

Introduction to Recording and Editing Audio with Audacity

Taught by: Chris McNulty & Anna Zhang

ANTH 4580 Special Topic: Making Anthropology Public

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Objectives

- Understand podcast anatomy and interview strategies
- 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

Slides and handouts available at: **bit.ly/fa22-hersh-audacity**



Podcast Anatomy



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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



Intro/Openings Examples: *That. Anthro. Podcast.*

Listen to the opening segment from [“Language and Culture with Dr. Kendra Calhoun”](#) (first three minutes), an episode of *That. Anthro. Podcast.* This episode is about how anthropological study can apply to the study of language (linguistics) and new media forms like TikTok.

Questions to keep in mind as we listen:

- What audio techniques does the host use to engage their audience?
- How do they introduce their topic and guest?
- What kinds of media are included in the opening segment?



That. Anthro. Podcast. (Cont'd.)

From the opening segment alone, we can make certain assumptions about *That. Anthro. Podcast.*

1. **Audience:** Anthropologists, other academics, and the general public interested in anthropology
2. **Style:** Interview and conversation
3. **Structure:** interview/Q&A, with sound clips and other 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. 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.



The Interview Podcast Format

If your podcast will incorporate interviews, be sure to consider the following tips from [Podcast.co](https://podcast.co):

- Start by selecting **compelling guests** that interest you
- **Do some research on your guest** before the interview (google them, check their socials, etc.)
- **Prepare and ask probing questions** (make a prioritized list of questions and possible follow-ups, but be flexible and stay in the moment)



The Interview Podcast Format (Cont'd.)

- **Have a pre-interview process** that includes your ‘elevator pitch’ for the project and a debrief on audience expectations, so that your guest has a sense of what you’re looking for
- **Keep the conversation on track** and moving forward, but **don’t interrupt**
- **Practice active listening**—try to visualize what your guest is saying, take notes, jot down follow-up questions, and stay present (rather than thinking about what *you’re* going to say next)
- **Listen back to your interviews** to learn how to hone your skills—and learn from successful podcast interviewers by listening to a range of examples



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.



Best Practices for Podcasting



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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** ([Free Music Archive](#), [YouTube](#))



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.
 - Being too close can make the audio too loud or garble 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!)



Making Podcasts: Audacity



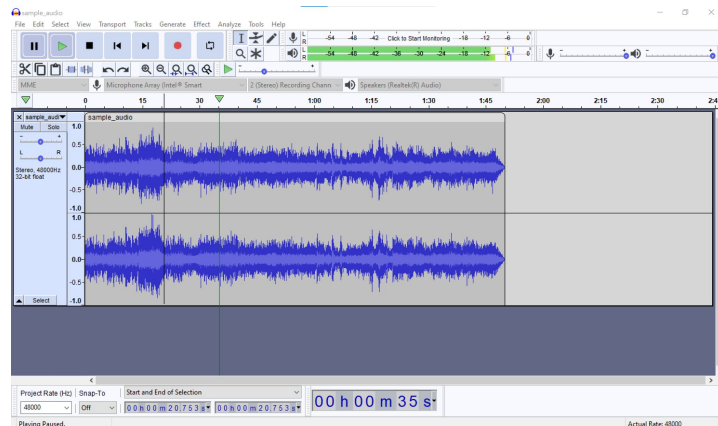
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What is Audacity?

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/> --- Audacity is platform-agnostic!

