

# Audacity Quick Reference Guide

Radford University Technology in Learning  
Center

## GETTING STARTED

Audacity is an open source, freeware audio editor available for Windows, Mac and Linux users. It can be downloaded at:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download>

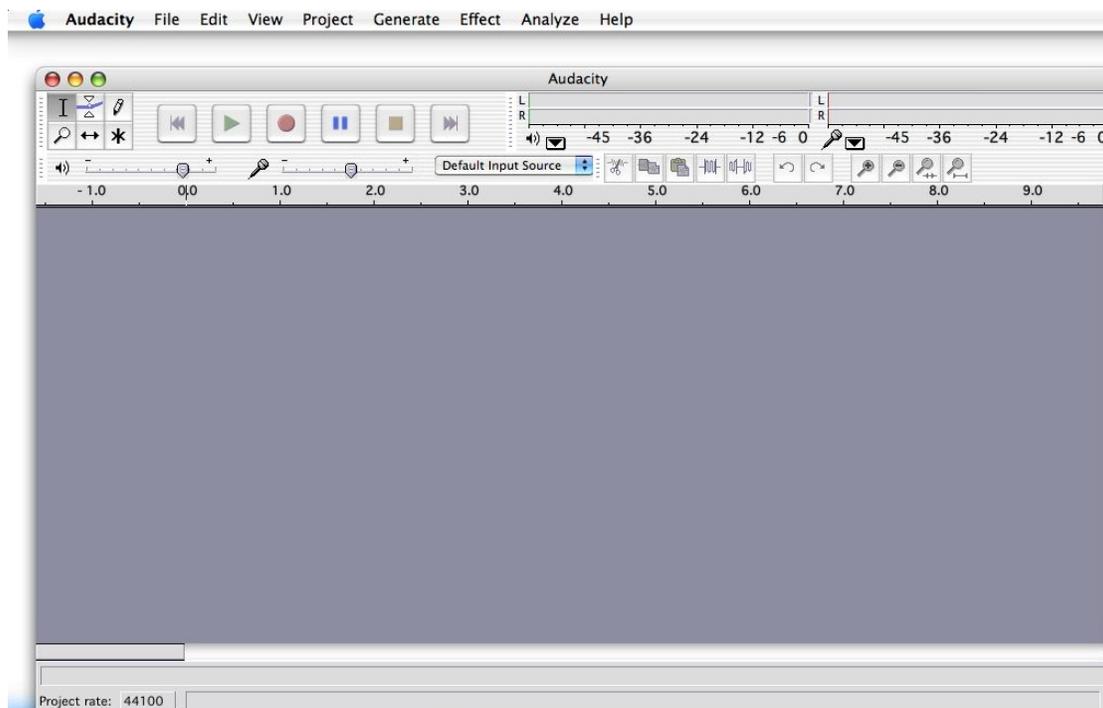
In addition to the application itself, users wishing to create MP3 files will also need to download the LameLib encoder from the above site. Store it in the Audacity program folder.

Audacity enables users to record, edit and produce audio files on a desktop or laptop computer. The program may be used as a single- or multi-track editor, and contains a variety of editing tools and effects, making the program useful to both hobbyists and developers alike.

In addition to this quick reference, more detailed user information – including an online manual – can be viewed at:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/onlinehelp-1.2/reference.html>

