

# Introduction to Podcasting with Audacity

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ENGL 4400: Opening the Archive

Professor K. J. Rawson

Spring 2021



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# Workshop Agenda

- Podcast anatomy and techniques
- Tips for getting started with recording audio
- How to record and edit audio in Audacity

Slides and handouts available at:

<http://bit.ly/diti-spring2021-rawson2>



# Objectives

- Understand podcast anatomy and devices
- Learn best practices for audio recording
- Learn about and explore Audacity as a podcast editing tool
- Learn how to:
  - Record audio
  - Clip audio
  - Add/move/delete tracks
  - Add sound effects and/or background music
  - Save and export projects



# Podcast Anatomy: The Intro

Podcasts typically begin with an **opening segment** of 10-30 seconds of music\* and audio wherein the creator identifies the **podcast title, host, and episode topic**—this creates a nice trademark/signature, and indicates to the listener that the podcast is about to begin. **Be as creative as you want!**

\*Consider the emotions and perceptions sounds evoke in listeners when choosing music and sound effects for your intro (spooky violins, dramatic horns, happy guitars, etc.)



# Opening Segment: *You Must Remember This*

Listen to the opening segment to [“Crossfire”](#) (through 1:13) from Karina Longworth’s *You Must Remember This* podcast, an episode about censorship and the Hollywood blacklist during the Cold War.

Questions to keep in mind:

- What audio techniques do they use to engage their audience?
- How do they introduce their topic?
- What kinds of media are included?



# Podcast Anatomy cont'd.

From the opening segment alone, we can make certain assumptions about the podcast:

1. **Audience:** people interested in history of Hollywood, censorship, intellectual property
2. **Genre:** journalism, non-fiction historical narrative
3. **Structure:** original narration with sound clips and story segments
4. **Media:** theme song music, sound effects, archival audio clips

These are all components to keep in mind when crafting not only your opening segment, but also your **entire podcast**.



# Podcast Anatomy: The Body

Your podcast should have an **argument** or **perspective**, not just a recitation of facts. Even if you're not speaking with anyone else in your podcast, try to keep your tone **persuasive** and **conversational**. Like any good piece of reporting, your podcast should be **organized** and rehearsed ahead of time.

Do your research and have your script written **before** you start recording; know how your show is laid out and how much time you have.

- Write out large numbers and/or complicated words/names out phonetically (twenty-two thousand and thirty-four vs. 22,034)
- Mark out spaces in the script for pauses, sound clips/effects, transitions between topics, etc.



# Podcast Anatomy: The Outro

Podcasts typically end with a **closing segment** of 10–30 seconds of music and audio wherein the creator names the **creator(s)**, **institutional affiliation**, and **audio/production credits**, including people whose work or advice has significantly influenced or contributed to the episode.

An outro script for your class might sound something like “This podcast was made by [student name]...opening music created by [artist name], sound effects taken from [repository name]... with special thanks to [name] for their contribution”

As in your opening segment, you can use music and sound effects to make your closing segment dynamic and interesting.





# Getting Started: Recording Audio

- Know where your microphone is located and keep it clear of papers/other objects
- Use headphones/earbuds when recording and editing
  - Prevent the “echo effect”
- Take ambient noise into consideration
  - A/C units, refrigerators, traffic, pets, roommates, loud clothing, etc.
- Ideally, find a room with good sound absorption
  - Yes: carpet, cushions, bookshelves, clothes (bedrooms, closets)
  - No: larger spaces with hard surfaces (kitchens, bathrooms)
  - Consider: Does the room have an echo? Hard floors/countertops/stainless steel surfaces?



