once it is in Google Drive, right/control click on the voice memo and choose Open With > Cloud Converter.
4. Your internet browser will then bring you to Cloud Convert. If you have not used this program before, Cloud Convert will require you to give it permission to access your Google Drive and may ask you to create a username for a Cloud Convert account. When sharing files to external programs, ensure you are protecting your data, which you can learn more about through [our data and privacy handout](#).
5. Once your account has been created, Cloud Converter will open the voice memo in your browser.
6. Select Convert to MP3 and then click the convert button. It will take a few seconds to convert.
7. You can then download the file and save it to your audio files. Be sure to save the file with a clear name in the correct location.
8. Finally, import the MP3 file into Audacity by opening Audacity and clicking File > Import > Audio and selecting the file name.