## THE AUDACITY INTERFACE



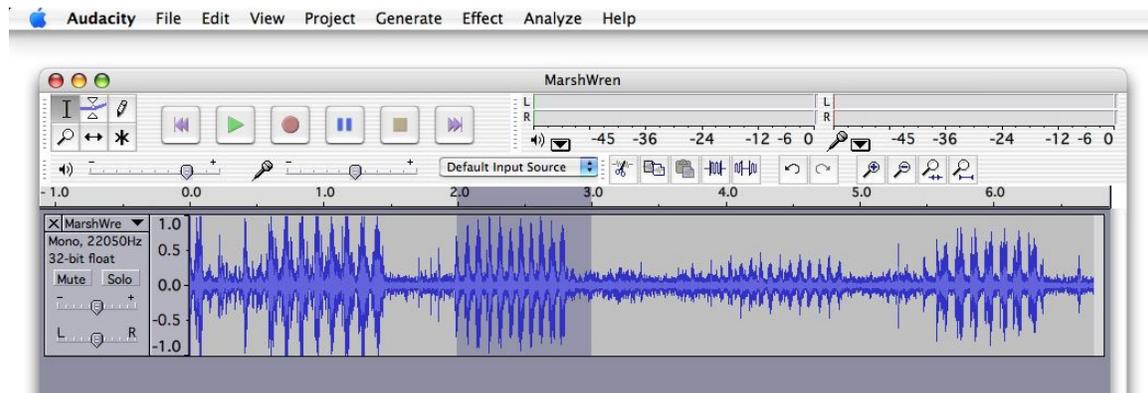
Audacity's user interface is simple and elegant. Users will quickly notice familiar program menus (File, Edit, View, etc.), as well as the standard transport control buttons (rewind, play, record, pause, stop and forward). On close inspection, users will notice the top portion of the window is divided into different areas, or 'toolbars,' which can be docked and undocked from the main program window using the Edit menu.

A cursory investigation of the toolbars will reveal many of the program's editing features. Similarly, exploring the program menus by simply clicking through them with the mouse will begin to suggest the program's

possibilities before any audio is actually recorded or imported. This type of early exploration often proves helpful when learning a new piece of software.

## RECORDING

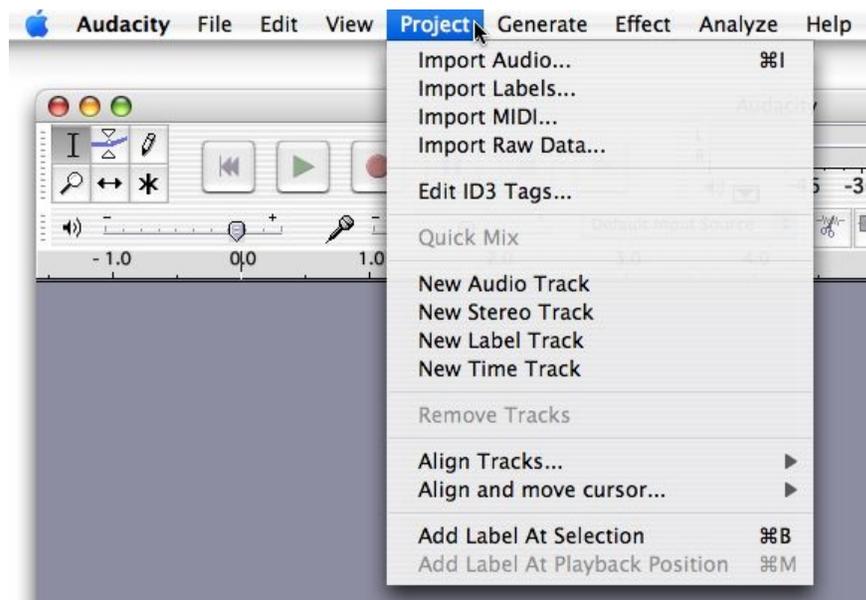
The answer to this one is easy: click red record button in the toolbar and start making noise!



Use the meters in the upper-right corner of the program window to monitor playback and recording level activity. Change input source using the drop-down labeled 'Default Input Source' (pictured above). If your computer doesn't have a built-in microphone, or you don't have an external one you can plug in, you will have a hard time recording anything in Audacity.

