

# Introduction to Recording and Editing Audio with Audacity

---

By Mel Williams and Ayah Aboelela  
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI)  
AFCS1113: Black Popular Culture  
Dr. N. Fedeke Castor  
Spring 2025

# Objectives

- Understand podcast anatomy
- Discuss how podcasting relates to embodiment and inclusion
- Learn best practices for audio recording
- Learn about and explore Audacity as a podcast editing tool
- Learn how to:
  - Record, import, and clip audio
  - Add, move, and delete tracks
  - Add sound effects and/or background music
  - Save and export projects

Slides and handouts available at: <https://bit.ly/sp25-castor-afc1113-audacity>

# Podcast Anatomy

# Podcasts

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 trademark/signature and indicates to the listener that the podcast is about to begin. **Be as creative as you want!**

# Podcast Anatomy: Intro/Opening Segment

Intros/Opening segments are listeners' **first impressions** of a podcast. From the opening segment alone, listeners make assumptions about the podcast's **Audience, Genre, Style**, and overall **Structure**.

This means that within a short span of time, the podcast's opening segment must accomplish several goals like:

- Grabbing attention: several successful podcasts set the tone using **Media** (e.g., theme song music, sound effects, archival audio clips)
- Identifying an audience: acknowledging/naming people who might be interested
- Establishing listener expectations: explaining the goal and theme of the podcast

# Discussion: Opening Segment Example

Listen to the opening segment (0:00-1:20) “[Episode 402: You Don’t Know African Diasporic Religions](#)” of Keeping It 101: A Killjoy’s Introduction to Religion Podcast.

- What audio techniques do they use to engage their audience?
- What additional opening statements are made, and what are their purpose?
- How is the topic and/or speakers introduced?

# Podcast Anatomy: The Body

Your podcast should have an **argument** or **perspective**, not just a recitation of facts. 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.

# Discussion: The Body Example

Listen to a portion of the body (20:24-23:10) of “[Episode 402: You Don’t Know African Diasporic Religions](#)” of Keeping It 101: A Killjoy’s Introduction to Religion Podcast.

- What audio techniques are used to move from one topic/speaker to another?
- How is context or additional information provided to the listener?



# Podcast Anatomy: The Outro

Podcasts typically end with a **closing segment** of 10–30 seconds of music and audio acknowledging the creator names the **creator(s)**, **institutional affiliation**, and **audio/production credits**, and **acknowledgments** 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.” It may also include outro music.

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

# Discussion: The Outro Example

Listen to a portion of the body (46:24-48:10) of “[Episode 402: You Don’t Know African Diasporic Religions](#)” of Keeping It 101: A Killjoy’s Introduction to Religion Podcast.

- What outro techniques does this podcast include, and how do they affect your understanding/perception of the material?
- What about the outro media?

# Best Practices for Podcasting

# General Best Practices

- **Test your mic** and technology before you start.
  - Record some test audio and play it back before you begin.
- **Have a plan** for the conversation and transitions.
  - Give yourself a script. As you record, mark out spaces for transitions in the recording (topic-to-topic, parts of the episode).
- **Don't panic** over filler words (e.g., um, uh, yeah, like). Edit these out later.
- **Prepare phonetic pronunciations** for names, long numbers, and complicated terminology.
- Include **transcripts for accessibility** (use software like Otter AI).
- Use **open access media/music** ([BBC Sound Effects](#), [Incompetech](#)).

# Environmental Considerations

- Ideally, find a room with good sound absorption to prevent the “echo effect”
  - **Yes:** carpet, cushions, bookshelves, clothes (bedrooms, closets)
  - **No:** larger spaces with hard, smooth surfaces (kitchens, bathrooms)
  - **Consider:** Does the room have an echo? Hard floors/countertops/stainless steel surfaces?
- Put some **distance** between yourself and the microphone (depending on your equipment).
  - Being too close can make the audio too loud or garbled sound as you speak. If you are positioned too far away the audio will be too quiet or too muffled to salvage.
- Stay hydrated!
  - Keep a drink nearby (water, juice, etc.) to soothe your throat and keep it relaxed.

# Recording Considerations for Interviews

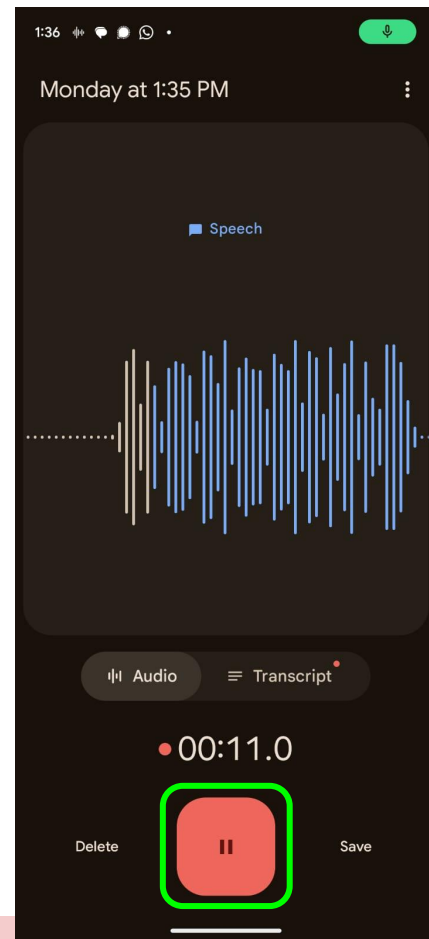
- **Remote Recording** (via Skype, Zoom).
  - If you record via Zoom, **save your recording to your computer** not the cloud.
- **Ease in to recording** with low-stakes conversation
  - Interviews are like playing catch. Start with questions that allow everyone to get comfortable. Be yourself!
- **Don't rush**, and know you can start over
  - You don't need to get everything in a single take, and you won't use all the audio that you record. So don't be afraid to pause frequently and remember you can start over (or cut something altogether!)

