

Working with Audacity Creating Audio files

Audacity is an open source audio editing application. Those big words mean that Audacity is a free program that you can download and use to create and edit audio recordings on your computer. It is available for both Mac and PC, but for our purposes we are going to focus on the PC platform. This software is very sophisticated and will do all kinds things to your audio files, but we are only going to begin to scratch the surface of what the application can do.

We're going to keep it simple, we just want to create some simple files that our students can use to receive instruction when they miss class.

There is a serious limitation to using audio files for instruction. Having no video to support the instruction really limits what you can do. It means you are delivering a straight lecture, but you have no body language to use, no board to write on, no overhead projector to add a visual dimension. Think of how this will limit the instruction you can use. Though there are limits, there are still many different applications you can use this type of instruction for.

Instructions for projects, vocabulary words, and short lectures are just a few of the opportunities.

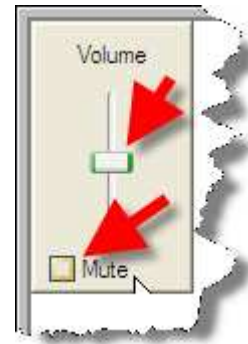
Step 1

Check Sound. The first thing you will need to do is to make sure your speakers on your computer are turned on and not on mute. To do this, left click on the small speaker icon in the system tray in the bottom right corner of your screen. The volume control window will appear.



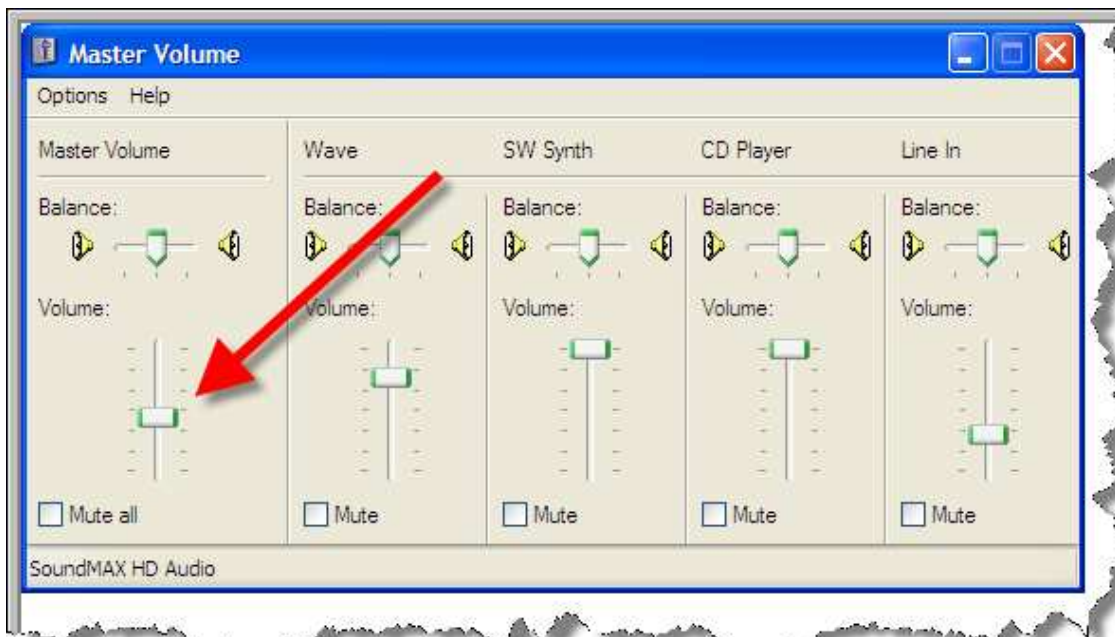
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Make sure the Mute box is unchecked, and the slide control is about mid-range. When you are ready, left click anywhere on the desktop to make the volume control go away.



Double click on the same speaker icon to bring up the master volume control. Here again, make sure the speaker level is set about half way, and the mute box is unchecked.