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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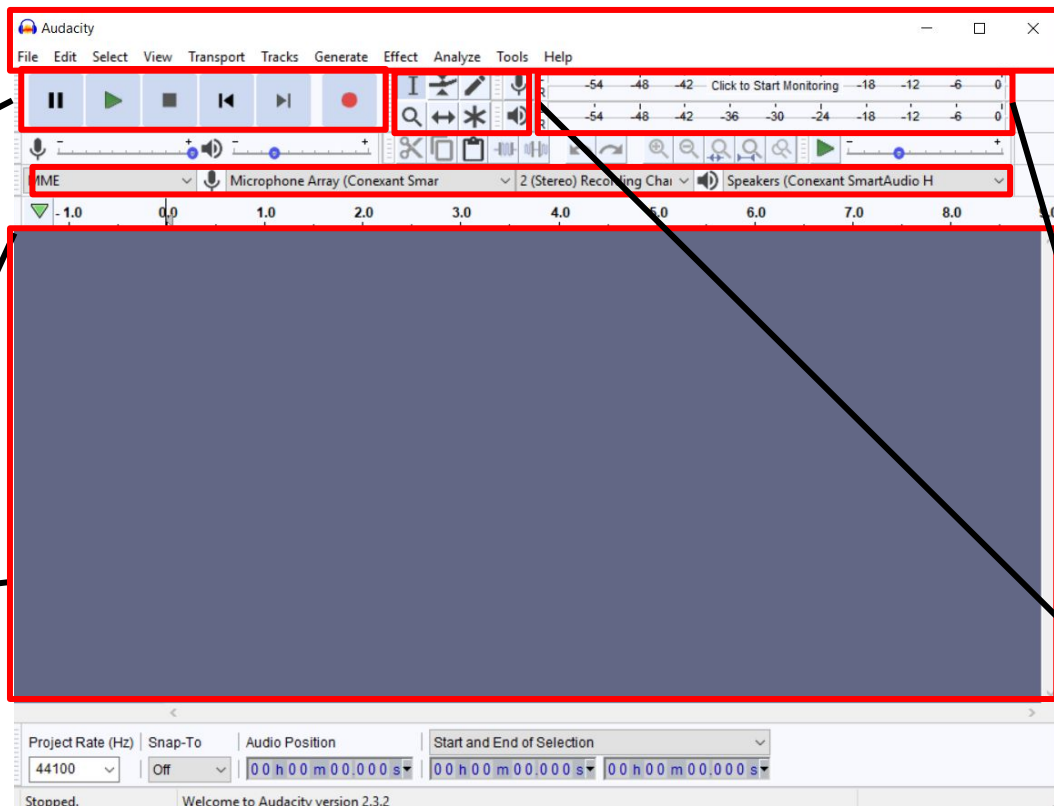
DOWNLOAD	FILE	SIZE	VERSION	ANTIVIRUS
Audacity Windows Installer	Signature	26.6 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Windows Zip	Signature	13 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity macOS DMG	Signature	36.2 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Linux Source	Signature	8.6 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Manual	Signature	20.2 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity macOS 2.1.1-DMG (screen reader accessible)	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, input, and
output

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



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

Output Volume
Level Monitor:
shows the
loudness of
each track in
real-time
*Tip: try for -12
to -6db*

Other Audacity
tools

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



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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

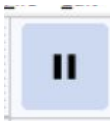


Recording

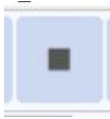
Make sure your **microphone** is working by checking to see that it's selected in the microphone section of the screen. Each computer will have different microphones, so check your sound settings for your model.



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.

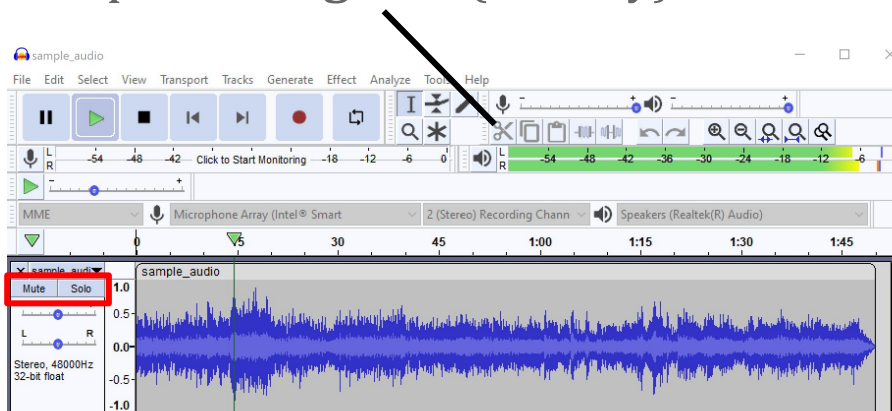


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Checking volume

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.