# Recording Audio cont'd.

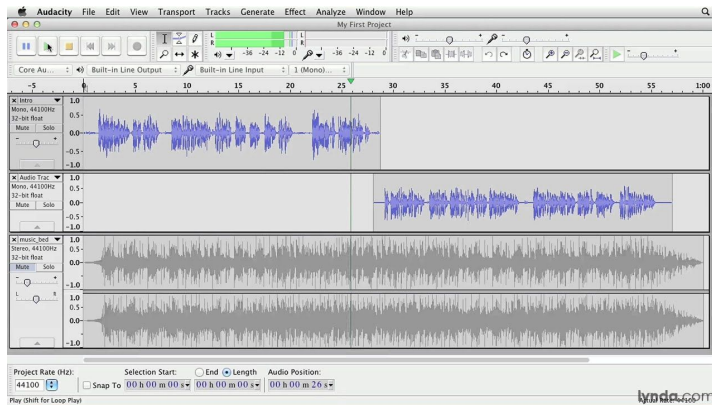
- Record test audio and adjust mic volume if necessary
- Record a few seconds of silence at the start and end of each track
- Begin way in advance, and do several takes
  - Editing often takes longer than the recording itself!
- Speak slowly, clearly, and conversationally
  - If you use too many “filler words” (um, like, so) you can always edit them out later
- Don't be afraid to stop and start over if you mess up! You'll save more time in the long run
  - Stop recording and start again at the top of the sentence to avoid jarring sound cuts in post-production



# What is Audacity?

An open source, multi-track audio recorder and editor.

Multi-track: the ability to have different layers of audio in one clip.



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# It's similar to GarageBand....



.....but *audio*-centric, not music-centric



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# Downloading Audacity

<https://www.audacityteam.org/> --- Choose if you want it for Windows, Mac, or Linux

Audacity is free software and developed by volunteers.

## Audacity for Windows

Windows 10/8/7/Vista (XP support has officially been dropped)

## Audacity for Mac OS X / macOS

Mac OS X/macOS 10.7 and later.

## Audacity for GNU/Linux

Source code

For PC users: download **Windows Installer**

For Mac users: download **MacOS.dmg**



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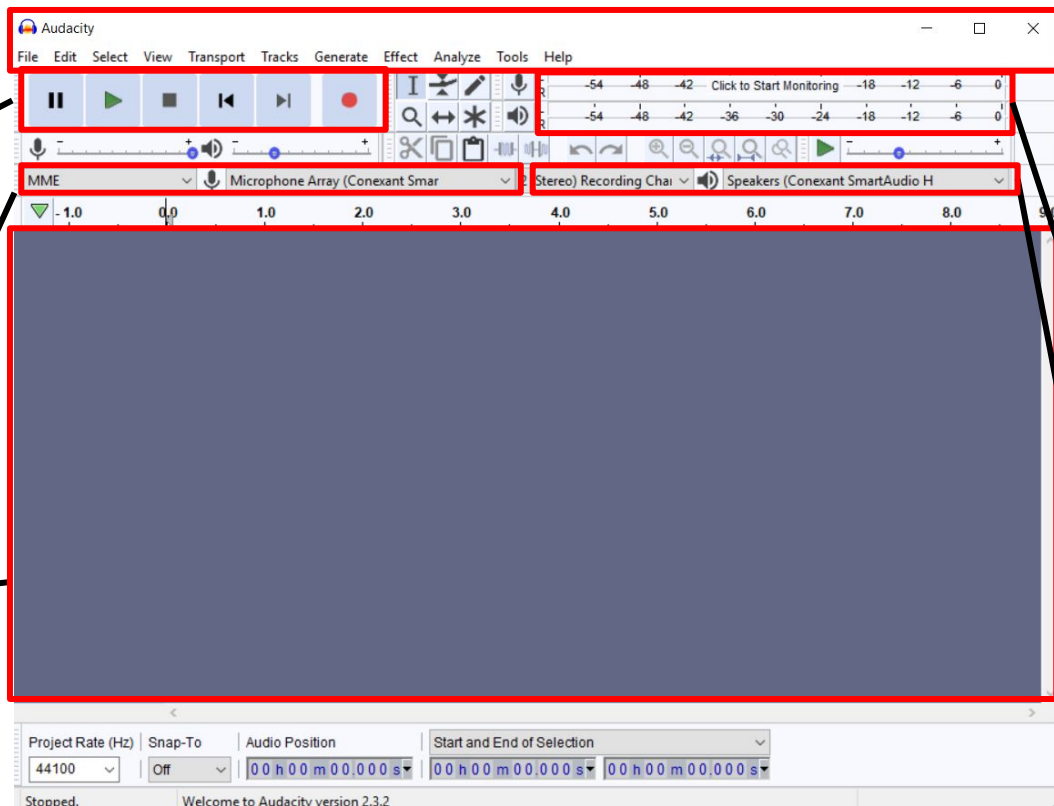
DOWNLOAD	FILE	SIZE	VERSION	ANTIVIRUS
<a href="#">Audacity Windows Installer</a>	Signature	26.6 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
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<a href="#">Audacity macOS 2.1.1-DMG (screen reader accessible)</a>	Signature	38.6 MB	2.1.1	0 / 15

