Audacity Basics

Preparation

Download Audacity

Audacity is installed on many campus computers, but you can find Audacity at http://www.audacityteam.org/download/.

LAME MP3 Encoder and the FFMPEG Library

In order to import/export files of certain formats, or export as a .mp3 format file, you may need to install a couple of plugins before running Audacity.

- The FFMPEG library is needed to import or export a range of proprietary file formats (you don't need this if you're only recording directly into Audacity and not importing files): https://support.audacityteam.org/basics/installing-ffmpeg
- The Lame MP3 encoder, which allows you to export files as MP3, is no longer needed on Windows or Mac versions of Audacity, but might be needed on Linux: https://manual.audacityteam.org/man/installing_and_updating_audacity_on_linux.html#linlame

To install, download the file to your computer and double-click to install. Then open Audacity. No further configuration should be required.
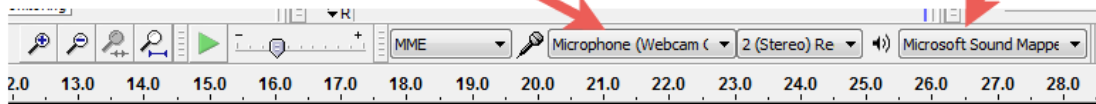
(**Note:** you may need administrative access – or assistance from IT Helpdesk – to install these files on your Langara computer.)

Recording

Select Input and Output
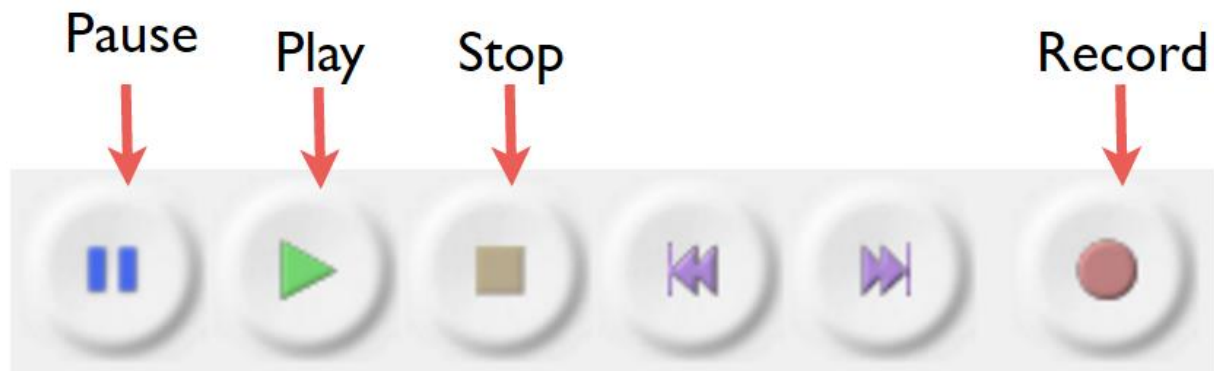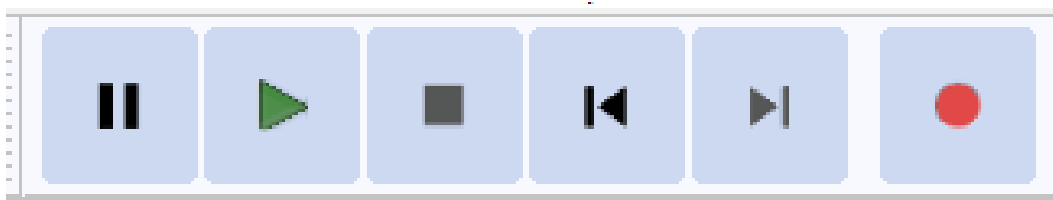

Make sure you've selected the correct external microphone (input) and speakers (output). If you're using a headset mic, these will be the same device.

Note: If you're using a new microphone or headphones, plug in the device and make sure your operating system has recognized it (if necessary) before you launch Audacity.

