

Super-fast guide to audio editing

How to use the free Audacity program for the PC or Mac

By Mindy McAdams
University of Florida



Audacity is a totally free audio editing program. It works for the PC or Mac. Get it [at Sourceforge](#).

Installing Audacity

1. Download Audacity to your own computer.
2. The file you downloaded is an installer file. Do whatever your operating system requires to install it (e.g., double-click and put into Program Files, or drag and drop the DMG into Applications).
3. You could start editing audio immediately, but don't.
4. Download the LAME encoder file. Follow [these instructions](#) to do so.
5. Unzip or uncompress the downloaded LAME file.
6. It is very important that you know exactly where you saved the lame_enc.dll or Lamelib file. Reason: The very first time you try to export an MP3 file from Audacity, it will ask you: Where is the LAME encoder file? You must show Audacity where the file is. You will do this only once.
7. If you don't follow steps 4, 5 and 6, you cannot export MP3 files from Audacity. However, you will not have a chance to do Step 6 until you have some audio to export.

Opening an audio file

How do you open any file in any program? File menu > Open.

Here is a sample file you can use while you're learning:

Note: Audacity cannot open WMA files. If you have WMA files, you must convert them first (convert to the WAV format, for example). Conversion can be done with [Switch](#) (Mac and Win) or [EasyWMA](#) (Mac only) /

Recording your own voice

1. Connect a microphone.
 - a. If your computer has a Mic In port, plug in a microphone.
 - b. If your computer has a Line In port, get a USB microphone or an audio adapter such as the [iMic](#).
 - c. If you have a built-in mic, okay, but it won't be the best quality.
2. Open Audacity.
3. Click the red button.

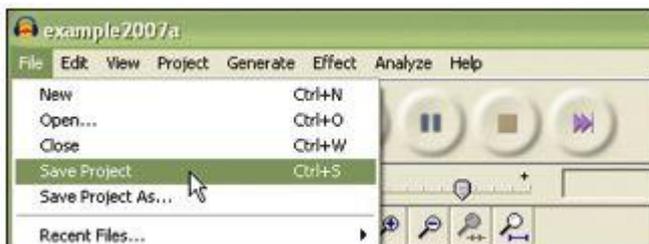


4. When you've finished, click the Stop button.



Saving your file

How do you save any file in any program? File menu > Save. But no, in this respect, Audacity is different.

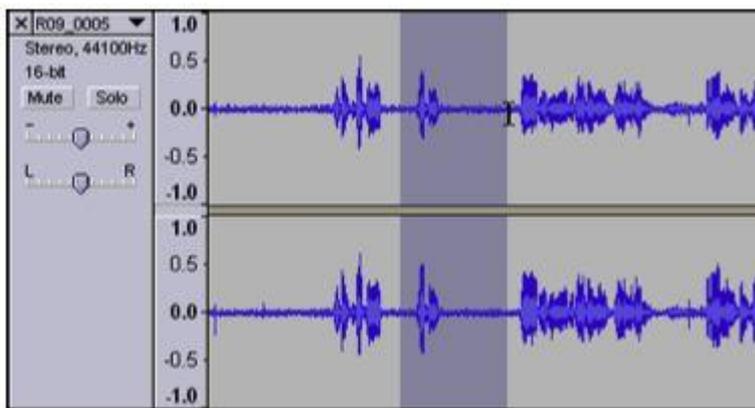


Like many audio editing programs, Audacity wants you to save a “project” and not a file—until you are completely finished with your editing. When you are finished, you will export a new file. But until then, you will just go on saving your project as many times as necessary to avoid losing your work.

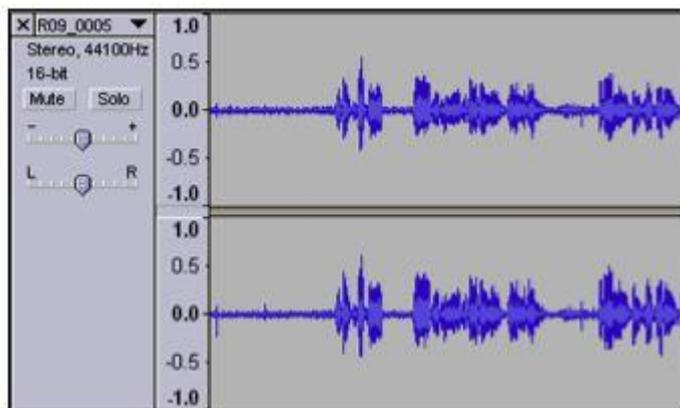
Editing audio

The basics are easier than you might assume.

To delete something, first you will click, hold and drag to select the section:



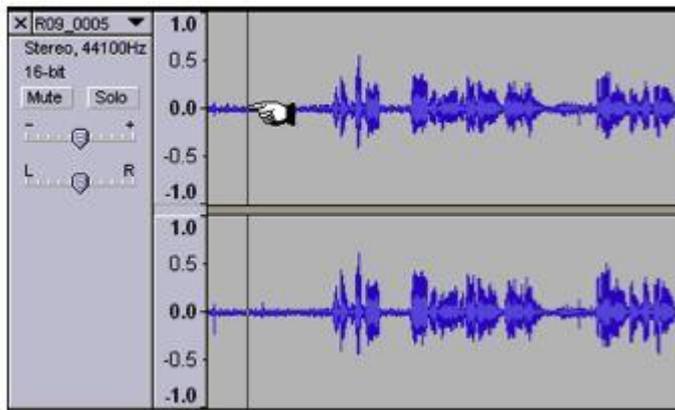
Then press the Delete key on your keyboard. (Note: The player must be *stopped*, not paused, or else this will not work.)