# Anatomy of Audacity

Main buttons (L-R):  
pause, play, stop,  
fast-forward/  
backward, record

Microphone,  
volume (the  
“input”)

Recordings will  
appear here.



Editing, saving,  
effects,  
transporting or  
exporting the  
recording.

Monitor: shows  
the loudness of  
each track in  
real-time

Stereo  
adjustments  
(the “output”)

# Key Terms

- **Track:** a single audio channel or stream.
  - **Multi-track:** an audio recording or channel with more than one track or recording of sound.
- **Clipping:** splitting audio into separate sections—that is, making “clips”
- **Waveform:** the curve within a track showing the duration and volume of individual sounds
- **Mixing:** the process of audio production, or mixing tracks of recordings, music, and other desired media.
- **MP3 File:** the most generally used audio file format. Others include .wav, .mp4.

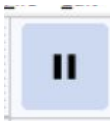


# Recording

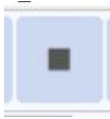
Make sure your **microphone** is working by checking to see that it's selected in the microphone section of the screen. Each computer will have different microphones, so check your sound settings for your model.



To **record**, click the button with the **red circle**.



Hit the **pause** button to pause a recording.



Hit the **stop** button to stop recording.



Use **Re-play** to verify that the recording is the quality/ volume that you want.



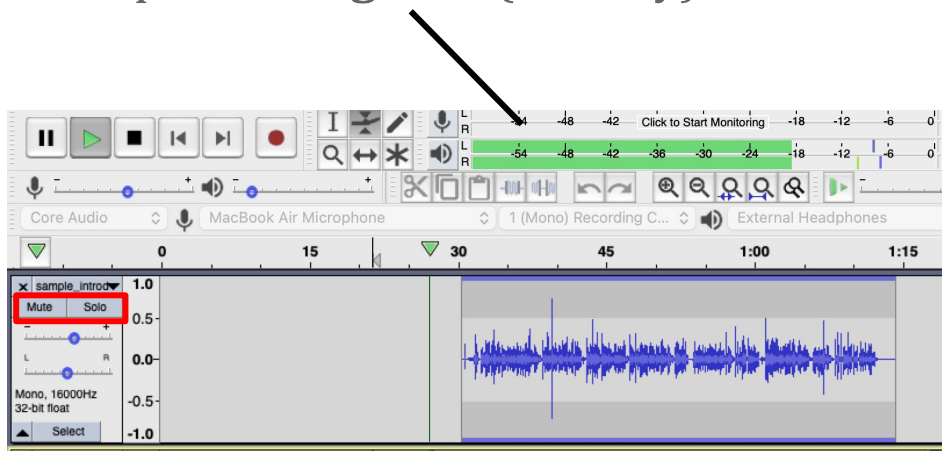
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# Checking volume

Keep an eye on the **monitor** when recording and playing back your audio—try to keep it in the **green** (literally).

