

# Introduction to Recording and Editing Podcasts with Audacity

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**Taught by: Liam MacLean and Claire Lavarreda**

ENGL 2770: Writing To Heal

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# Workshop Objectives

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

All materials are available here: <http://bit.ly/FA23-Edwards>



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# Podcasts As A Tool of Healing

“Medical care is often framed as a detective hunt, a mystery to be solved. When a diagnosis is reached, doctors experience a sense of closure. End of story. In fact, for the patient, the story is just beginning. As a patient, I have learned that a medical diagnosis can, in fact, challenge our very sense of self— our identity. It took me a while to get my bearings, but **storytelling helped me find my way. By listening to the stories of others and by telling my own, I was able to redefine myself** and to come out feeling stronger. ... [I found] a feeling of wholeness, self-acceptance, and healing.”

–Excerpt from an interview with Annie Brewster via Harvard Magazine, author of *The Healing Power of Storytelling*



# 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, listeners make assumptions about the podcast's **Audience, Genre, Style**, and overall **Structure**.
- The podcast's opening segment must accomplish several goals:
  - **Setting the tone:** several successful podcasts set the tone using media (e.g., theme song music, sound effects, archival audio clips).
  - **Identifying an audience:** Acknowledging and drawing in people who might be interested.
  - **Establishing listener expectations:** Explaining the goal and theme of the podcast.



# Opening Segment Example

Listen to the opening segment to “[Storytelling for Health and Justice: Gaynell Fuller](#),” by the Health Story Collaborative (Up to 1:00) and take notes.

Questions to keep in mind:

- How do they introduce their topic? Even though it doesn’t follow “traditional” podcast anatomy, what makes the intro useful?
- What audio techniques do they use to **engage their audience**?
- What kinds of media are included?
- How does an opening segment **encourage reflection, action, and/or emotion**?



# Podcast Anatomy: The Body

- **Basics of Narrative Structure**

- Have an organized approach (beginning, middle, end)
- Have an “argument” or a reason (in this case, a purpose for the healing narrative)
- Establish central themes/people in your story early

- **Perspective**

- Healing narratives are different than “regular” podcasts
  - Inherently, the nature of your content is more personal and sensitive, designed to heal and reclaim
  - Knowing this, your perspectives should be broad and open-minded
    - If the project involves interviewing another person, listen to them closely, allow them to speak/vent, and understand that their perspective on issues (such as illness, death, medical care) may be different





# Podcast Anatomy: The Outro

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

An outro script for a 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.



# Outro Example

Now listen to the concluding segment to “[Healing Grief and Addiction](#)” by *Creative At The Wheel*. (50:10 onward). Compare the techniques used in the outro to the techniques used in the intro segment from earlier.

- How did this conclusion convey a sense of **cohesion**?
- What decisions were made to keep the audience engaged?
- How does the content of a podcast affect the tone of the media included?



# 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.
- **Write like you speak.** It can even help to talk out loud while you write your script.
- Include **transcripts for accessibility** (use software like Otter AI).
- Use **open access media/music** ([Free Music Archive](#), [YouTube](#)).
- **Give yourself time to edit.** Often editing audio or video is the more time intensive than recording it, so make sure to give yourself plenty of time to get it done!



# Getting Started: Tips for Recording Audio

- 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.



# 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).
- Put some **distance** between yourself and the microphone (depending on your equipment).
  - Being too close can make the audio too loud or garbled sounding as you speak. If you are positioned too far away, the audio will be too quiet or too muffled to salvage.
  - Know where your microphone is located and keep it clear of papers/other objects.



# Environmental Considerations cont'd.

- 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.
- 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 into the interview** 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 Considerations for Interviews

- **Emotional considerations**
  - Whether it's a recording of yourself or an exchange with another person, make sure you have clear boundaries set in place
  - You can always edit out things later—respect your own and others' boundaries and if someone decides to withdraw consent to use all or part of an interview, make sure to respect that! Remember, this is about healing.
- **Talking about personal trauma, life experiences, and medical information**
  - Build in breaks for you/your interviewee, be considerate, respect the need for starts/stoppages
- **Ensure you have proper consent and permissions for sensitive information**
  - Does your project need forms or verbal confirmation?