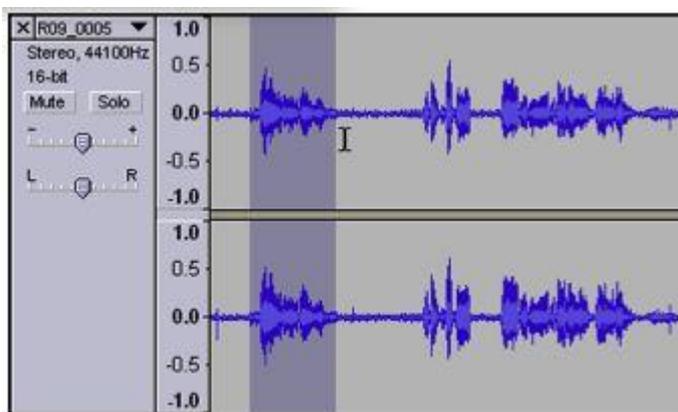
If you make a mistake, hold Ctrl (Win) or Cmd (Mac) and press Z.

To move a section from one place to another, first select it (as shown above), but hold Ctrl (Win) or Cmd (Mac) and press x (for cut). This is exactly the same as Microsoft Word. Cut, copy and paste all work in your audio editor.

Move the cursor to where you want to add the cut section, and click once:



Then hold Ctrl (Win) or Cmd (Mac) and press v (for paste):

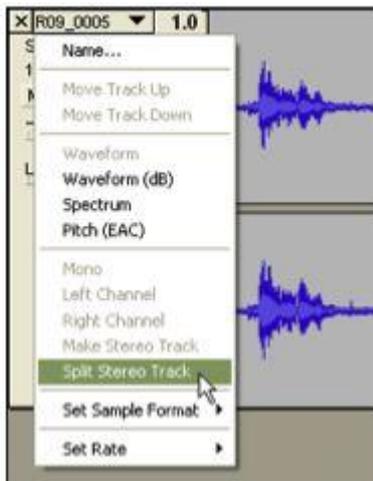


Before you export the finished file

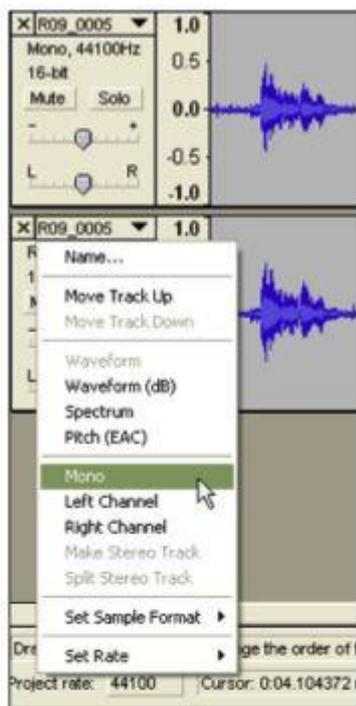
When you've completed your editing, you will want an MP3 file. First, you should convert a stereo file (two tracks) to a mono file. This reduces the file size by 50 percent.

Convert stereo to mono

1. Click track name (here it is "R09_0005"; yours will be different) to open menu. Select "Split Stereo Track."



2. After splitting, change each track to Mono.



3. Select **all tracks** by shift-clicking each track until all are highlighted.

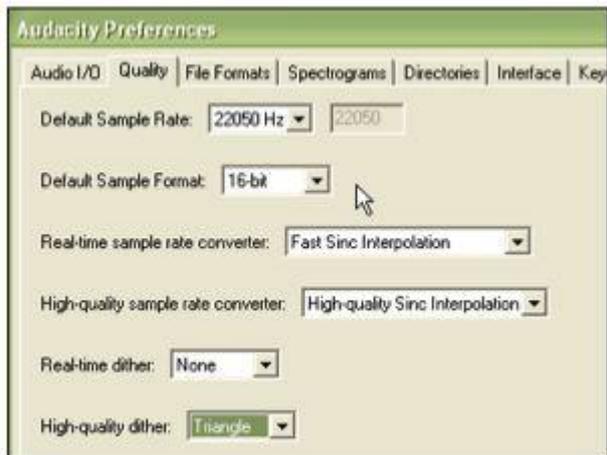
4. Project menu > Quick Mix

If you had only one track, you don't need to do this.

Adjust output settings

Next, you need to adjust your output settings. Edit menu > Preferences

On the "Quality" tab, you need 22050 Hz* and 16-bit:



*Actually, the current version of Audacity will save the MP3 file at 44100 Hz even though you have changed the sample rate.

On the "File Formats" tab, you need a bit rate of 56 (at bottom):



When finished, click OK in the Audacity Preferences dialog box.

Exporting the finished file

If you have completed all your editing, then it's time to export an MP3.

File menu > Export As MP3



You can leave the "ID3 tags" blank, or fill them in.

Voila! You have an MP3 file suitable for uploading to the Web.