Introduction to Recording Audio with Audacity

Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI)
Mel Williams & Shannon Peifer
ANTH 4100 - Making Anthropology Public
Spring 2026, Professor Carie Hersh

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

Agenda

- Understand podcast anatomy
- Learn best practices for audio and interview recording
- Learn how to:
  - Record and import audio
  - Add, move, and delete tracks
  - Editing sound effects and/or background music
  - Save and export projects

Slides and handouts are available at: **bit.ly/sp26-hersh-anth4100-multi**

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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

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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.

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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 may sound 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.

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Best Practices for Recording

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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 or monologue and transitions.
  - Give yourself a script. As you record, mark out spaces for transitions in the recording (e.g. topic-to-topic).
- **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). See our Copyright and Fair Use handout for more information.

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Expressing Research Verbally

☐ If your podcast includes formal research or numerical data, remember that the way you *write* about research is different from the way we *talk* about it

  ○ For example, in an essay, you might write something like, "Sullivan et al. (2025) found that 98% of students across 60% of the universities in the U.S.A. report satisfaction with at least 50% of their courses (Sullivan et al., 2025)."

  ○ However, this format of sharing information does not translate as well to speaking and listening, with lots of numbers/data listed back to back, academic shorthand that makes sense written but is harder to catch while listening (e.g., "et al."), etc.

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Best Practices for Expressing Research

- If you are reporting numbers or data, make sure that you're going slowly enough that listeners can meaningfully catch them
- Pick and choose which sources to quote directly or which data to cite explicitly (especially since with all citations, you will have to provide your sources in some kind of bibliographic format) so that listeners aren't overwhelmed with data but can focus on the most meaningful points
- In-text citations do not translate the same in conversation.
  - E.g., **written**, "This thing happened (Sullivan et al., 2025)."
  - E.g., **spoken**, "In a 2025 study on this one thing, Sullivan and colleagues found that this other thing happened."

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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.

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Recording Considerations

- Put some **distance** between yourself and the microphone (depending on your equipment).
  - 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.
- If recording on your computer, be aware of clicking and typing sounds as Audacity will record these.

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Recording Considerations: Location

- Ideally, find a room with good sound absorption to prevent the "echo effect."
  - **Yes:** carpet, cushions, curtains, clothes (bedroom, studio)
  - **No:** larger spaces with hard, smooth surfaces (kitchen, empty classroom)
- Northeastern has a podcast studio that can be [reserved online](#).

Pexels, "Bricks, Chairs, Classroom image" *Pixabay.*

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Recording Considerations: Interviews

- **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!).
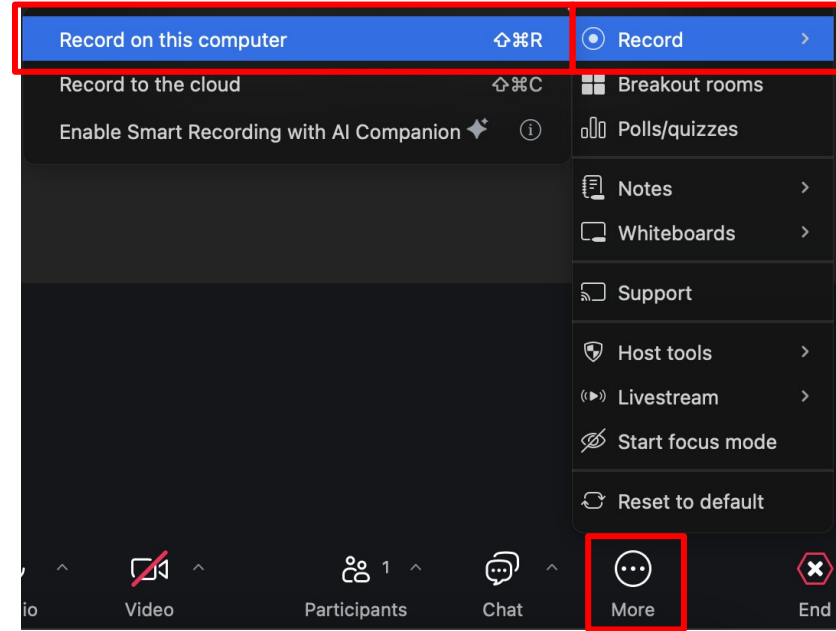
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Interview Introduction Example

Author Chat w/ Dr. Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought | SBG Book Club