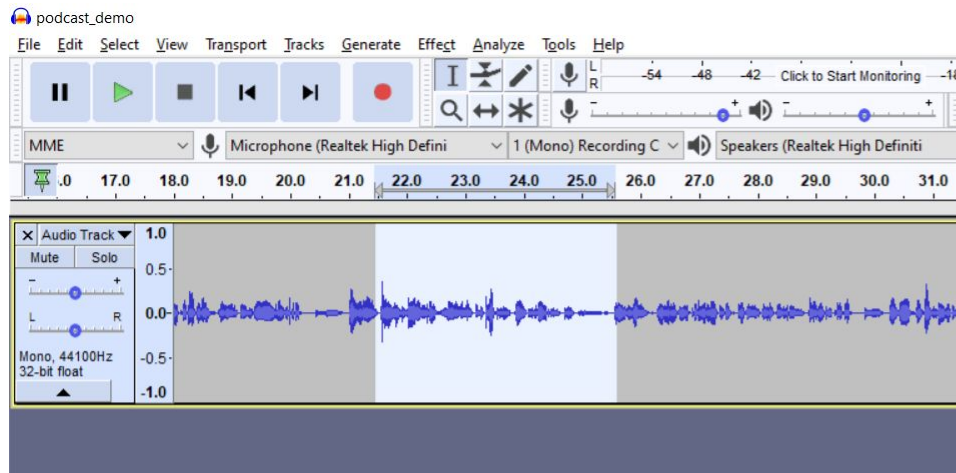


- If your volume is too loud, the monitor levels will turn yellow and red. Tracks that are too loud will have a blown-out effect when played back.
- If one of your tracks is louder or softer than the others, you can adjust the volume on each track.
- **Tip:** to hear one track without the others, you can **mute** the other tracks or click “**solo**”



# Removing Parts of Tracks

Once you have recorded audio in Audacity, you can easily edit it. Here is how to remove sections using the **Selection Tool (F1)**:

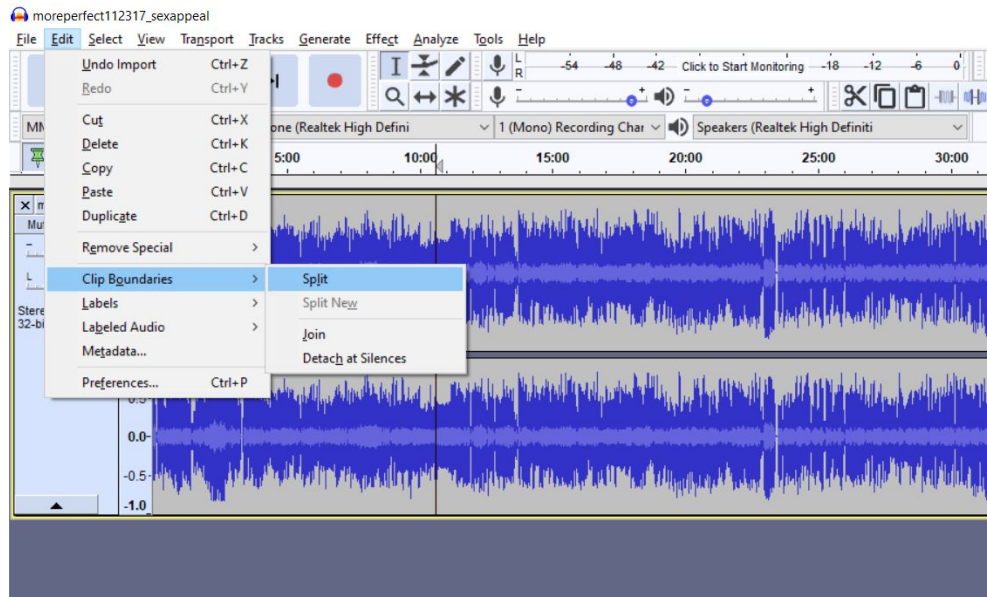


- Use your cursor to click and drag to select the portion you wish to remove.
- Then, hit backspace or delete on your keyboard.
- **Tip:** you can zoom in and out with the **Zoom Tool (F4)** to better see what you're trying to delete



# Splitting Tracks

To split a track in Audacity, follow these steps to make shorter clips:

