

Online | 2013

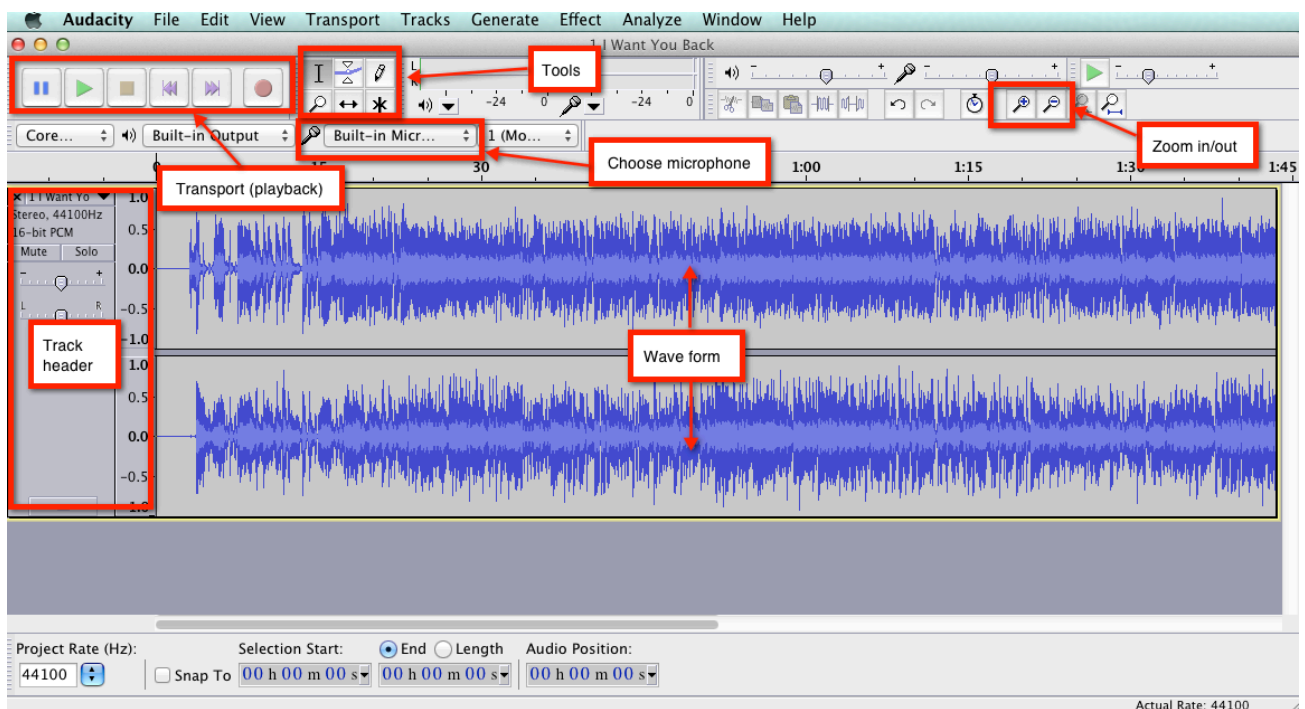
Amazing Audacity: Session 1

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Midnight Music

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The Audacity Screen



Import audio (a song or SFX)

Before we start

You can't import a song into Audacity *directly from a CD*. You need to "rip" the required track from the CD on to your computer using a separate audio extractor program. Some options are:

- iTunes (Mac and PC)
- Windows Media Player
- Audiograbber
- CDex

Once the song is on your computer, you can then import it into Audacity.

File formats

You can import a number of file types into Audacity. These include:

- Uncompressed audio formats: WAV and AIFF
- Compressed audio formats: MP3, Ogg Vorbis, Flac and MP2

What's the different between WAV and MP3?

A WAV file is a large file, that's referred to as "lossless" or "CD quality". It has not been compressed in any way. You can use WAV files to put projects together in Audacity and then burn them to CD, but because they are big in size, it's not possible to email them to a friend. A 3-minute pop song can be around 40MB.

An MP3 file is a compressed audio file, which is also known as "lossy". MP3s are a much smaller size: a 3-minute pop song is around 3MB. When you rip songs from a CD on to your computer, iTunes or Windows Media Player usually converts the audio file to an MP3 automatically.

You can import either of these file types into Audacity for editing.

Import the song into Audacity

- Go to **File > Import > Audio**
- Navigate to the song/sound effect you want to import
- Click **Open**
- You can also drag songs directly into Audacity from Windows Explorer (PC), the Finder (Mac), or from the iTunes window or from your desktop

Why won't my song import?