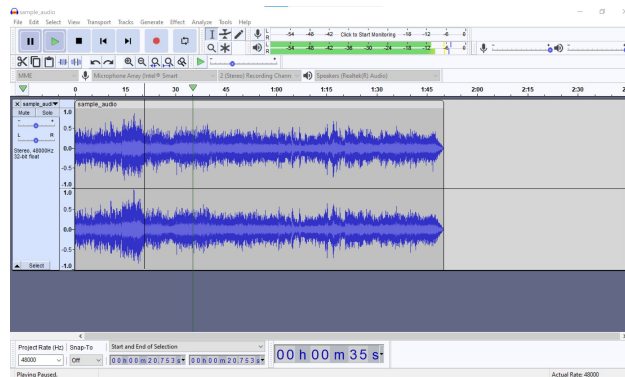
# Making Podcasts: Audacity



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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 (for example you can have background audio playing while you talk, if you want).



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# 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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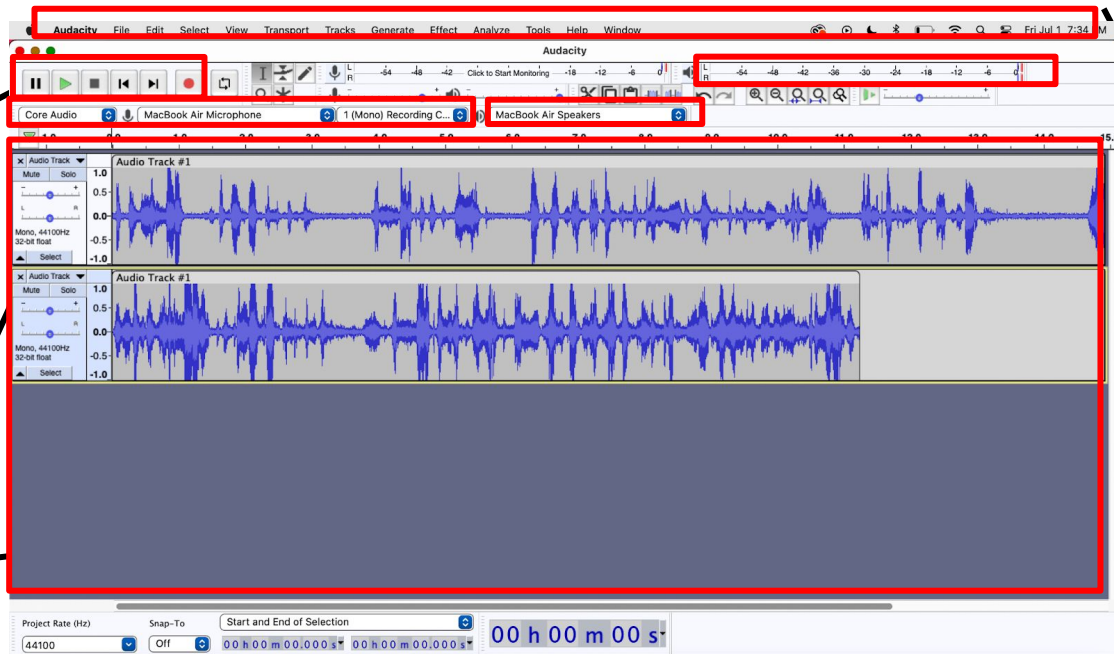
DOWNLOAD		FILE	SIZE	VERSION	ANTIVIRUS
Audacity Windows Installer		Signature	26.6 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Windows Zip		Signature	13 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity macOS DMG		Signature	36.2 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Linux Source		Signature	8.6 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity Manual		Signature	20.2 MB	2.3.2	0 / 15
Audacity 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



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



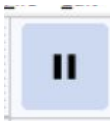
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# Recording

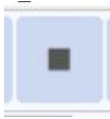
Make sure your **microphone** is working by checking to see that it's selected in the microphone section of the screen. Each computer will have different microphones, so check your sound settings for your model.



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



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



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



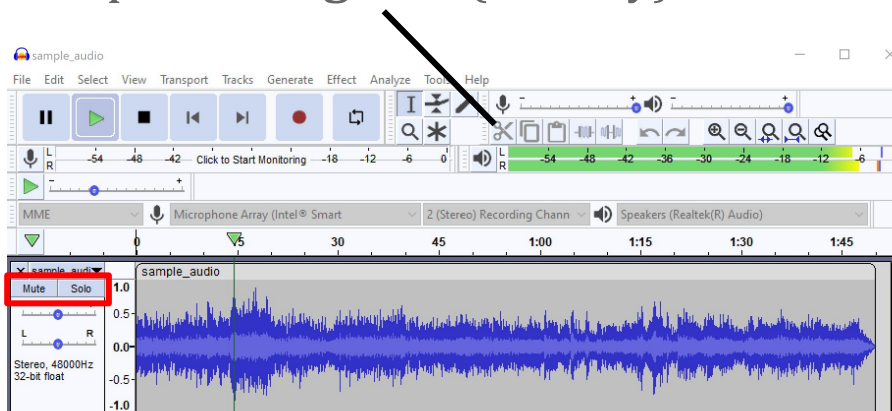
Use **re-play** to verify that the recording is the quality/ volume that you want.