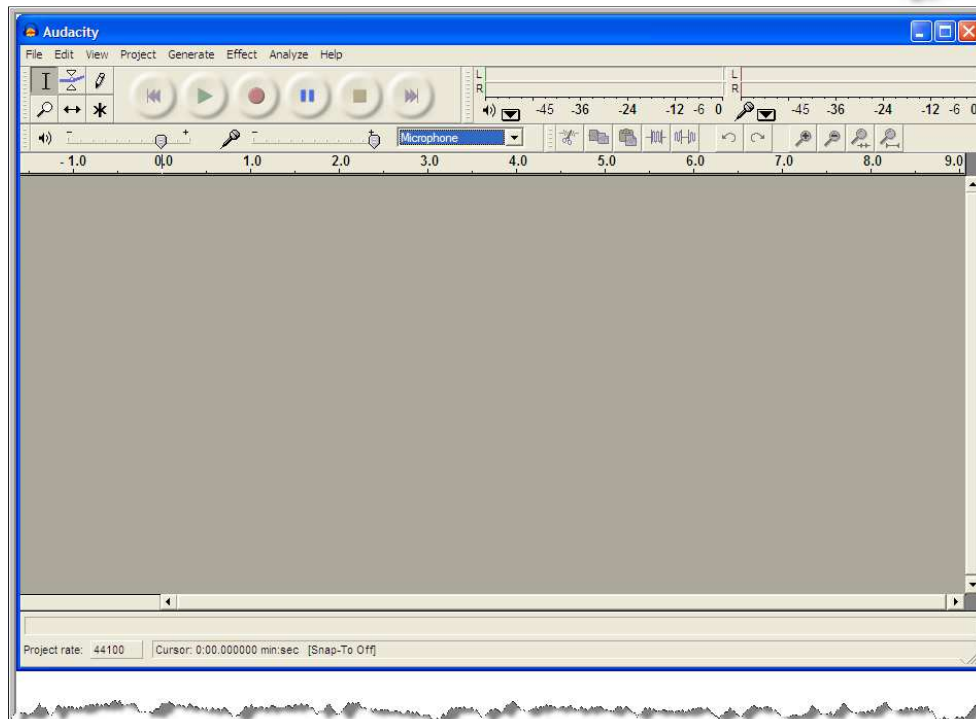
Step 2



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Step 3

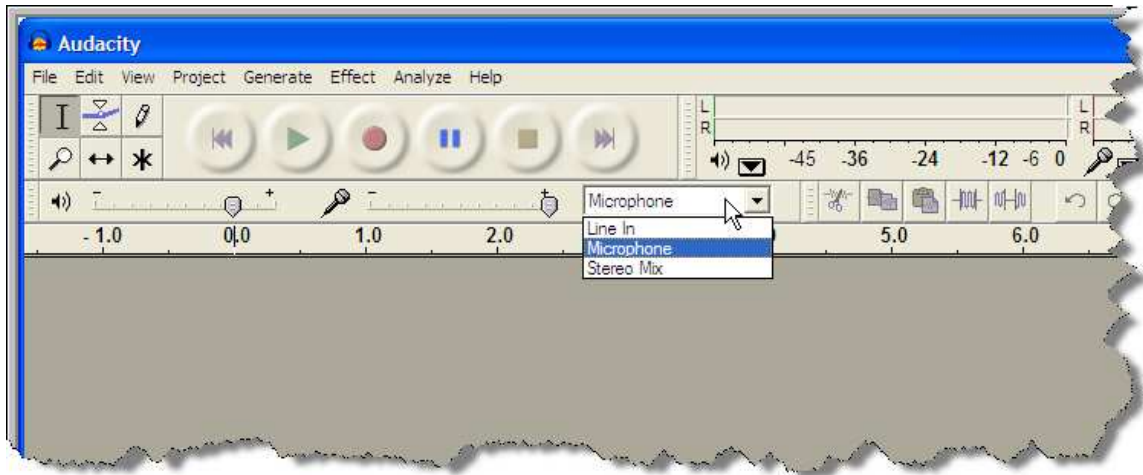
When you launch Audacity, this window below will appear. The next step will be to make sure a microphone is connected to the computer and is working.