# Recording From a Phone

- Smartphones have become a very common way to record interview audio. Even professional journalists now primarily use their smartphones.
- Depending on the phone you have, the app you use will be different—any app that can record audio will work. These free apps are a good starting place:
  - Recorder (Google LLC) for Pixel phones
  - Voice Memos (Apple) for iPhones
  - Samsung Voice Recorder (Samsung) for Galaxy

# Using Audio Recording Apps

- These apps universally use a big, red button to start recording. This slide shows Google's Recorder app, but all of these buttons will be very similar regardless of the app you are using.
- If you want to take a short break in your recording you can hit **pause** (highlighted in green). This will stop the recording until you hit record again, but it won't end the recording as a whole.
  - To get to the pause button in Apple Voice Memos, swipe up on the recording while it's running.
- Finally, when you're done recording remember to hit **save** or **stop** (often represented by a square) depending on your app. This will end the recording altogether and let you send it to your computer.
- Be mindful of how your data and the recorded audio is stored on different recording apps.

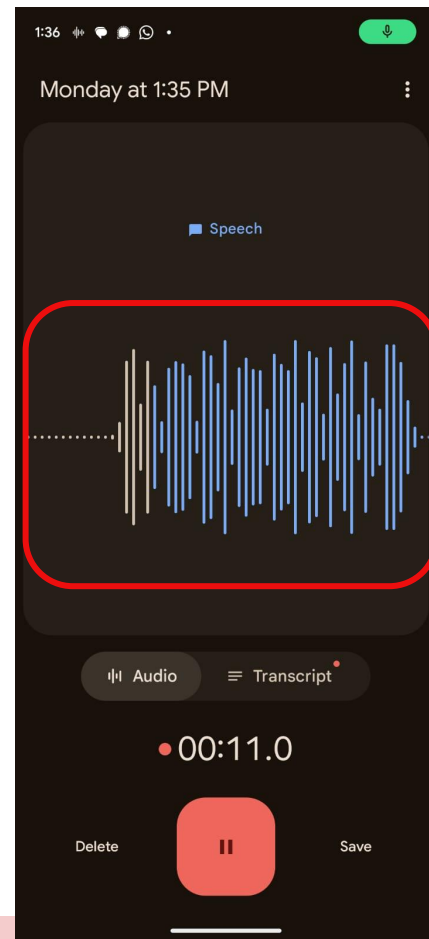


*Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!*



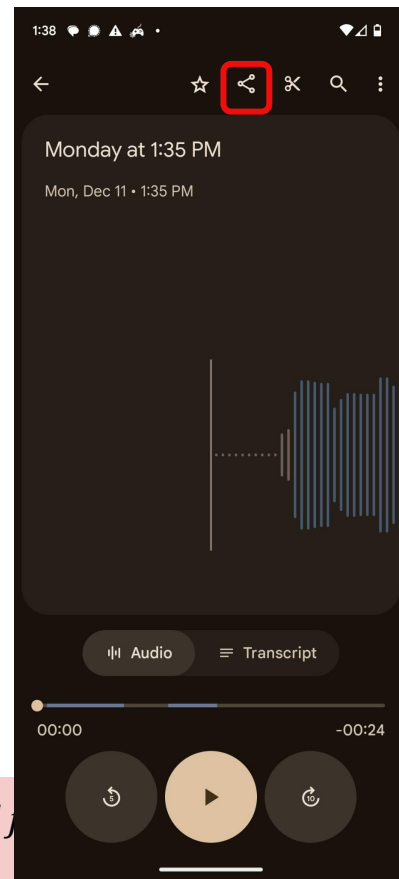
# Monitoring Your Recording

- While you are recording, the app will show a **waveform** (highlighted in red), which shows the current audio input
  - **Make sure to check your waveform intermittently as you record** (especially at the beginning)
  - **If you aren't seeing any waveform or it is very small**, the phone is likely **not picking up your audio**
  - The peaks and troughs of the wave show when it is picking up more and less audio. This should generally match the louder and quieter parts of your interview recording, though don't worry if it doesn't seem to be completely precise.