Some tracks may not import into Audacity. Often this is because the audio file was purchased online and is protected by Digital rights Management (DRM).

Adjusting the view

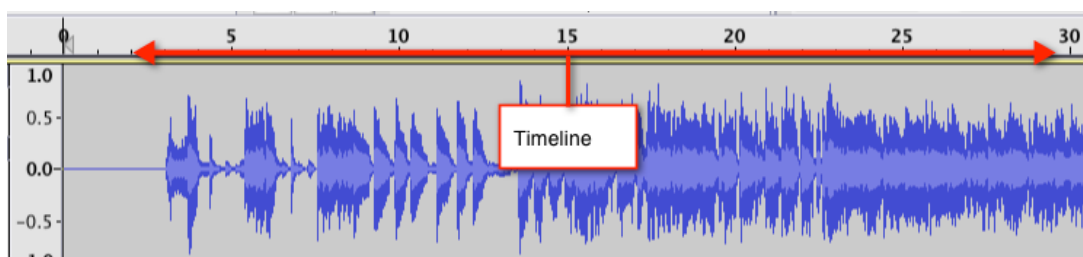
Zoom in and out

You can zoom in and out using the zoom tools on the toolbar.



As you zoom in and out, take note of the **timeline** at the top of your screen. The timeline shows minutes and seconds. In the image below, I have zoomed in so that I can see every 5 seconds showing along the timeline.

You'll need to zoom in and out frequently as you work.



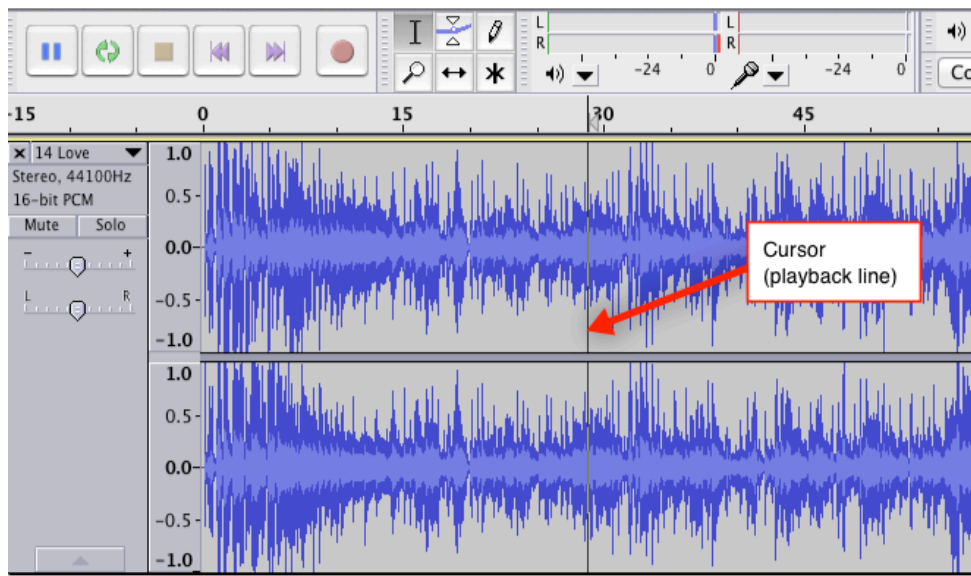
Playback

Using the controls

- Click on the playback controls on the top left of the screen with the mouse
- As you play your file, the **cursor** (the playback line) moves through the wave form



- When you click on **Stop**, the cursor will return to its original position



Basic playback shortcuts

Start/stop playback	Spacebar
Move cursor to beginning of track	Home
Move cursor to end of track	End
Pause	P

Playback from a specific place

- Click anywhere on the wave form to place the cursor and then start playback from that position
- Use the arrows on your computer keyboard to fine-tune the position of the cursor if necessary
- Press the **Spacebar** to start playback
- Press the **Spacebar** again to stop playback (the cursor will return to the position it started from)

Playing a short section

- Click and drag the mouse across the blue wave form to select a small section of audio for playback
- Press **Spacebar** to start the playback

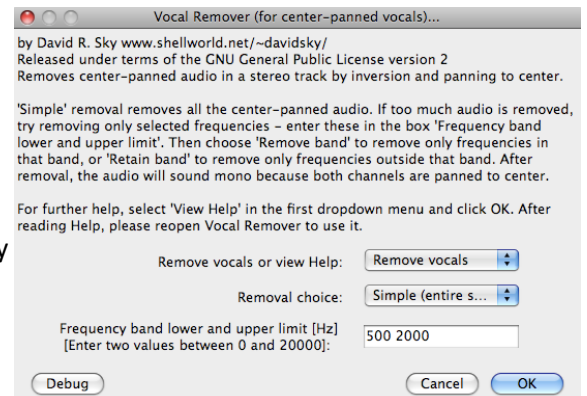
A common mistake!