Controls

Depending on your operating system, the buttons might have a different shape, but their function is the same.
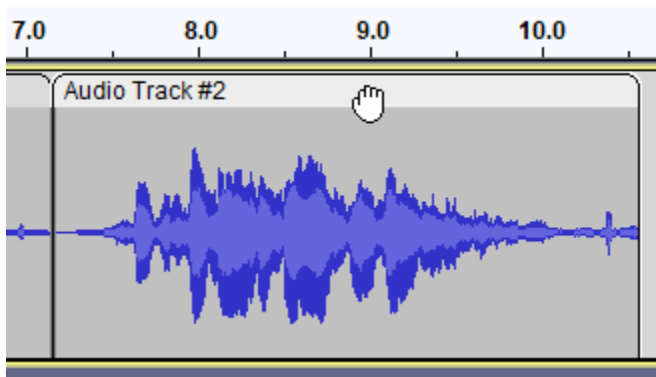
Tools

Selection Tool – for choosing start/endpoints, selecting tracks, or parts of tracks, for editing or deletion

Time Shift - In previous versions of Audacity, you were required to select a specific tool to move tracks or segments around. As of version 3.x, you can just click and drag to shift segments forward or back in time or move them between tracks.

How to record

To start recording: click the Record button (Audacity will create a new track each time you click Record)

To stop recording: click the Stop button

Change start point: use the Selection Tool (see Tools) to choose a new start point for recording or playback

Mute tracks: remember to mute the previous track(s) if you stop recording and then start again

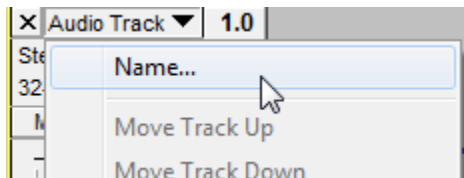**Delete tracks:** click on the "x" in the top left corner of the track

Recording a "Silence" track

This is useful for filtering out background noise later. Just make sure you're in a quiet space, and then record 20 or more seconds of ambient background noise with no one speaking. When you're finished, mute this track. You will return to it later.

Naming tracks

This is important if you end up with multiple tracks. Rename the track by clicking on the track menu and selecting "Name."

Save early, save often

Remember to save your Audacity project (File > Save or Ctrl+S) every time you stop recording or make a change to a track.
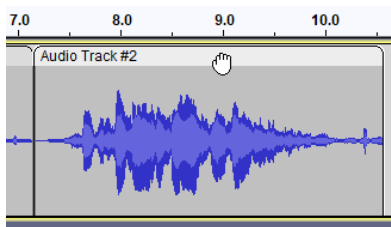
Processing

Remember to un-mute tracks as you edit them.

Editing Tracks

Cut out a section

Using the Selection tool, click and drag along the section you want to cut. Then press the Delete key on your keyboard.
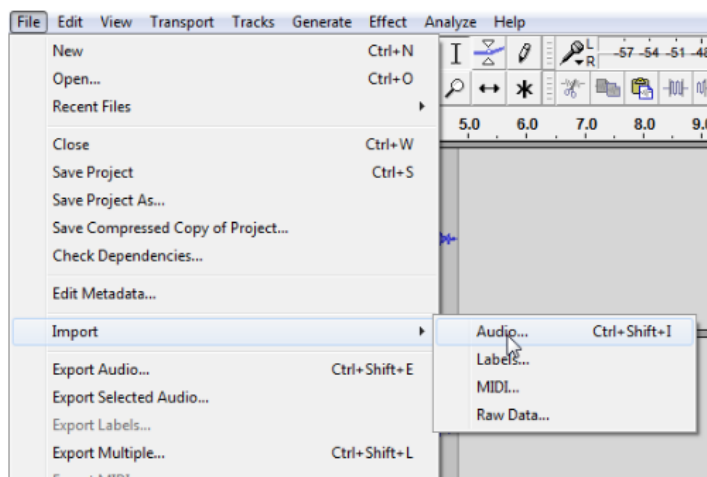
Move a track

Click on the top edge of the track you want to move and drag it forwards, backwards, or up and down into separate tracks.