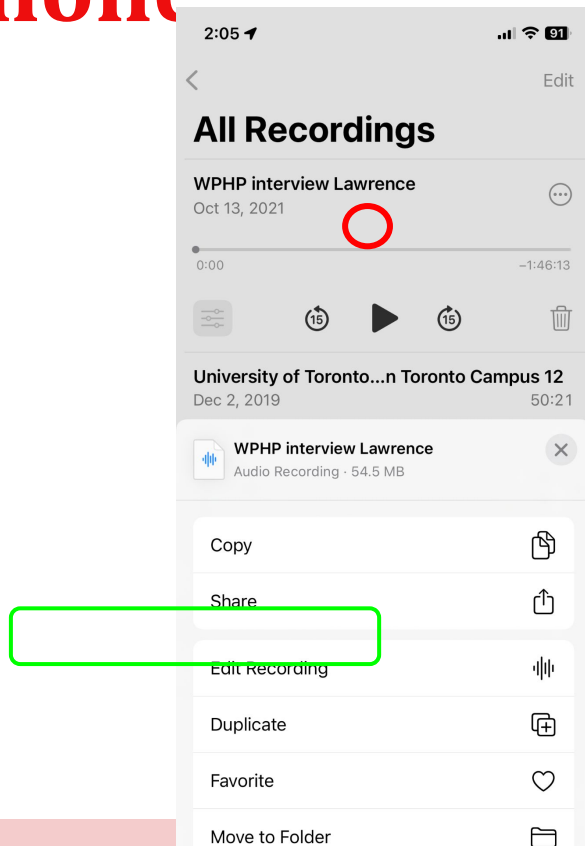
# Getting the Audio From Your Android

- The easiest way to get the file from your phone to your computer will be to use the **share** function. Look for a symbol like the one highlighted on the right.
  - From the share menu, you will be able to send the file to yourself in various forms, such as email.
  - Sometimes the file size may exceed the limit for email, which is where Google Drive can work better
- As soon as you have files on your computer, you can move on to audio editing!



# Getting Audio From Your iPhone

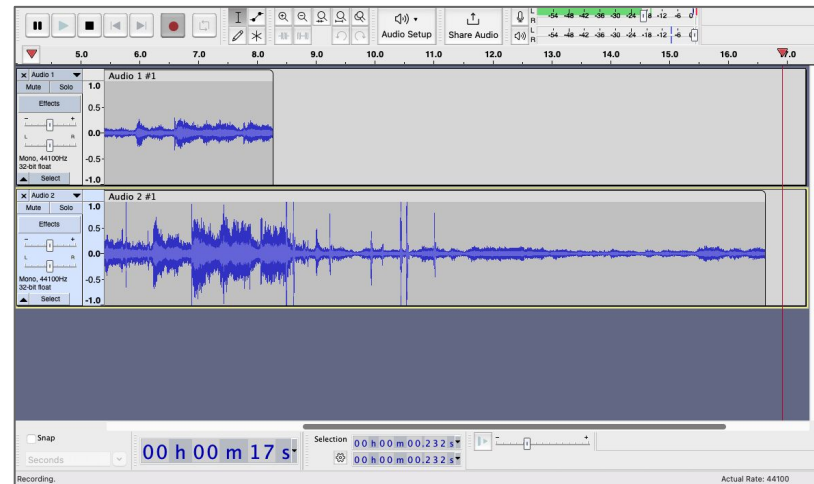
- To get audio out of Voice Memos, click the three dots (highlighted in red) and select “share” (highlighted in green).
- You’ll need to pick a method that works for you:
  - Airdrop and iCloud work.
  - If you download the app for Drive or Dropbox (or similar), you can send the file to those.
  - It will probably be too big a file to email to yourself.



# Making Podcasts: Audacity

# What is Audacity?

Audacity is a free, easy-to-use, **multi-track** audio editor and one of the more popular free audio editors used for creating podcasts.





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


# Downloading Audacity

<https://www.audacityteam.org/download/>

DOWNLOAD FOR

  
**Windows**  
32 & 64 bit

  
**macOS**  
Universal Binary

  
**Linux**  
64 bit appimage

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Offline manual**  
[Download Audacity manual](#) ↗