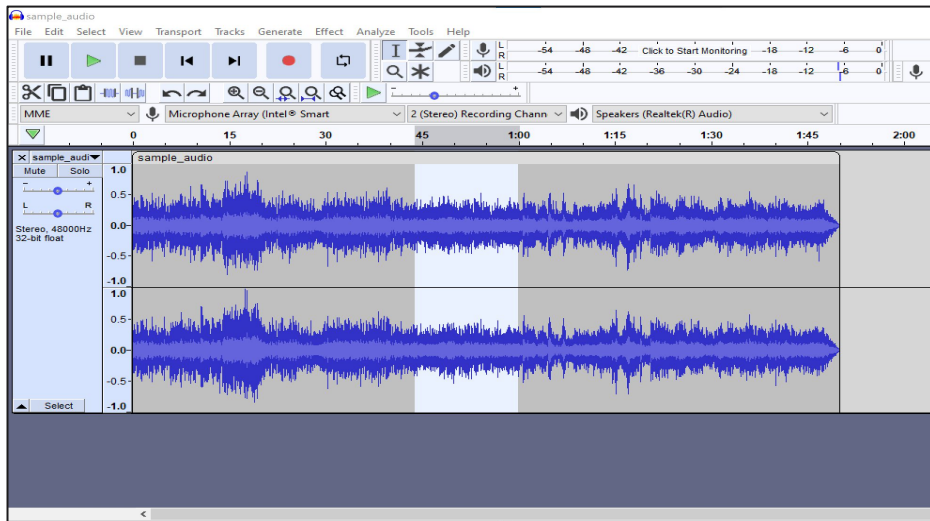
If one of your tracks is louder or softer than the others, you can adjust the volume on each track.

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



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.



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Basics: Audacity & Editing Audio



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The Audacity Toolbar

- **I** The **selection tool** will be selected automatically when you open Audacity.
- ***** The most useful tool is the **multitool**, which 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.



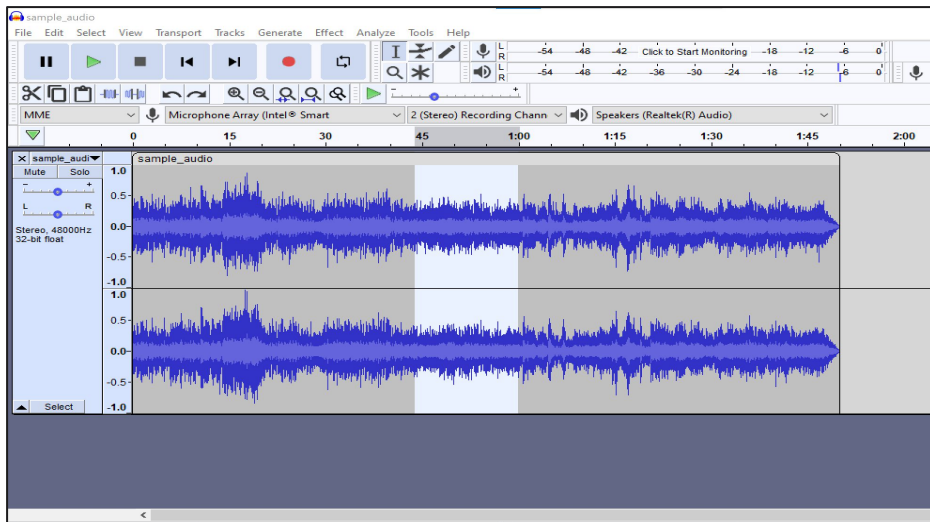
The Audacity Toolbar (Cont'd.)

-  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.
-  The **zoom tool** lets 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 (F1)**:



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 Tool (F4)** to better see what you're trying to delete.