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Step 4

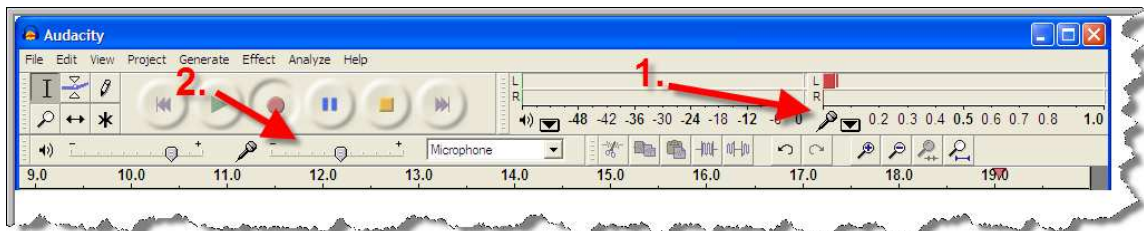
In the pull down menu in the center of the Audacity tool bar, select the microphone you are going to use. Your computer may have more or less options than shown here.



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Step 6

Like we did with other applications, we need to set the microphone level in Audacity. With the microphone connected to your computer, and if necessary, turned on, click on the microphone icon identified with the number one arrow. Speak naturally into the microphone, and the meter above the icon will register your voice level. With the slide control identified with arrow 2, adjust the microphone level so that the meter registers your voice around .5. You just don't want the meter reading too high or too low.



Step 7

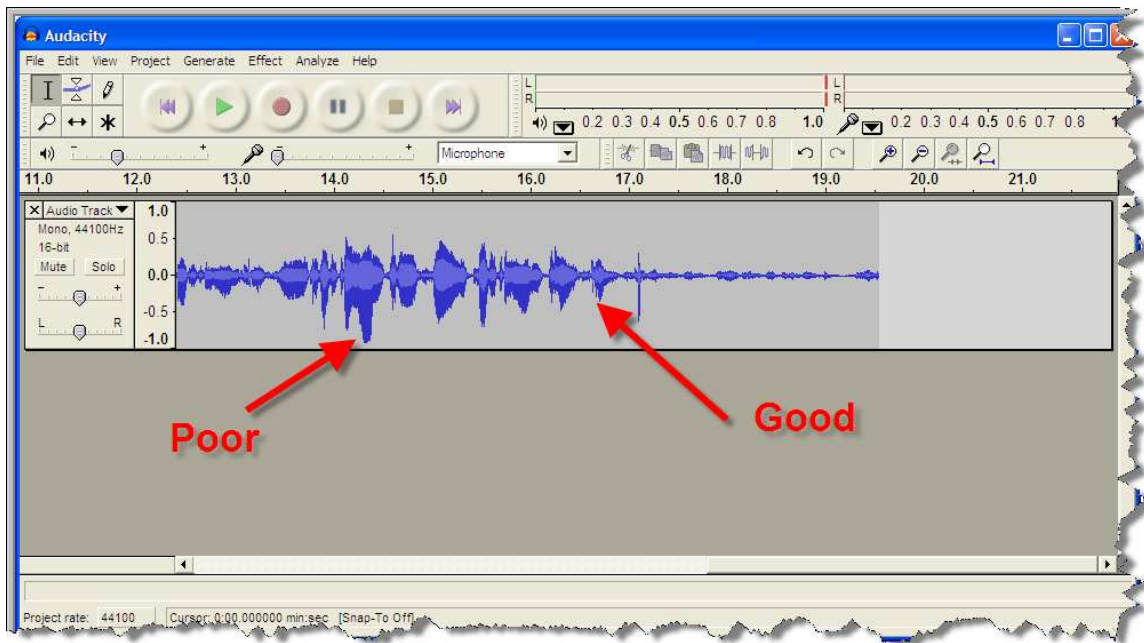
The play and record controls are similar to any traditional CD player. Button 1 returns to the start of the track. Button 2 plays the track. Button 3 is the record button. Button 4 is the pause button. Button 5 is the stop button, and button 6 advances to the end of the track. To begin recording, simply click on the red record button. Press the pause button if you need to take a break, and press the square stop button when you are done.