**FFmpeg library**  
[FFmpeg import/export library](#) ↗

**Source code**  
▸

**Older versions of Audacity**  
[Download older versions from FossHub](#) ↗



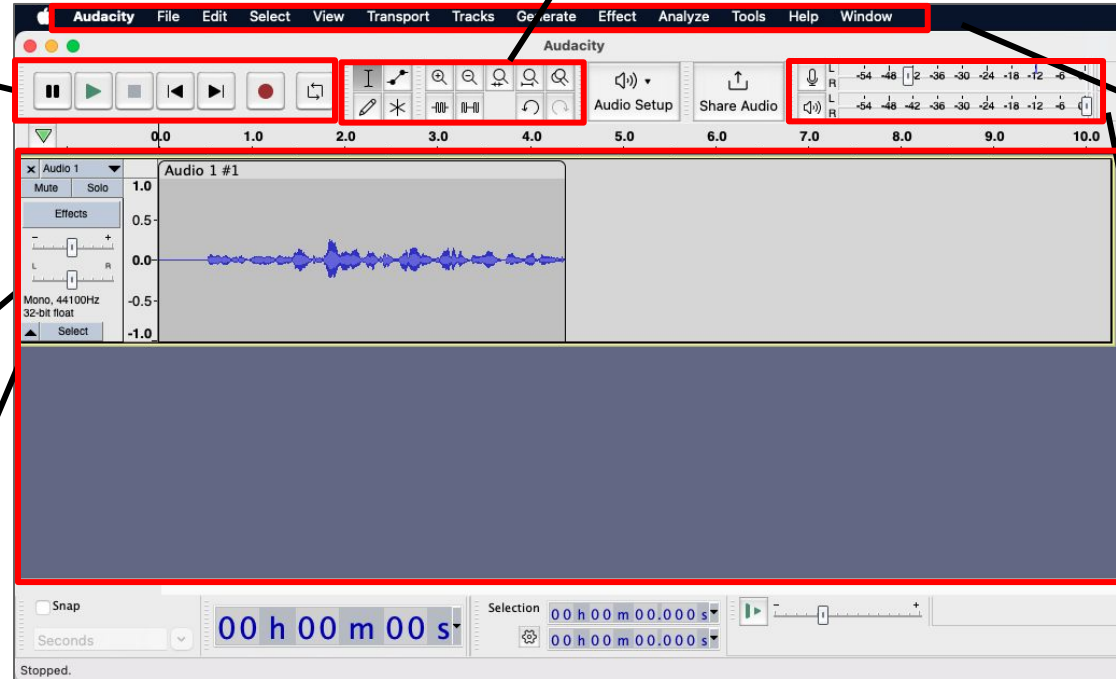
# Anatomy of Audacity

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

Microphone,  
volume, input, and  
output

Recordings (audio  
tracks) will display  
in this window  
here.

Audio Editing



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

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



Northeastern University  
*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

<https://manual.audacityteam.org/>

# 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 and .mp4.





# Basics: Audacity & Recording Audio

# Getting Started: Tips for Recording Audio

- Know where your microphone is located and keep it clear of papers/other objects
- Use headphones when recording and editing
  - After you finish editing, listen to the file without headphones to see where the audio is too loud/quiet when played in a space.
- Take ambient noise into consideration
  - A/C units, refrigerators, traffic, pets, roommates, loud clothing, etc.
- **Save frequently.** Audacity does not autosave.

# 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 much 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. Stop recording and start again at the top of the sentence to avoid jarring sound cuts in post-production

# 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.

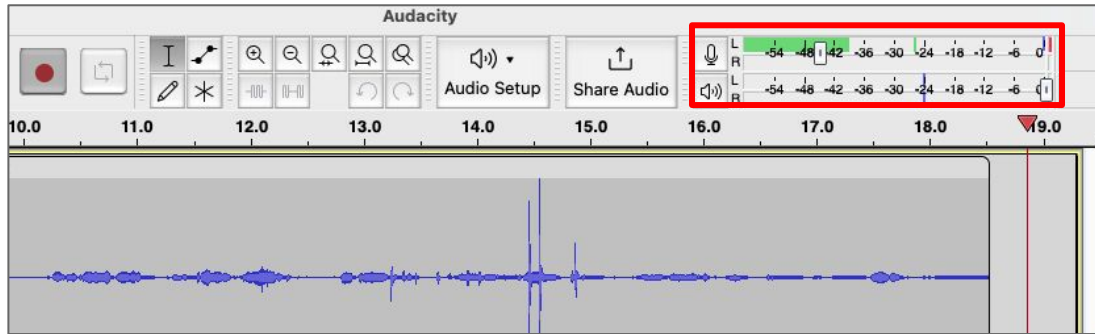


Use **Re-play** to verify that the recording is the quality/ volume that you want.



# 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.

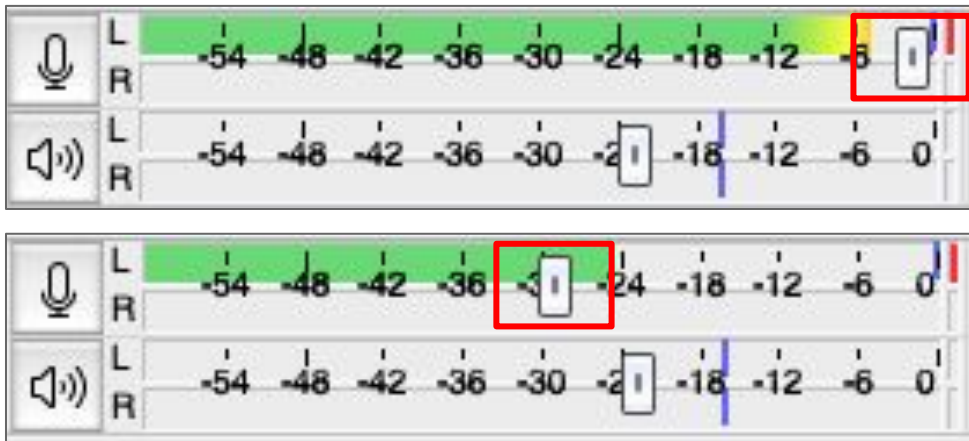
If one of your tracks is louder or softer than the others, you can adjust the volume on each track.