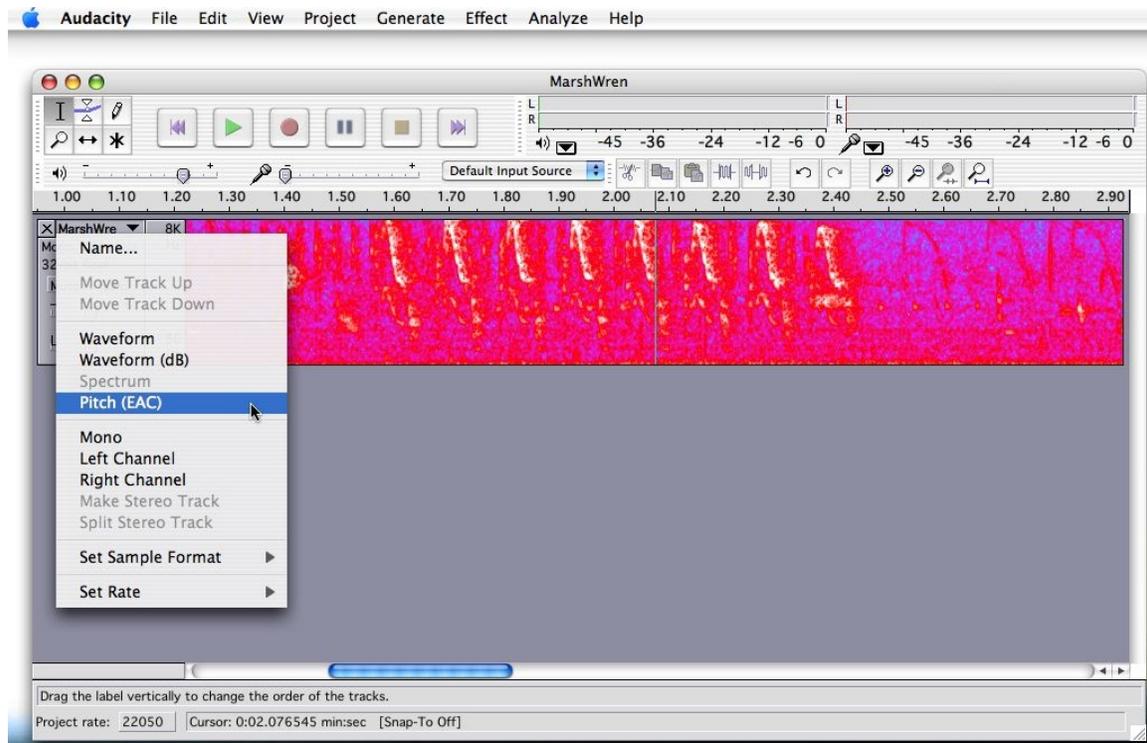
## IMPORTING AUDIO

Importing audio files into Audacity is easily done using the Project menu:

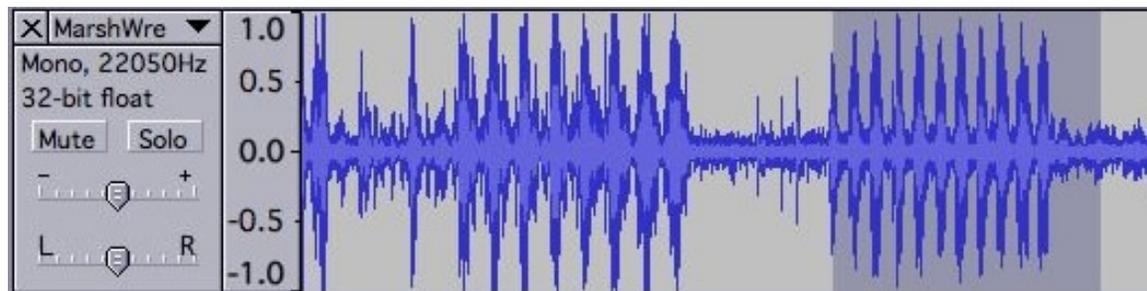


## MANAGING TRACKS

Each track created in Audacity contains a channel menu:



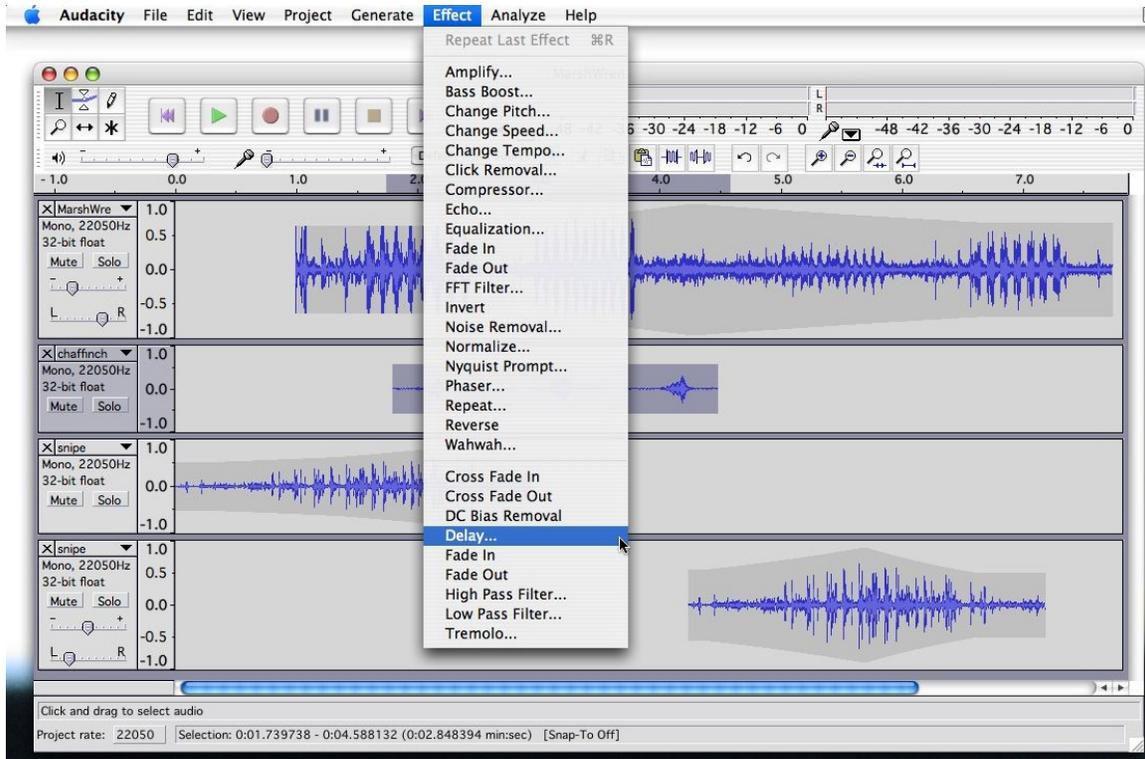
By clicking the arrow icon next to a track's name, the above menu appears. Among other things, users can choose how to view a track (waveform, spectrum, or pitch data). In addition, each track contains sliders for volume and pan control, as well as standard mute/solo buttons useful for auditioning certain tracks while silencing others:



## EDITING

Audacity features standard cut/copy/paste-style editing that can be performed on audio that has been recorded or imported into the program. These options are located under the Edit menu. Drag to select a portion of a waveform, or click the info area of a track's channel menu to select an entire track.

Once a track or region is selected, any of Audacity's built-effects can be applied by accessing the Effects menu:



Click to choose an effect, and a dialog appears, enabling the user to manipulate the effect's behavior prior to applying it. Click 'preview' to get an idea of how it sounds before clicking OK.

Audacity also features a set of editing tools in the upper-left corner of the program window. The description below is taken from the Sourceforge online Audacity reference:

### Editing Tools

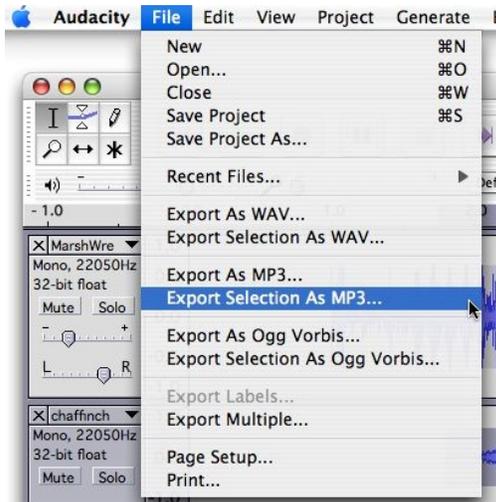
-  Selection tool - for selecting the range of audio you want to edit or listen to.
-  Envelope tool - for changing the volume over time.
-  Draw tool - for modifying individual samples.
-  Zoom tool - for zooming in and out.
-  Timeshift tool - for sliding tracks left or right.
-  Multi tool - lets you access all of these tools at once depending on the location of the mouse and the keys you are holding down.

The best way to get a feel for how each tool works is to try it out. You can always choose Edit > Undo if you want to step back a few edits if you do something you don't like.