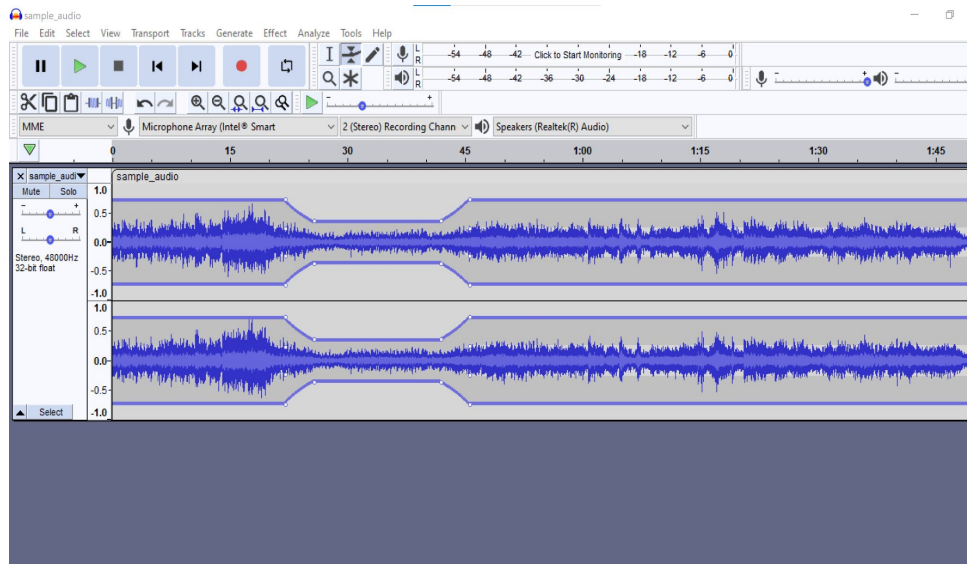


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Fading In/Out

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



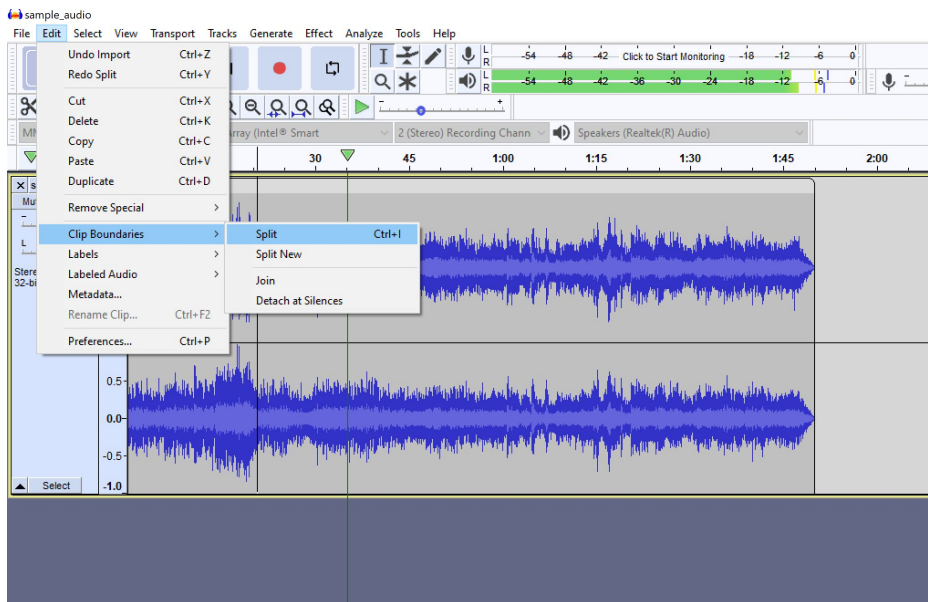
Click to add **control points** (little white dots) on the track you want to fade in.

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.

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**”, or press **Ctrl+I**.