**Tip:** to hear one track without the others, you can **mute** the other tracks or click “**solo**”



# Adjusting Mic Volume

If the recording volume is too loud, you can use the slider in the recording meter to adjust the recording level

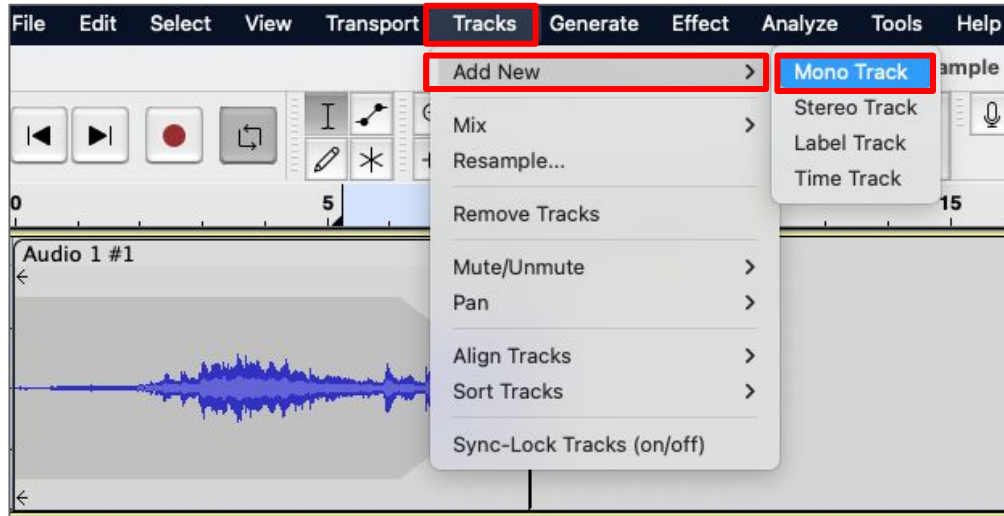


Move the slider to the right for a higher (louder) recording level and to the left for a lower (quieter) recording level



# Adding Tracks

To create additional tracks in Audacity for a **new recording**, 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** option.



# Basics: Audacity & Editing Audio



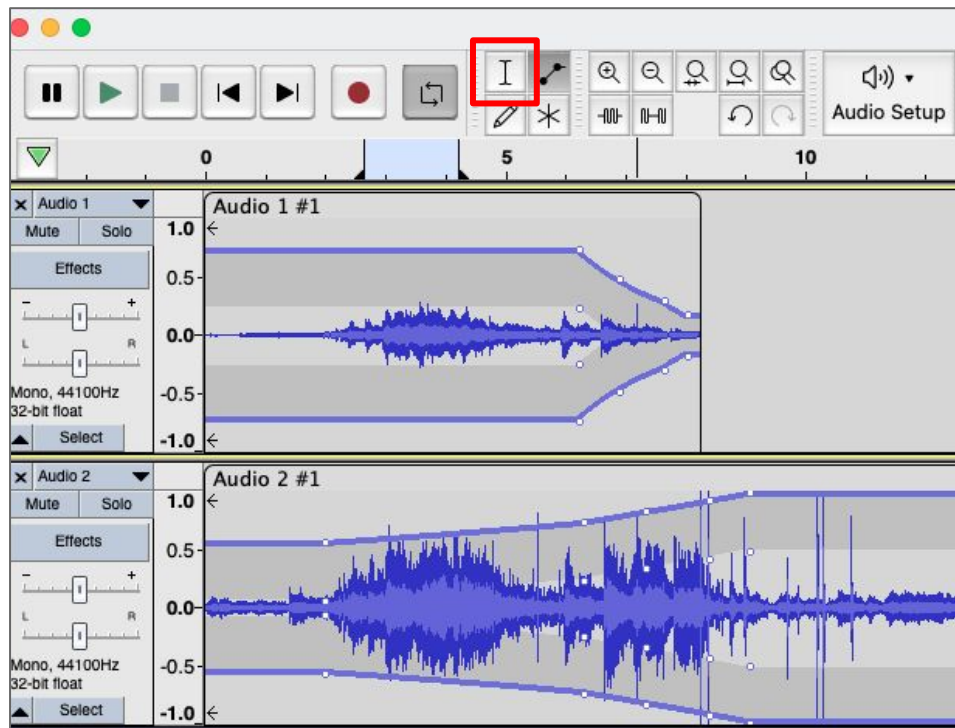
# Toolbar: Selection and Multitool

- The **selection tool** will be selected automatically when you open Audacity.
- The **multitool** allows you to use all the functions of the other tools without switching to them.
  - The selection tool function is the default.
  - Hover over the waveform borders to use the envelope tool function.
  - Use your trackpad to zoom.
  - Zoom in and left click to use the draw tool function.



