

## Using Audacity - <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

There is plenty of good 'how to do' advice on the Audacity website under 'Help' as well as in online fora and on YouTube.

### Why use it?

It's free. Not as flexible as some, but it's free and it has excellent supporting documentation.

### What can you use it for?

It's very good for basic audio work and is used a lot for making simple podcasts and sound clips for use on the web or displays. You can also digitise analogue sources – old tapes, cassettes or records – as long as you have the correct connections from the playback device to your computer.

### Ways of getting sound into Audacity.

You can record sound using your computer. You need to make sure Audacity is recording sound from either your computer's inbuilt microphone or one you have plugged in. Go to Edit>Preferences to do this.

You can record sound using a separate sound recorder, load the sound file onto your computer, and import the file(s) into Audacity. Use File>Open to do this. If you want to add another file to the window use File>Import (File>Open will open another window).

**Important point – if you are editing an existing sound file you should almost always edit a copy!**

### What can Audacity do?

The basic functions that you will use most are Copy, Cut, Delete. From the Effects menu you will mostly use Amplify, Fade In, Fade Out.

It is worth having a play with Compression as well. If there are quiet and loud parts in a clip that you want to sound more equal in volume, compression can help (the 'Leveler' effect is a simple version of this).

### Editing more than one track.

If you want to mix two or more tracks together you can open the first one and then use File>Import to add others. You can align the tracks using the time shift tool ←→, adjust their volumes using the slider under each track's 'Mute' and 'Solo' buttons, and use Auto Duck from the Effects menu to lower the volume of the background tracks when the main track is playing. When using Auto Duck, the track you want to make quieter needs to be above the 'master' track and you may have to move the tracks by clicking on the triangle by the name of the track and choosing 'Move Track Up' or 'Move Track Down'.

### Add metadata

Add metadata (cataloguing information) to the sound file using File>Open Metadata Editor. This information stays attached to the sound file and can be very useful if paperwork gets lost.

### Saving and Exporting

If you save your 'project' then it becomes an Audacity project that you can come back to again and re-open. However, it will not be playable as a sound file. To do this you need to Export rather than Save.

For archival purposes, export as a .wav file. For exhibitions and the web you will usually want to use .mp3. When you press Export you will see the field 'Save as type' and it is here you can select .wav or .mp3. If you choose .mp3 and then press Options followed by Quality you will see many different settings ranging from 320kbps to 8kbps (kilobytes per second). These quality settings affect the size and quality of the sound file. For the web and exhibitions the usual setting is 128kbps but if the original recording is of good quality you may be able to use 64kbps easily.

If Audacity tells you it can't save as .mp3 because it doesn't have an LAME encoder you will have to download this via the Audacity website. This is normal and there is a disclaimer on the Audacity website that states:

'While the LAME encoder itself and its source code are free, in some countries you may need to pay a licence fee to legally encode MP3s, because of the patented technology the encoder uses. Individuals must decide for themselves whether they should use LAME for free, according to the country they are in and their own conscience.'

[http://manual.audacityteam.org/man/LAME\\_MP3](http://manual.audacityteam.org/man/LAME_MP3) - accessed 27/02/2014

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