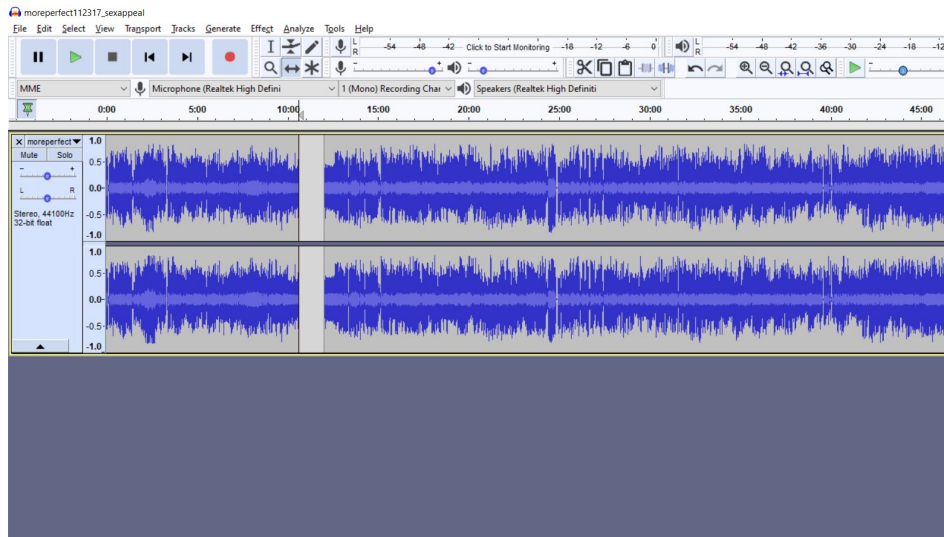


- With the **Selection Tool (F1)**, place your cursor over the section where you want to split your track.
- Navigate to the **Edit** section, click under “**Clip Boundaries**” and select “**Split.**”



# Moving Tracks

To move entire tracks or audio around in Audacity, you can click and drag them using the **Time Shift Tool (F5)** in the upper navigation bar.



Once you have selected this tool, click whatever clip or track you want to move and drag it into position.

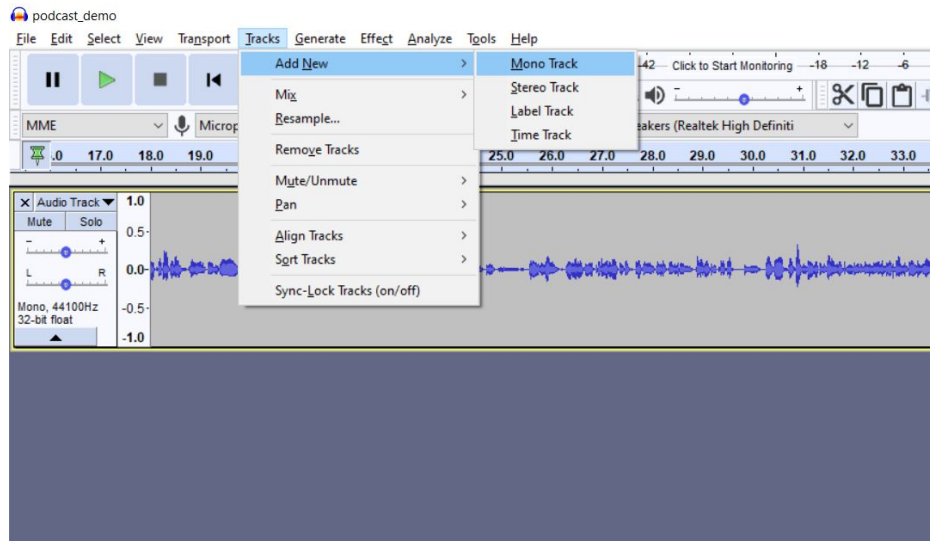


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# Adding Tracks

To create additional tracks in Audacity for a **new recording**, simply hit the record button and it will start a new track. Another option is:



Navigate to the “Tracks” menu option and select “Add New.” This will open a list of options. Select the “Mono Track”