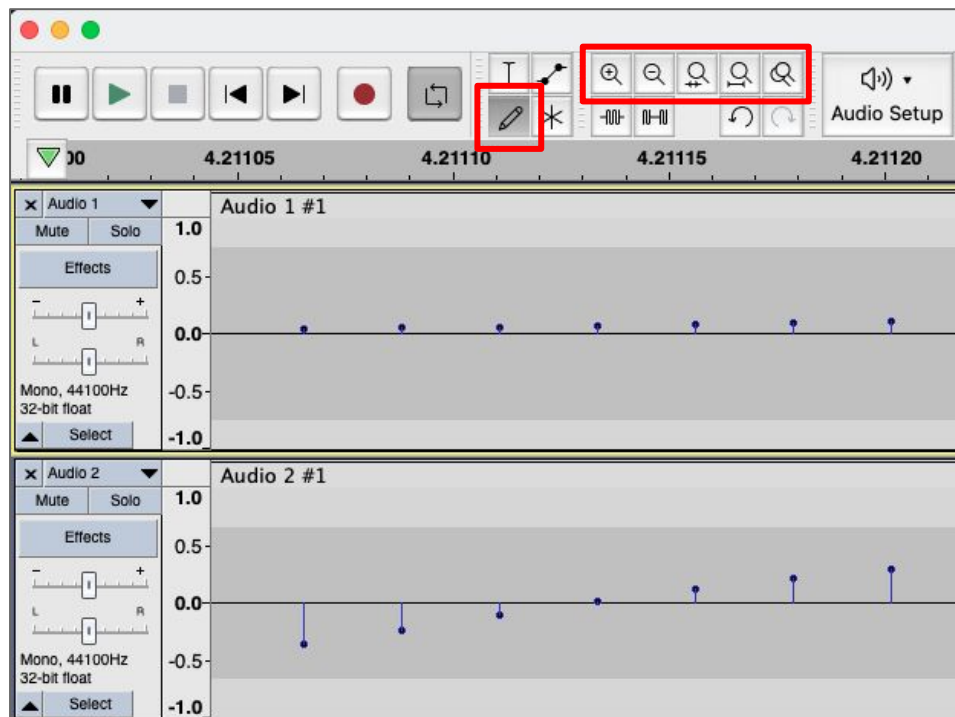
# Toolbar: Envelope

- The **envelope** tool allows you to smooth changes in volume by using control points at the top and bottom of the waveform.
  - Clicking on the blue border will create control points, which you can then move around to adjust the waveform envelope.



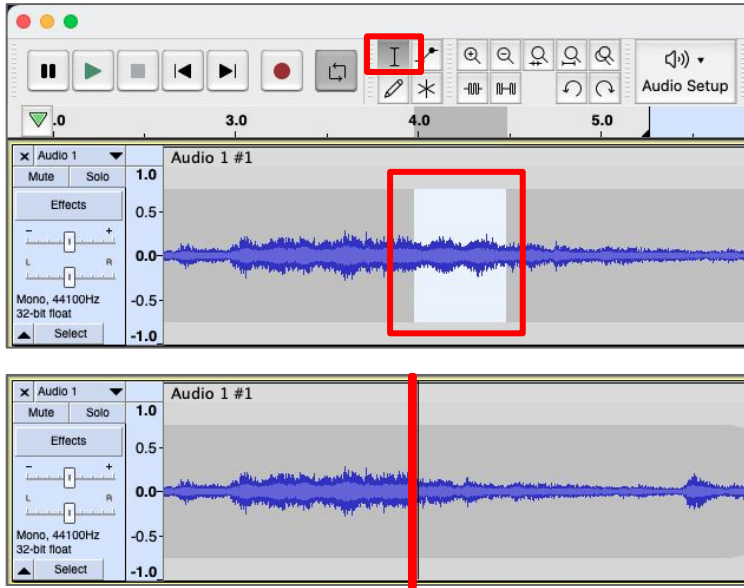
# Toolbar: Zoom and Draw

- The **zoom tools** let you zoom in and out of the waveform in order to make adjustments.
- The **draw tool** allows you to manually redraw the waveform to change the volume or correct background noise.
  - You can only use the draw tool if you've zoomed into the waveform.



# 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**:



Click and drag with your cursor to select the portion you wish to remove.