SBG Book Club, "Author Chat w/ Dr. Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought | SBG Book Club," YouTube Video, July 22, 2020, [Author Chat with Dr. Patricia Hill Collins](#).
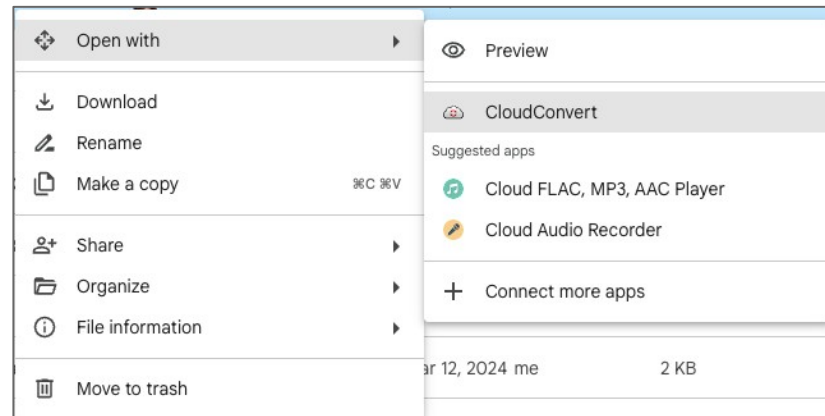
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Recording Interviews on Zoom

- ☐ To recording a Zoom meeting select More > Record > Record on this computer.
- ☐ Once you have ended the meeting, locate the Zoom folder on your computer and rename the file.
- ☐ You can also save a transcript of the interview by selecting Show captions > View Full Transcript > Save Transcript before you end the meeting.
- ☐ See the [Zoom interview handout](#) for more information.

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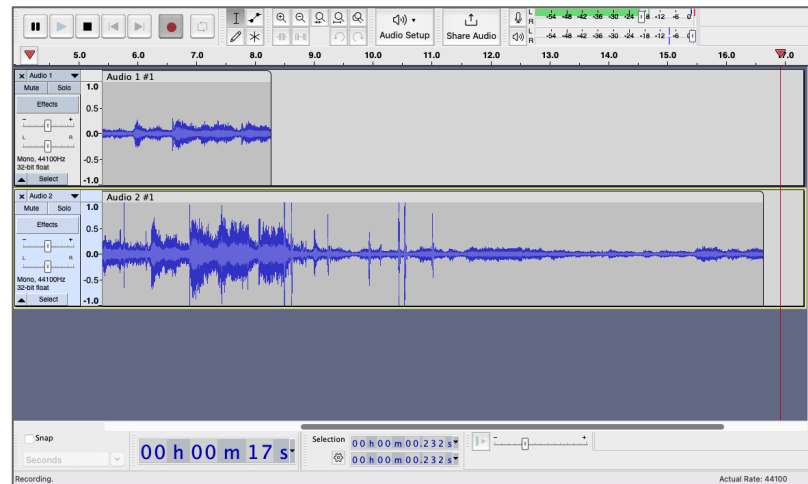
Converting Audio File Formats

- Zoom may record audio in a format that is not compatible with Audacity. Cloud Convert on Google Drive can help you convert the audio file to MP3.
- Upload the audio file to Google Drive and select Open with Cloud Convert to convert the audio file to MP3.
- Once the file is converted, download it onto your computer.
- See the handout File Storage in Audacity for more information.

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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.)

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Downloading Audacity

[Audacity Downloads](#)

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
‣ .tar.gz

Older versions of Audacity
Download older versions from Fosshub

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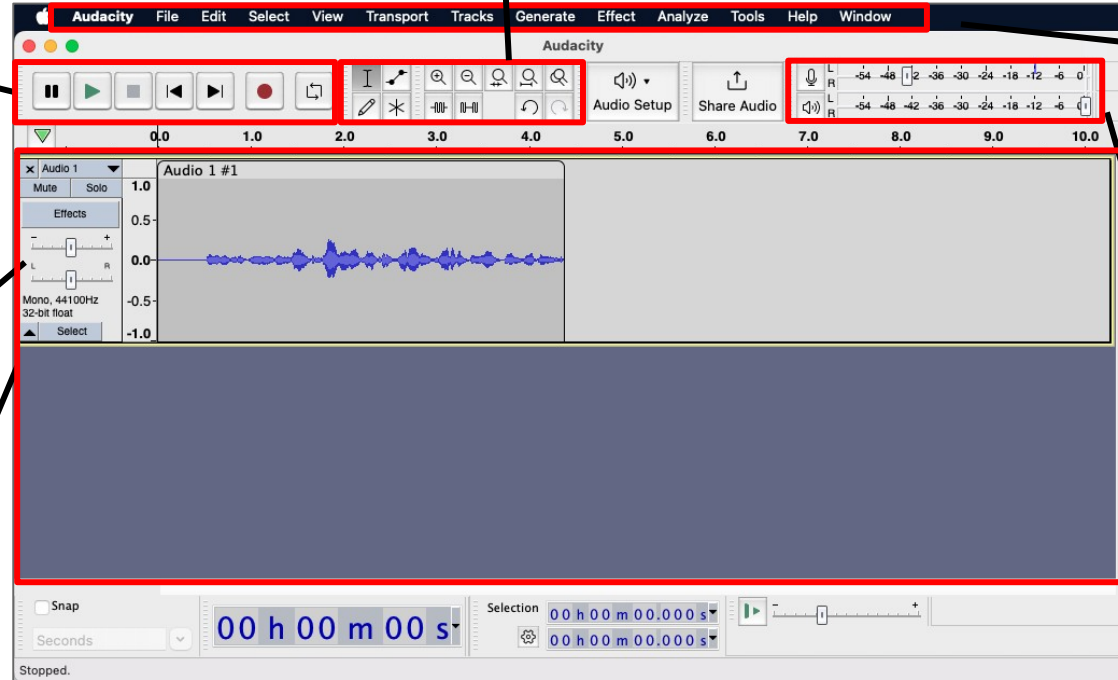*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