### SAVING AND EXPORTING

An important part of any workflow is frequently saving changes you've made to the file you're currently working on. This is easily done by choosing 'File > Save Project As' to initially save a new file, and then File > Save (ctrl-s) for saving subsequent changes.

When your project is ready for its final destination (CD, MP3, etc.), it will need to be *exported*. Using the options on the File menu, you can choose to export an entire Audacity project, or a selection you've make therein.



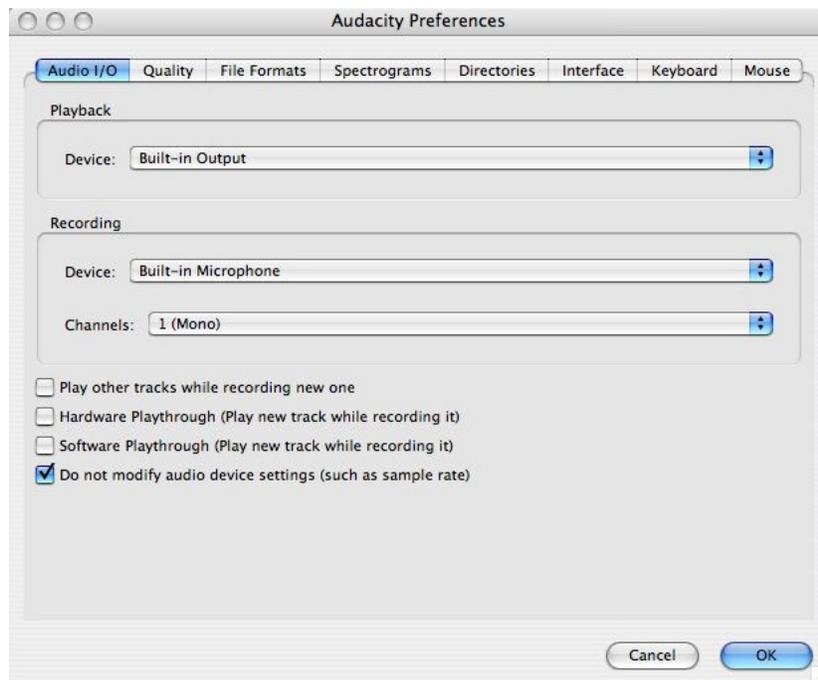
For audio being burned to CD, WAV is likely the best choice. It is an uncompressed format and will retain the highest quality. For audio being used in a podcast or other Web-based application, MP3 is likely the better choice, given its small file size.

**Keep in mind that exporting audio out of Audacity will flatten all layers and mix any effects you've used into each track.**

It's always a good idea to maintain a copy of the original Audacity project file in case you need to go back and change something.

## PREFERENCES

User preferences for Audacity can be set in the program preferences (*Audacity > Preferences* for Mac or *Edit > Preferences* for Windows):



Items such as default audio input and output source, as well as native file format, are set in the Preferences.

## RESOURCES

1. To reiterate the resources mentioned at the beginning of this document:

Audacity is an open source, freeware audio editor available Windows, Mac and Linux users. It can be downloaded at:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download>

In to the application itself, users wishing to create MP3 files will need to also download the LameLib encoder from the above site.

Audacity enables users to record, edit and produce audio files on a reasonably powerful desktop or laptop computer. The program may be used as a single- or multi-track editor, and contains a variety of editing tools and effects, making the program useful to both hobbyists and developers alike.

In addition to this quick reference, more detailed user information – including an online manual – can be viewed at:

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2. As with many computer programs, the best way to begin learning Audacity is experiment. Don't be afraid to click buttons and try it out. Remember you can always quit without saving and start over.

3. Audacity is a freeware program, therefore, there is no company to call for technical assistants. Instead, look to the online user community, as well as friends, family, and colleagues, when you need help.

4. Many users find it helpful to have a repository of sounds at their disposal for the various projects they work on. In addition to professionally produced collections such as the BBC Sound Effects library, there are several online resources worth checking out:

[www.findsounds.org](http://www.findsounds.org) - royalty-free archive of sounds found in nature, around the house, etc.

[www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com) - contains an MP3 search engine.

[www.sounddogs.com](http://www.sounddogs.com) - a repository of various sound effects.