Import music or other files

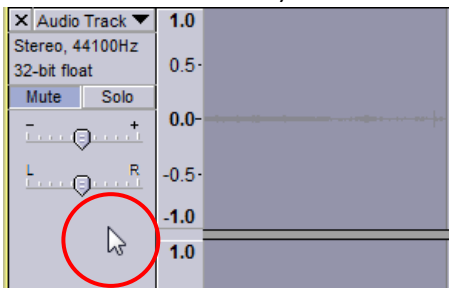1. Go to File > Import > Audio

2. Navigate to the file and click Open
3. The imported audio will appear as a new track at the bottom of your project
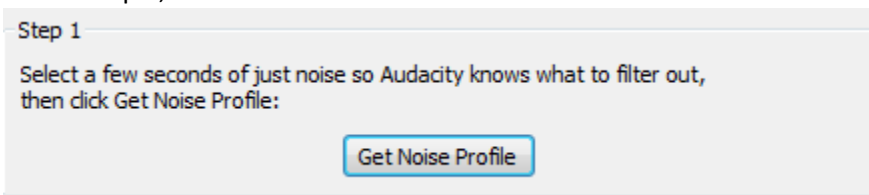
4. Using the Time Shift tool, drag it to where you want it
5. Optionally: fade the music in and out by selecting the beginning and end of the file with the Selection Tool and going to Effect > Fade Out
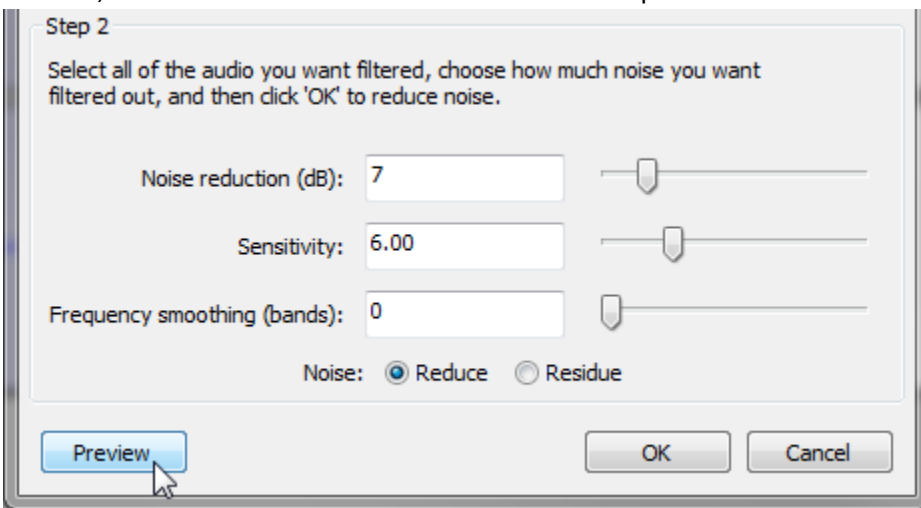
Filter out background noise

1. Unmute the "silence" track you recorded earlier and select it with the Selection Tool. You can also select the entire track by clicking in the track's Track Control Panel (rather than on any of the controls or buttons):