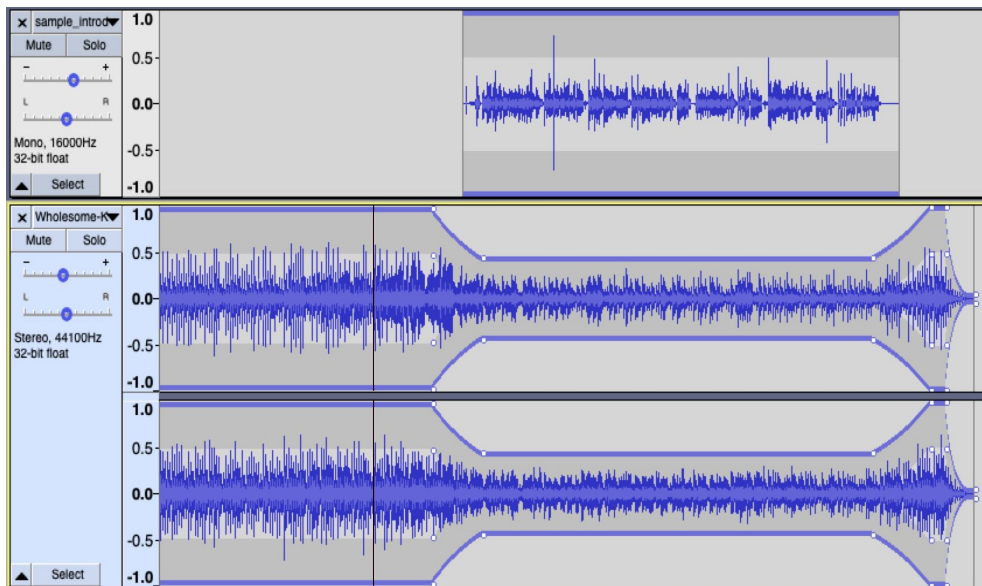


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# Fading In/Out

To fade music in and out on Audacity, use the **Envelope Tool (F2)**. Two yellow bars will show up on each track.



- Click to add **nodes** (little white dots) on the track you want to fade in.
- Drag and move the nodes to up and down and side to side to change the volume and how gradual the volume fade is.
- Add and adjust nodes at the end of the track to fade the music back in.



# Sound Effects and Music

You can import sound effects or music by downloading MP3 versions of the sounds to your computer. Some great sites to find open-sourced, non-copyrighted music/sounds are:

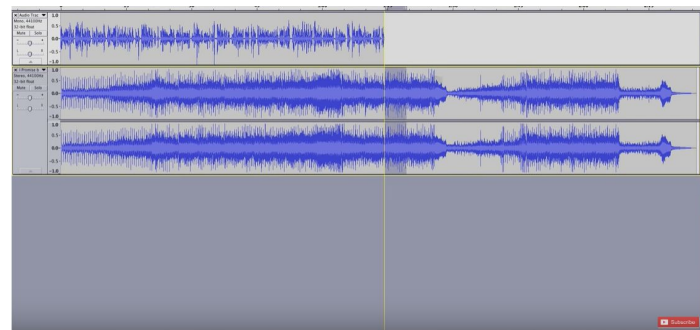
- <https://freesound.org/>
- <https://freemusicarchive.org/>
- <https://sound-effects.bbcrewind.co.uk>

Then, you can just drag and drop the files into your Audacity recording space (below).

You can also use:

**File > Import > Audio** to add in MP3s.

You can also experiment with any of the effect tools on Audacity:





# Audio File Credits (Best Practices)

Always credit any audio files you use! Look for a Creative Commons license and follow the publisher's requests for how they want you to cite their work. Cite them in both your podcast description and in the podcast itself! Here are some example attributions:

- "Footsteps, Dry Leaves, F.wav" by InspectorJ ([www.jshaw.co.uk](http://www.jshaw.co.uk)) of Freesound.org
- "Wholesome" Kevin MacLeod ([incompetech.com](http://incompetech.com))

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<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

See also Karina Longworth's **extensive attribution list**, under "[show notes](#)".



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# Saving

*Audacity does not auto-save!* Don't forget to save your recording, early and often!

Try and save after each major edit/input of a recording, just to be safe.

**File > Save Project > Save Project As> “Name of your podcast”**

And once your project is saved...

**File > Save Project > Save Project > [saves the updates to your file]**



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# Exporting and Sharing

Finished with your recording?

Make sure you export your project as an **MP3** before you send or share it! This will ensure that other people are able to listen to it correctly; anyone who does not have Audacity downloaded will not be able to open your project file otherwise.

**File > Export > Export as MP3**

Select “best quality”



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# Your turn!

On your own time, explore Audacity and recording, editing, and mixing your own sound clips.

Try:

- Recording audio files in Audacity
- Slicing audio files to create silence
- Adding in background music or sounds
- Using sound effects (fade in/out, distort the audio, etc.)



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# Thank you!

If you have any questions, contact DITI at [nulab.info@gmail.com](mailto:nulab.info@gmail.com)

Sign up for DITI office hours! <https://calendly.com/diti-nu>

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