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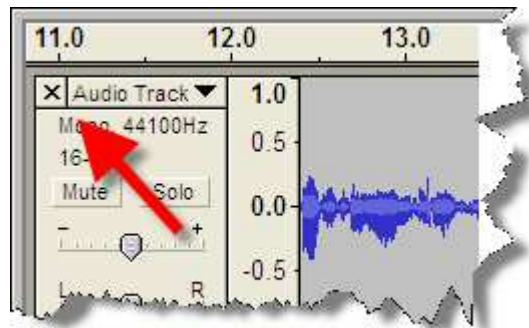
Step 8

As you record, wave patterns of your voice will appear on the track that appears in the window. The idea is to keep the patterns from touching the edge of the track, as shown.



Step 9

In your first attempt or two, you may want to delete the whole track and start over. To do so, just click the x in the upper left corner of the track as shown, and record a new track. A new track will appear as soon as you click the record button again.



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Step 10

If there are a few, 'ums', 'ahhss', or other parts of the narrations, replay the track while carefully watching the wave forms so that you can identify the parts you want to delete. It might be helpful to use the magnifying glass to zoom into the section of track in question. Use the "I" selection tool to select the unwanted portion of track, and use the delete key on the keyboard to delete the section.



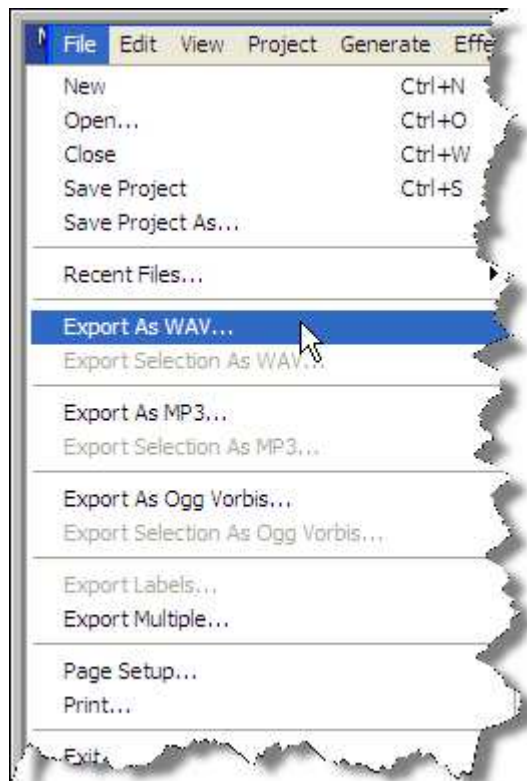
The last step is to export the file in a useable format. You have two options here, a WAV file and an MP3 file. The WAV file is a larger, higher quality file which is good if you want to import the file into a video. The MP3 is a smaller file, but it can be imported into your students' iPods. You can even upload the MP3 into iTunes, and your students will think you are a real geek!

Step 11

In order to use the MP3 option, you will have to have the LAME converter installed on your machine. It is easily downloaded and installed, following the prompts that Audacity gives you.

Before you export the file it would be a good idea to save it. The traditional steps apply here, file, then save.

When you export the file, simply follow the steps Audacity takes you through. Give your file a new name, and pay attention to where you saved it. This file is different than the Audacity file we made earlier.



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