# 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.

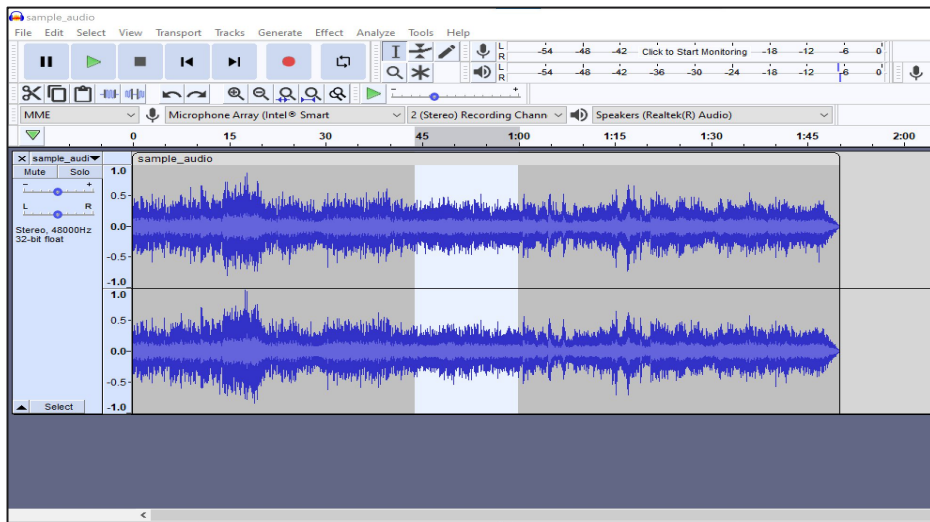
If one of your tracks is louder or softer than the others, you can adjust the volume on each track.

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



# 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.



# Basics: Audacity & Editing Audio






# 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.



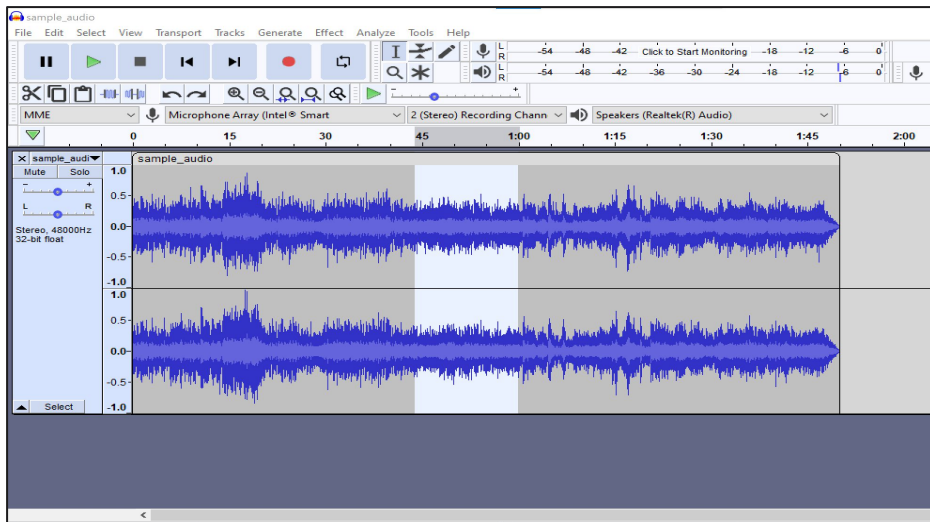
# The Audacity Toolbar (Cont'd.)

-  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.