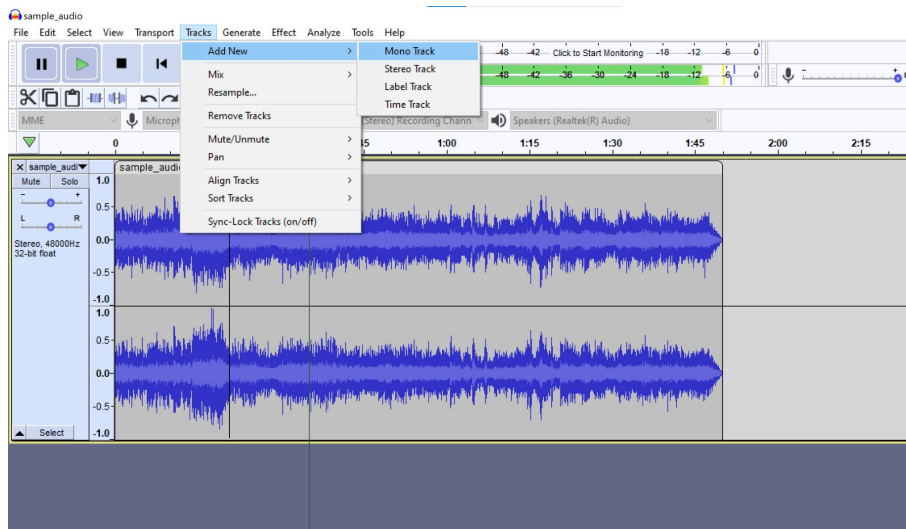


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Adding Tracks

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. You can also add a new mono track by pressing **Ctrl+Shift+N**.



Saving, Exporting, and Sharing



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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”



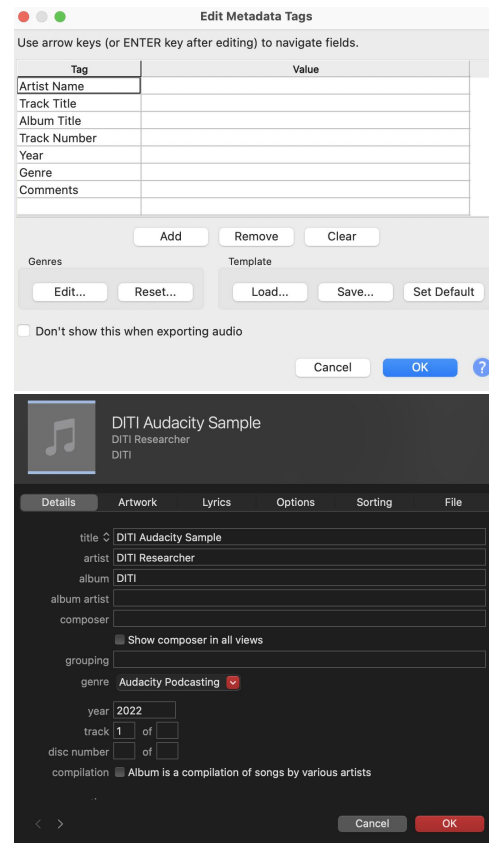
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Exporting Metadata Tagging

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

In order to add artwork, you should import your file to an Apple Music library, right click on it and click “Get info.” You will see the metadata tags you entered in Audacity, and will be able to upload artwork for your podcast.



The image shows two screenshots related to Audacity's metadata tagging process.

The top screenshot is the "Edit Metadata Tags" dialog box. It features a table with two columns: "Tag" and "Value". The "Tag" column lists fields: Artist Name, Track Title, Album Title, Track Number, Year, Genre, and Comments. The "Value" column is empty. Below the table are buttons for "Add", "Remove", and "Clear". There are also sections for "Genres" (with "Edit..." and "Reset..." buttons) and "Template" (with "Load...", "Save...", and "Set Default" buttons). At the bottom, there is a checkbox labeled "Don't show this when exporting audio" and "Cancel" and "OK" buttons.

The bottom screenshot is the "Get Info" window for a file named "DITI Audacity Sample". The window has tabs for "Details", "Artwork", "Lyrics", "Options", "Sorting", and "File". The "Details" tab is selected, showing fields for title, artist, album, album artist, composer, grouping, genre, year, track, disc number, and compilation. The values entered are: title "DITI Audacity Sample", artist "DITI Researcher", album "DITI", album artist "DITI", composer "DITI", grouping "DITI", genre "Audacity Podcasting" (with a red checkmark), year "2022", track "1" of "1", disc number "1" of "1", and compilation "Album is a compilation of songs by various artists". There are "Cancel" and "OK" buttons at the bottom right.



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Thank you!

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Research Fellow

Anna Zhang

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