

A quick guide to using Audacity

Audacity is a free, open-source, cross-platform audio editing tool available for Mac, Windows, and Linux, available from:

<http://www.audacityteam.org/>

There are two pitfalls to be aware of when using Audacity. First, Audacity is what's called a "destructive editor": if you delete something, save your progress, and close your project, you will never be able to restore what was deleted. (This is different from a video editor such as Final Cut Pro, which is a non-destructive editor.) For that reason, I recommend always keeping a backup.

Second, Audacity saves its projects in two parts: if you name your project **PB692**, then Audacity will create a folder called **PB692** and a file called **PB692.aup**. *Each file is useless without the other*; Audacity needs both.

The tools

Audacity's playback commands are similar to any audio player's:



The spacebar is a shortcut for play/stop; use it liberally.

Audacity has six main editing tools; for this exercise, you'll need only three.

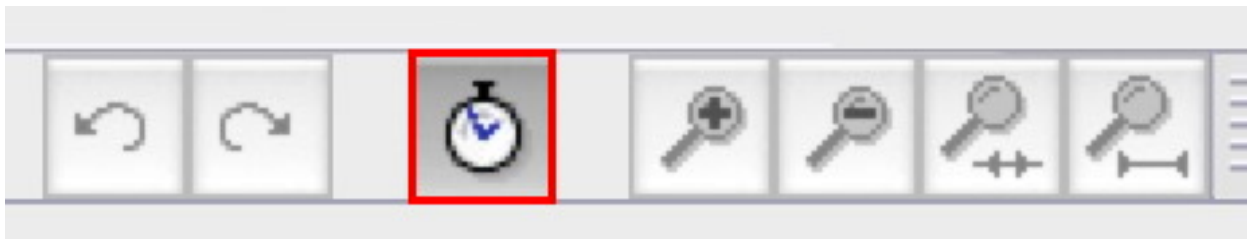


The first tool is the “I-bar”; it’s used for highlighting and selecting clips of audio. When selected, you can drag your mouse across the waveforms to select segments of audio to edit. You can also double-click a track to select the entire segment.

The second is the zoom tool, used for magnifying sections of audio. When selected, anywhere you click will become bigger; to zoom out, hold down the Shift key while zooming.

The third is the time-shift tool, used to drag a track left and right.

Once your tracks are in sync, use the “sync lock” tool to keep them in sync. (Newer versions of Audacity omit this icon, but the function is still available under **Tracks > Sync-Lock Tracks**)



With this option selected, anything done to change the **duration** (but not the **content**) of one track will affect all other tracks as well.

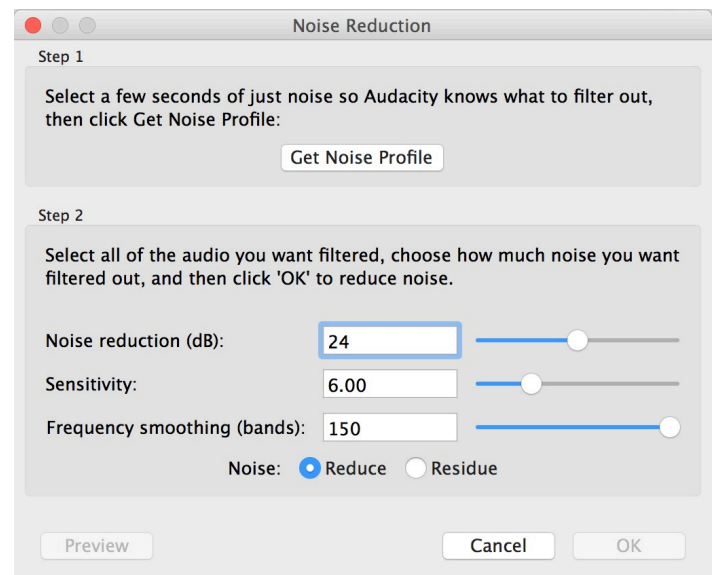
Editing

The first step is to reduce background, or “ambient”, noise—defined as noise that occurs consistently throughout your project. Examples include a refrigerator, fan, air conditioning, or general static hiss.

Note that these steps must be done separately on each track:

1. Find at least five seconds of audio where there is no one talking, and only the ambient noise is present. Highlight it.
2. Go to **Effect > Noise Reduction...** and click “Get Noise Profile”. Nothing will appear to happen.
3. Now select the entire track by double-clicking it.
4. Again go to **Effect > Noise Reduction...** but this time click “OK”.

This process will remove the ambient noise from everywhere in the track—even when people are talking.



Now you need to remove occasional noise—such as a dog barking, a keyboard typing, or someone sneezing. Since each person has their own audio track, you can silence one person without affecting what the other speaker is saying.

Just highlight the audio you want to silence, then select **Edit > Remove Special > Silence Audio**. (On the Mac, you can also press Command-L.)

If you find long, awkward pauses where nobody is talking, you can delete them by simply highlighting them and pressing “Delete” on the keyboard. Any audio to the right will shift left to fill the gap.

