

Recording Quality Audio Tracks Using “Audacity”

- 1. Open Audacity.** The “Preferences” under the *Edit* menu lets you set up your recording and playback features. The default is: *Playthrough*, check *Overdub*, *Latency*, buffer 100, Correction -130. Under the *Quality* heading select 44100, 16bit for your *Sampling*. You can browse through the other headings and set up your system how you want it.
- 2. Choose your hardware.** You will need a USB audio interface (Like a Behringer UM2 <https://amzn.to/2TWzdKZ>) in order to connect a microphone to your computer. We recommend using a dynamic microphone (like a Sure SM58) unless you are in a controlled environment with little or no background noise. Don't hold your mic, place it on a stand. Also, make sure in your *Preferences* menu under *Devices*, you have selected the appropriate channel for recording (This is the channel your mic is plugged into on your USB audio interface).
- 3. Choose your recording environment** carefully. You want the area around you dead, so there are minimum reflections of your voice bouncing around the room. Set up near heavy curtains and surround yourself with materials which will absorb your reflections. When you do your show, your recorded voice will take on the acoustics of the room you are performing in, so stay away from reverbs, etc. unless your character is falling off a mountain!
- 4. Record when it is quiet.** Add sound FX later, don't try to record your voice in an uncontrolled environment. That way, you can adjust the effects to be in perfect relationship to your voice on the final mix.
- 5. Read up on Audacity.** By touching on the upper right bar you can see your mic input level. Keep the peaks of your vocal about -12. If you hit 0 you will get digital distortion, which is unfixable. If you record at a level too low, you will end up with a noisy track. If necessary, once you have your recording, you can go to the *Effect* menu and select *Normalize* and the computer will bring you up to the maximum signal level. Save your project.
- 6. Mix your tracks.** If you have vocals, music and fx sounds, make sure the sound you want the people to hear is the loudest at that moment. You can lower the entire track by selecting *View* and *Mixer Board* or the slider at the head of the track. Check the Audacity manual. You can even lower or raise the volume of parts within the track. You want the mix to be balanced and understood by your audience.
- 7. Choose your export format**, wav or mp3 (for mp3 you must download the LAME encoder. Don't worry, it is free. Check audacity's website or copy and paste this link: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&item=lame-mp3>

Once you have your file exported to the desired location, you are ready to add your work to your show. Make some test runs to ensure your audio is clear and intelligible.