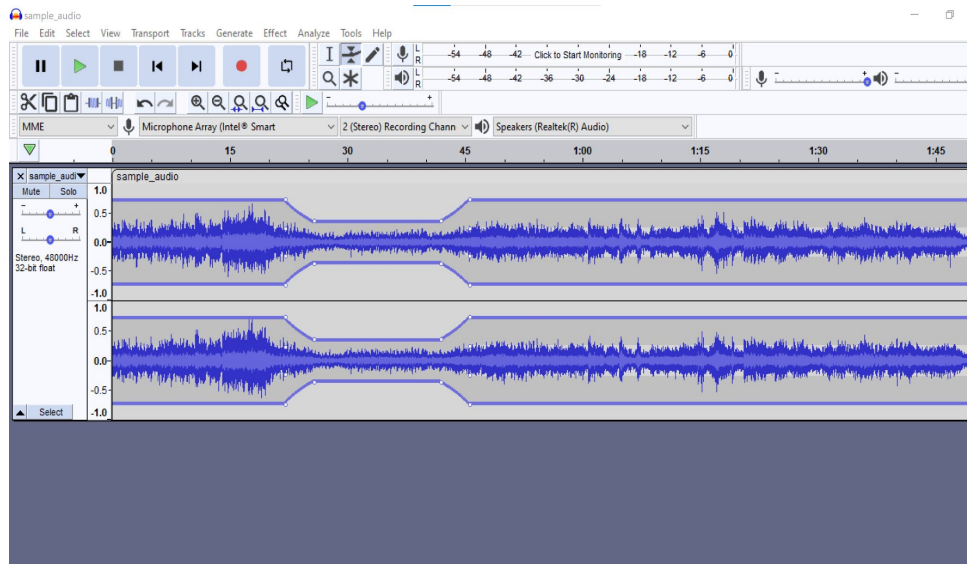
Then, hit backspace or delete on your keyboard.

**Tip:** you can zoom in and out with the **Zoom Tool (F4)** to better see what you're trying to delete.



# 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.

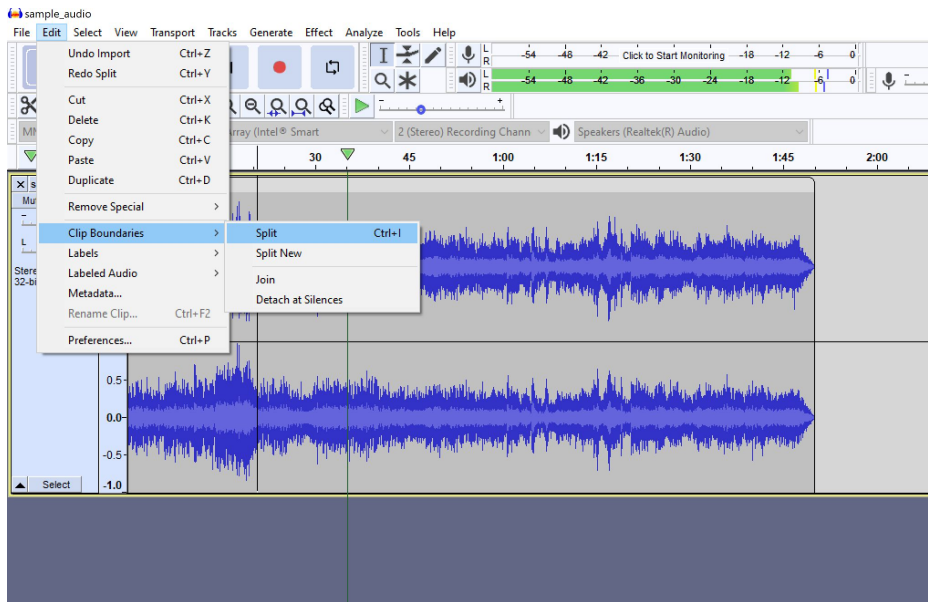
Drag and move the nodes to up and down and side to side to change the volume and how gradual the volume fade is.

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.

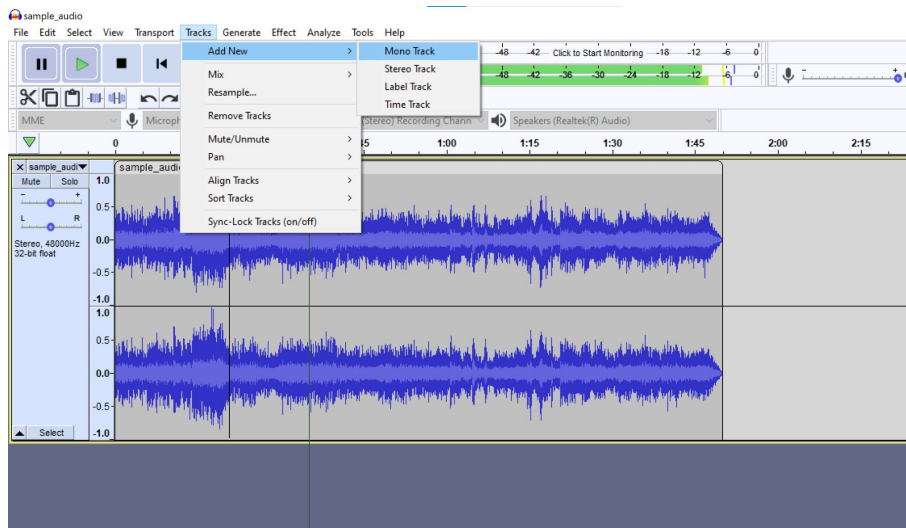
Navigate to the **Edit** section, click under “**Clip Boundaries**” and select “**Split**,” or press **Ctrl+I**.