2. Go to Effect > Noise Reduction
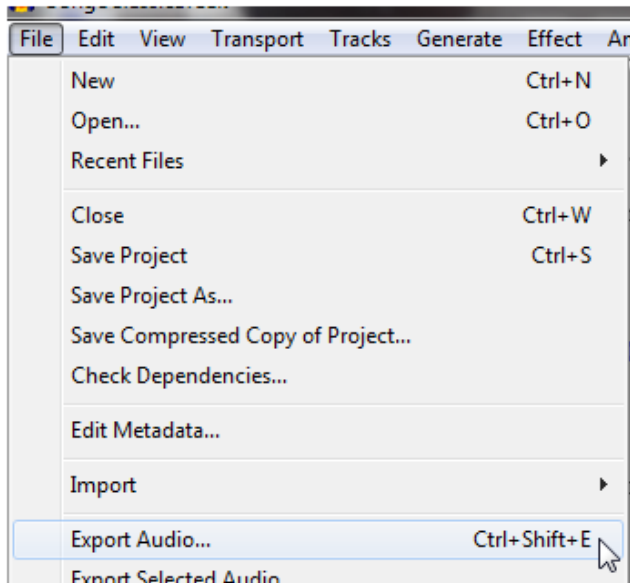3. Under Step 1, click Get Noise Profile

4. The Noise Reduction window will close; now select the track(s) you want to fix and go to Effect > Noise Reduction again
5. Under Step 2, change levels if you want and preview with the Preview button; when you're finished, click OK and wait while the Noise Reduction processes
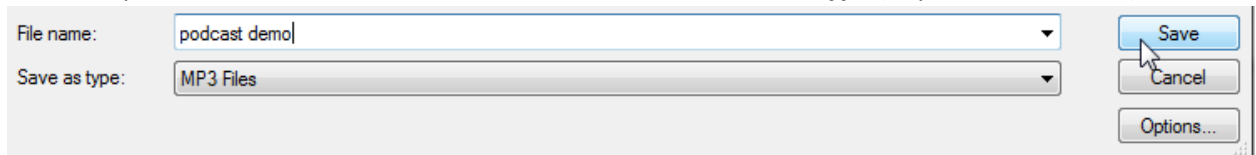

Note: Be careful how much you use this filter. Turning the "Noise reduction" slider too high can have distorting effects on the rest of the track.
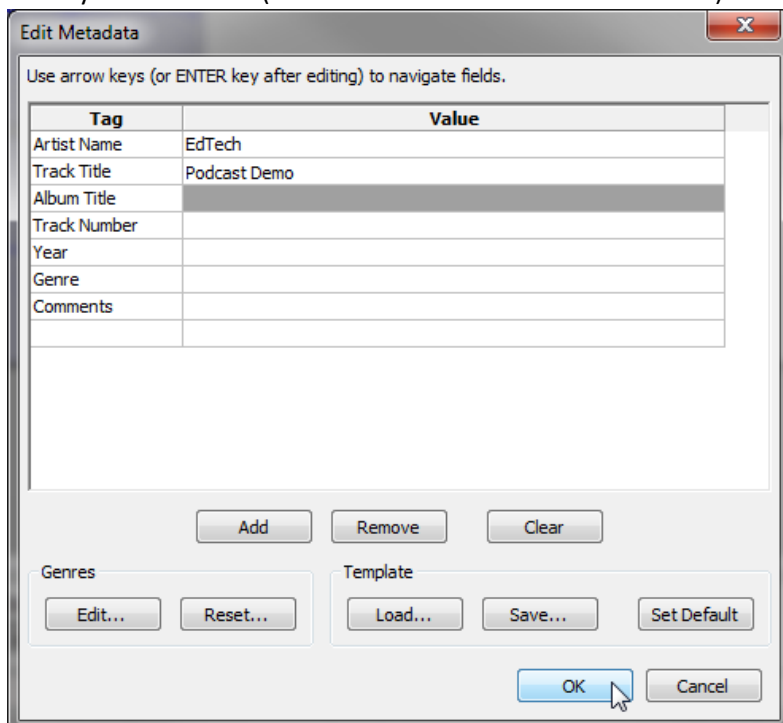
Exporting your podcast

1. Go to File > Export Audio

2. Choose a place to save, a file name, and a file format under **Save as type** (.mp3 recommended)

3. Click **Save**
4. Enter your metadata (Artist Name and Track Title minimum)

5. Click OK and wait for the file to render; depending on the size of the file, this could take anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes

6. Navigate to where you saved the file and listen to your new podcast