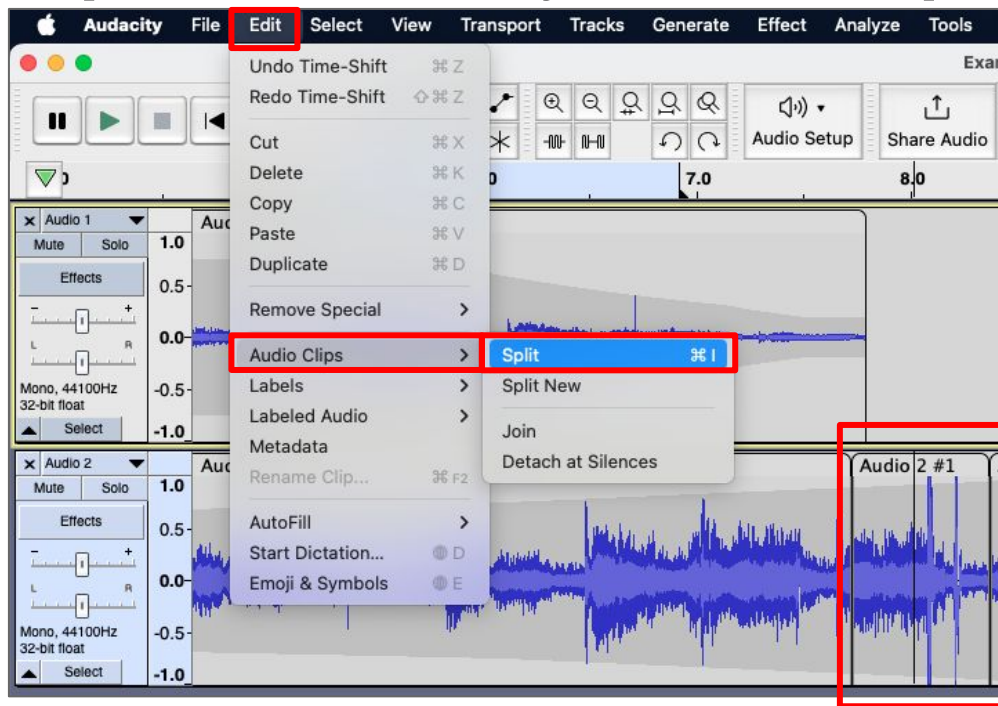
Then, hit backspace or delete on your keyboard.

**Tip:** you can zoom in and out with the **zoom tools** to better see what you're trying to delete.



# Splitting Tracks

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



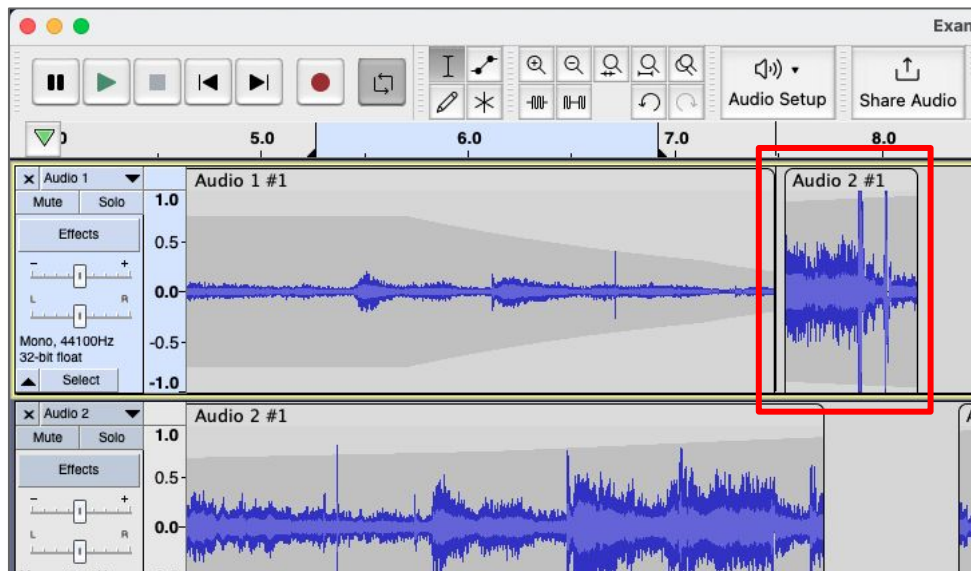
With the **selection tool**, place your cursor over the section where you want to split your track.

Navigate to the **Edit** menu, click under **Clip Boundaries** and select **Split**.



# Moving Tracks

To move entire tracks or audio around in Audacity, you can click and drag them by hovering your mouse over the top of the clip.



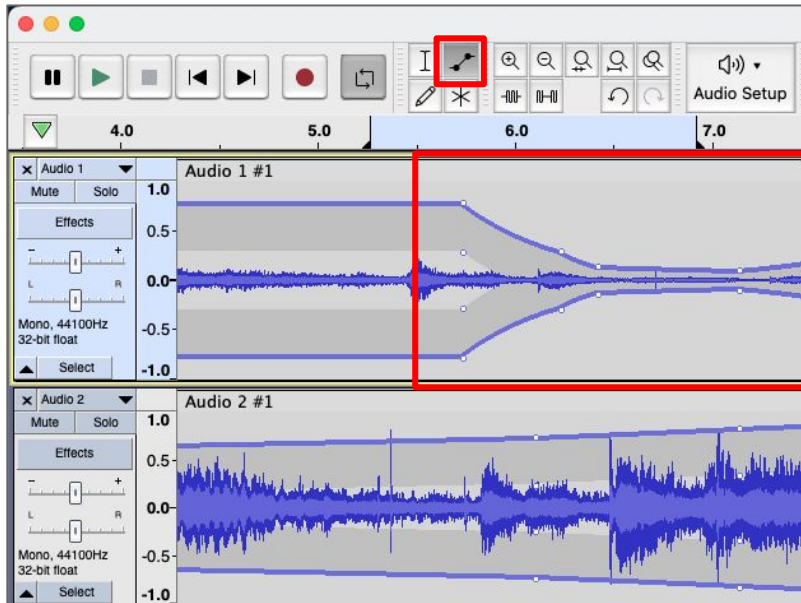
Once you have selected the clip, click whatever clip or track you want to move and drag it into position.