Anatomy of Audacity

Audio Editing

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

https://manual.audacityteam.org/

Key Terms

- **Track:** a single audio channel or stream.
  - **Multi-track**: an audio recording or chanel 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.

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Recording and Importing 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.

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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.

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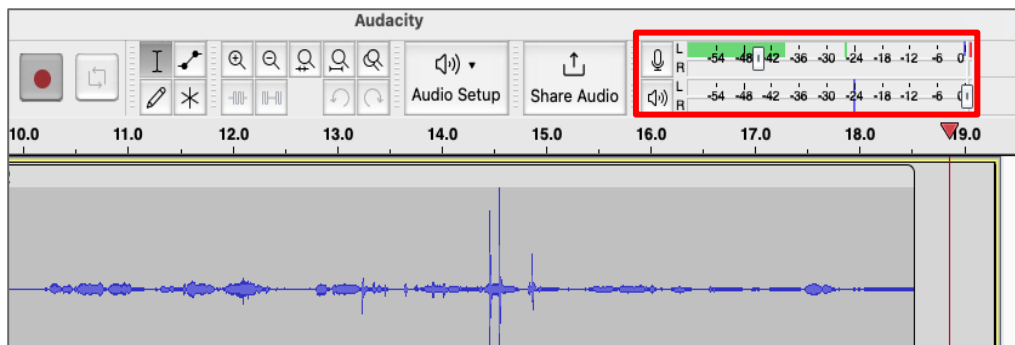
Hit the **stop** button to stop recording.

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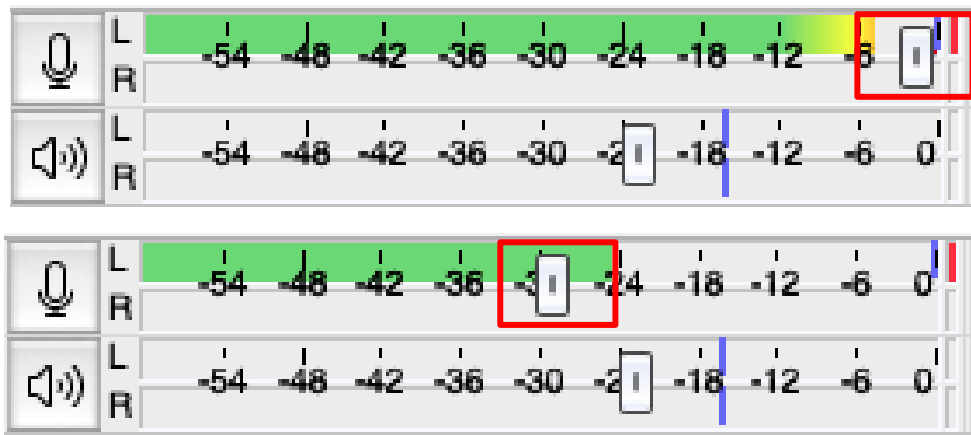
If one of your tracks is louder or softer than the others, you can adjust the volume on each track.