# 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**.



# Your Turn!

- Visit [freemusicarchive.org](https://freemusicarchive.org) OR [studio.youtube.com](https://studio.youtube.com) and click on the 'Audio Library' tab (you have to be signed into Google for this one)
- 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



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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! Exporting to an MP3 will ensure that anyone—even people who don't have Audacity—can listen to your project file.

**File > Export > Export as MP3**

Select “best quality”

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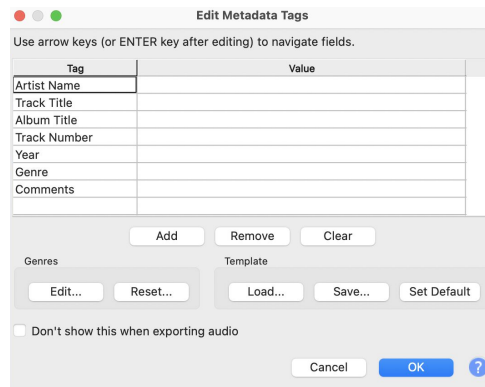


# Exporting Metadata Tagging

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

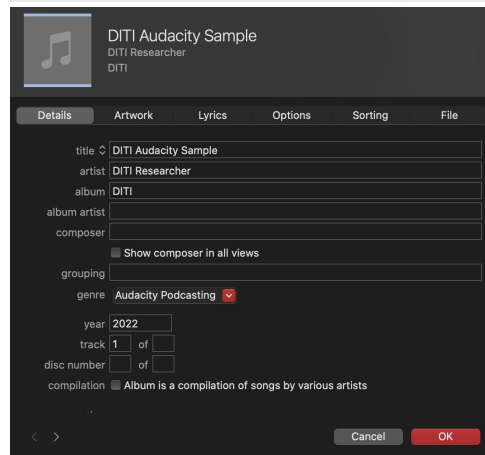
On a Mac you can add artwork by importing your file to an Apple Music library, right clicking on it and clicking “Get info.”

On a PC, you can edit the MP3 metadata by clicking through to File Properties.



The 'Edit Metadata Tags' dialog box in Audacity. It features a table with two columns: 'Tag' and 'Value'. The 'Tag' column lists: 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.

Tag	Value
Artist Name	
Track Title	
Album Title	
Track Number	
Year	
Genre	
Comments	



The 'DITI Audacity Sample' metadata editor. It has a dark theme and a sidebar with tabs: Details, Artwork, Lyrics, Options, Sorting, and File. The 'Details' tab is active, showing fields for: title (DITI Audacity Sample), artist (DITI Researcher), album (DITI), album artist, and composer. There is a checkbox for 'Show composer in all views'. Below these are fields for 'grouping', 'genre' (Audacity Podcasting), 'year' (2022), 'track' (1 of 1), 'disc number' (1 of 1), and a 'compilation' checkbox. At the bottom, there are 'Cancel' and 'OK' buttons.



# Healing and Audacity

Now we've learned about both healing narratives and Audacity as a tool. Let's think now about how the two can work together.

- How does Audacity specifically fit well with healing narratives?
- What are aspects of Audacity that make it more/less suited for recording and editing healing narratives?





# For Further Exploration

- DITI has also produced a handout that covers all of the basics of Audacity that we have talked about today, which you can refer back to if you need a refresher.
  - <https://bit.ly/audacity-handout>
- In addition, DITI has created a short guide to copyright and fair use that you can refer to if you have any concerns on this topic.
  - <https://bit.ly/diti-fair-use>



# Thank you!

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**—Developed by Liam MacLean, Claire Lavarreda, Juniper Johnson  
and Cara Marta Messina**

- Link the course materials: <http://bit.ly/FA23-Edwards>
- For more information on 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)



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