



Christina's Quick and Dirty Audacity Help¹

Do This Every Time!

These are important habits to get into, to avoid headaches and frustration later.

1. Organize your assets before you begin.

Audacity acts like a nondestructive editor: this means that if you move your files, Audacity won't know where they've gone, which may corrupt your project file. Audacity will also store project data in the same place as your project files, so it's important to keep things in one place and to organize them well.

2. After opening a file, immediately "Save Project As..." and name your project.

This will help ensure you don't accidentally start editing your original sound file!

3. Save early, save often.

Programs crash, things happen.






Also very important: do not rename files once you've begun! If you absolutely must rename your project file, make a copy by using "Save Project As..." Try to avoid messing with the files on your harddrive.

Quick Tour of the Interface


If you do something to your project you don't like, **you can always undo** (either *Edit > Undo* or CTRL + Z on Windows or ⌘ + Z on a Mac).

Transport toolbar:






(Note that these commands are also available from the "Transport" menu and also have keyboard shortcuts)

-  Starts playback of the audio file. (*You can also use spacebar.*)
-  Pauses playback; note you **CANNOT edit** if you press pause.
-  Stops playback; **WILL** allow you to perform an edit. (*You can also use spacebar.*) After stopping, playback will resume from last starting point.
-  Skips to start of project, and  skips to end.

¹ Some of this text is lifted straight from the online manual and "Getting Started" help.

-  Begins recording at the current cursor position or at the beginning of the selected section.

Tools toolbar:

-  Selection tool (*F1*)—you'll use this a lot. The default tool when you open Audacity. Will let you move cursor for playback (click to select a start point), as well as highlight a chunk of audio to copy, move, or edit (click and drag, or click + SHIFT + click).
-  Envelope tool (*F2*). Allows you to adjust volume, fade in/out.
-  Draw (*F3*). For editing waveforms; I'm not as familiar with this tool, but you're welcome to play with it.
-  Zoom tool (*F4*). Click once to zoom in one step, SHIFT + click (or right click) to zoom out one step. You can also zoom using the "View" menu.
-  Timeshift tool (*F5*). Lets you drag clips or tracks left and right along the timeline. Also lets you drag clips or tracks up or down into another track.

Working with Audio Tracks

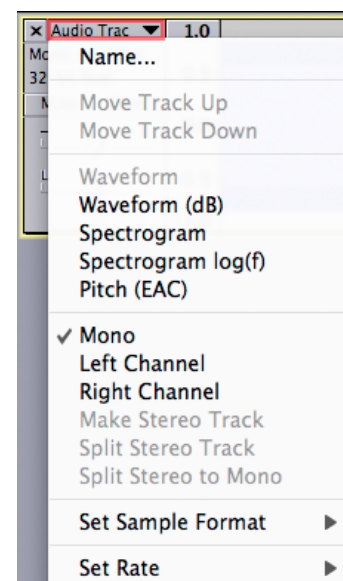
There are three ways to **open a new audio track**:

1. Simply drag and drop the audio file in to the Audacity window. (If you're using a Mac, drag the audio file to the Audacity icon instead...)
2. Select *Import Audio ...* in the Project menu.
3. Use the keyboard shortcut : **CTRL+I**

Audacity can import WAV, AIFF, AU, IRCAM, MP3 and OGG files. **Note** that if you wish to import **WMA files**, you'll need to install a plugin called **the FFmpeg import/export library**.

Track Drop-down

Once you have imported your audio track, the track drop-down menu (SEE RIGHT) will allow you to rename the track, move it up or down in the project window, split and join the stereo tracks (only something you need to worry about if you're a more advanced user), and more.



Editing

The main commands for editing audio are under **the Edit menu** (such as cut, copy and paste) and **the Effect menu** (you can do things like boost the bass, change pitch or tempo, or remove noise).

Audacity applies edits to selected areas of the audio track. To select a particular area, click in the track and drag the shaded area with the mouse. If no audio is selected, Audacity selects all the audio in the project window.

Some of the editing tools we'll use a lot:

- Edit > Trim: deletes everything except the highlighted selection.
- Effect > Amplify: controls the volume of the individual track. For example, use to adjust volume of background music so it doesn't compete with your voice.
- Effect > Fade: a good tool to use for transitions.
- Effect > Leveller: a simplified compression tool that can be used to fix clipping (sound distortion).

When playing or recording, the Edit and Effect menus will appear grayed out, because a moving track can't be edited. Commands can sometimes be unavailable for other reasons too. For example, you can't run effects until you have audio on the screen, and you can't paste audio until you've cut or copied it to Audacity's clipboard.

Exporting

When we're working in Audacity we're working with .AUP files, which only Audacity can read.

Once you're finished your project and ready to share:

1. **If you're exporting to .mp3**, make sure you've downloaded the LAME MP3 encoder on your computer.
2. **Go to "File" > "Export..."**
3. **Select your filetype from the drop-down menu.**