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

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28

Adjusting Mic Volume

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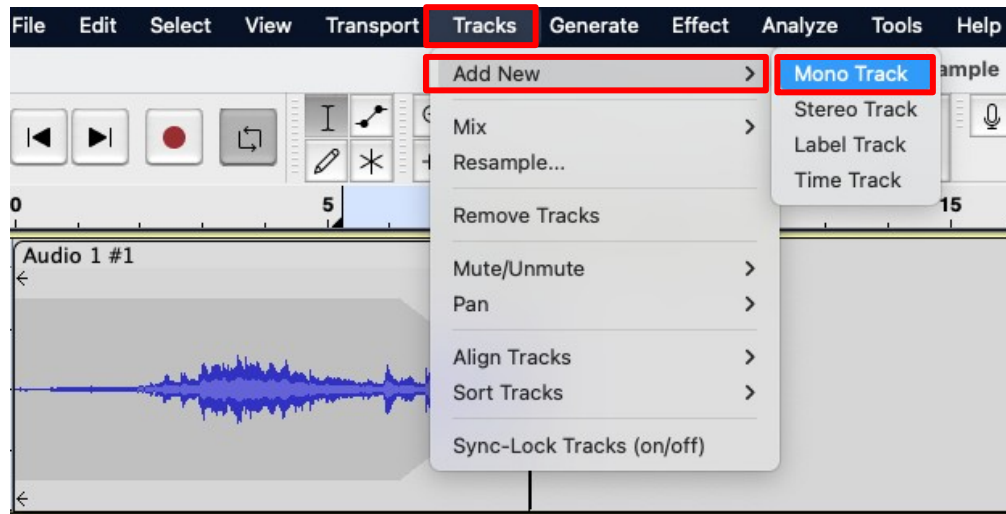

Move the slider to the right for a higher (louder) recording level and to the left for a lower (quieter) recording level.

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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:

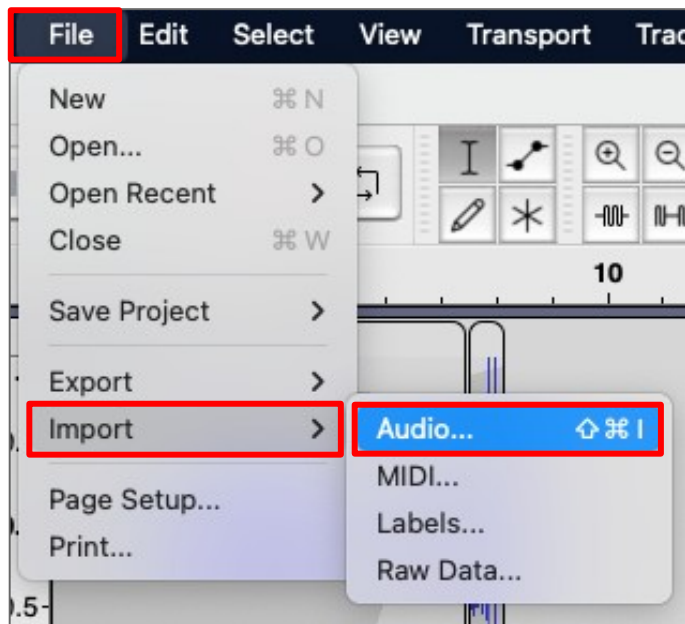Navigate to the **Tracks** menu option and select **Add New.** This will open a list of options. Select the **Mono Track** option.

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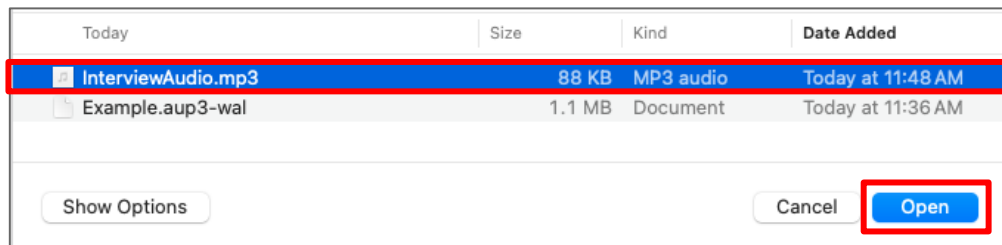*Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!*

Importing Audio

To import audio, select **File** then **Import** and select **Audio.**

Select the audio file you would like to import then click **Open**. The imported audio will appear on a new track.

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Your Turn!

- Visit one of the following:
  - BBC Sound Effects and click on 'Browse All'
  - incompetech.com and click on 'Royalty Free Music'
- **Find a sound effect or music** appropriate for your introduction.
  - Consider the tone of your recording and intended audience
  - Add a new track to your project
  - Record a track of yourself practicing the intro

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Saving Your Recording

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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]

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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).

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35

For Further Exploration

DITI Handout on Audacity

DITI Handout on Installing Audacity

DITI Handout on File Organization in Audacity

DITI Handout on Copyright and Fair Use

DITI Handout on Accessibility

Northeastern Library Recording Studios

Northeastern Library Digital Media Toolkit

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Thank you!

—**Developed by Sara Morrell, Emily Sullivan, Carlos Arriaga Serrano, and Halima Haruna**

- 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

- We'd love your feedback! Please fill out a short survey here: https://bit.ly/diti-feedback

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