# Fading In/Out

To fade music in and out on Audacity, use the **envelope tool**. Two yellow bars will show up on each track.



Click to add **control points** (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.



# Your Turn!

- Visit one of the following:
  - [BBC Sound Effects](#) and click on 'Browse All'
  - [incompetech.com](#) and click on 'Royalty Free Music'
- Download something you want to play around with and try to:
  - **Remove** some of your track
  - Choose a part to **fade in** or **fade out**
  - **Split the track** into multiple
  - **Add a new track** to your project



# Saving, Exporting, and Sharing

# Saving

*Audacity does not auto-save!* Save your recording, early and often!

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

Save in multiple places. Always have backup.

**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]**



# About File Formats

- **Lossless Audio File Formats:** better than or equal to CD-quality
  - **WAV:** uncompressed file, meaning huge file size. The best for editing raw audio files in Audacity.
  - **AIFF:** Apple's alternative to WAV. Uncompressed, not widely used
- **\*MP3/MP4:** compressed audio file, ensures small file size. Best for exporting and distributing from Audacity.
- **Ogg Vorbis:** Open-source alternative to MP3. Used in Spotify streaming

*\*Note: The DITI typically recommends you save files as mp3 (sometimes mp4, if you use a PC).*



# 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; 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”

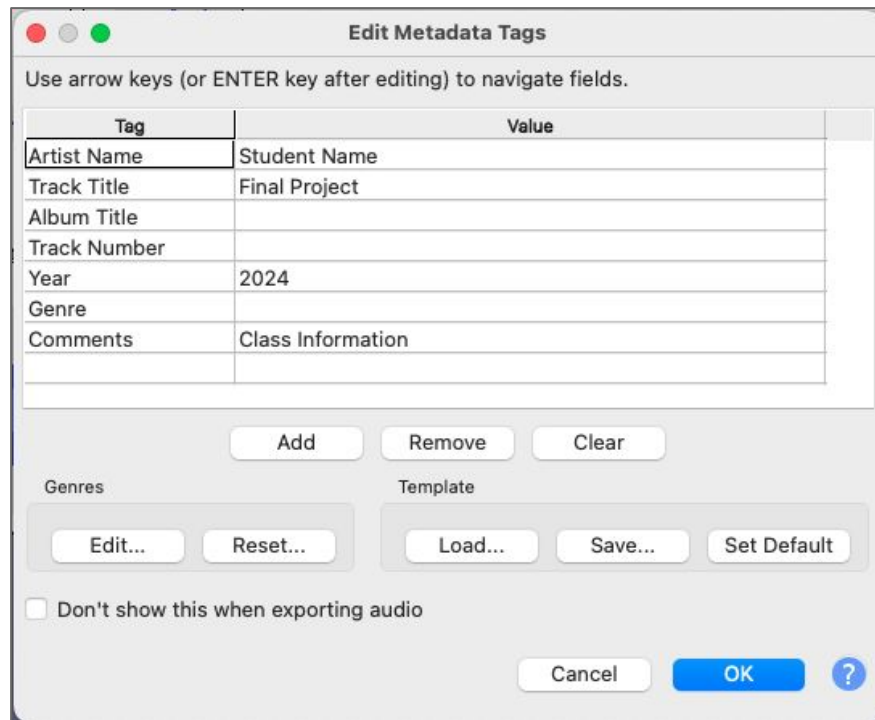


**Northeastern University**  
*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

*Feel free to ask questions at any point  
during the presentation!*

# Exporting Metadata Tagging

When you export your file, Audacity will prompt you to add metadata tags to identify it.



Use arrow keys (or ENTER key after editing) to navigate fields.

Tag	Value
Artist Name	Student Name
Track Title	Final Project
Album Title	
Track Number	
Year	2024
Genre	
Comments	Class Information

Buttons: Add, Remove, Clear

Genres: Edit..., Reset...

Template: Load..., Save..., Set Default

☐ Don't show this when exporting audio

Buttons: Cancel, OK, ?



# Thank you!

—Developed by Dipa Desai, Claire Lavarreda, Sara Morrell, and Avery Blankenship, Mel Williams, and Shannon Peifer

- For more information on the DITI, please see:  
<https://bit.ly/diti-about>
- Schedule an appointment with us! <https://bit.ly/diti-meeting>
- If you have any questions, contact us at: [nulab.info@gmail.com](mailto:nulab.info@gmail.com)
- We'd love your feedback! Please fill out a short survey here:  
<https://bit.ly/diti-feedback>