Be aware that when you pause playback, most of the menu items will be greyed out and unavailable to use. If you want to edit the audio in any way (change key, change pitch, remove vocals), you need to make sure that the playback is **not** paused.

Remove vocals from a song

Step-by-step

- Import the song by going to **File > Import > Audio**
- Locate the song and click **OK**
- Go to **Effect > Vocal Remover (for centre-panned vocals)**
- Leave the settings as they are and click **OK**
- Play back song to test the results. If you get a poor result, try running the effect again with different settings
- More information can be found in this article:
http://wiki.audacityteam.org/index.php?title=Vocal_Removal



What you need to know

- The vocal remover won't work every time and it's not perfect
- It only works on stereo tracks (tracks with a left and right channel)
- Success depends completely on how the track was mixed in the first place
- It removes sounds that are panned to the center (equal in left and right speaker or headphone ear)
- Because it removes center-panned sounds (which are not just vocals), some stuff you want to keep may go as well (ie. the drums or bass)
- Just try it – if it works, great, if not move on to something else

Help! I made a mistake!

If you don't like the effect of the vocal remover (or you did something else to your audio file that you're not happy about), you can simply undo the change.

Two slow ways to undo

- Go to **Edit > Undo**
- Use the **Undo button** on the toolbar

One quick way to undo

Use a shortcut!

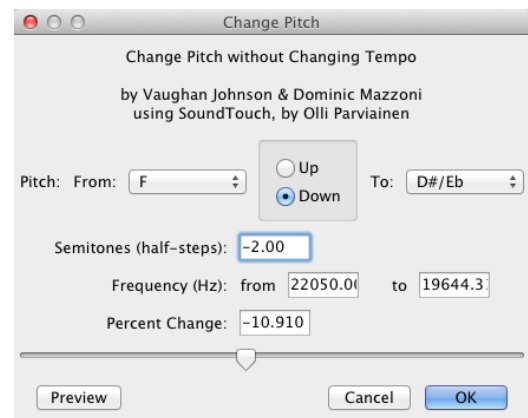
- Press **Control+Z (Command+Z on Mac)**

This shortcut can be used in any software program – not just Audacity – so learn it and you'll shave hours of time off your computing life 😊

Change the key (change pitch)

Step-by-step

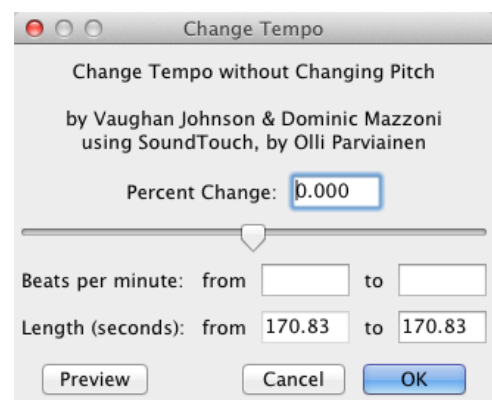
- Import the song into Audacity
- Go to **Effect > Change pitch**
- Do just one of the following:
 - Choose whether you'd like to transpose **Up** or **Down** and then adjust the key of the song in the **Pitch: From** and **To** drop-down menus
 - Type in the number of semitones (a negative number = transpose down in pitch)
 - Drag the slider at the bottom of the window left or right (more useful for spoken word or sound effects)
- You can click on the Preview button to preview your pitch change
- Click **OK**



Change the tempo (without changing pitch)

Step-by-step

- Import the song into Audacity
- Go to **Effect > Change tempo**
- To go slower: drag the slider to the left (try -20.00 percent or so)
- To go faster: drag the slider to the right
- You can also type values into the **Beats per minute from** and **to** boxes



Selecting audio

If you want to make changes to part of an audio file (just a portion of a track), you need to select the part you want to change first.

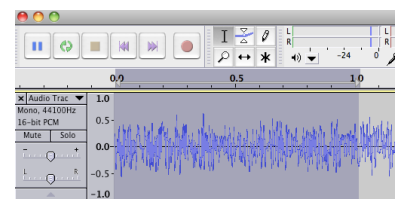
Here are some ways to select audio in Audacity:

Option 1

- Click and drag your mouse across the blue wave

Option 2

- Click (once) at the beginning of the section, hold **Shift** down and use the right arrow to expand the selection
- Hold down **Ctrl (Command) + Shift** and use the left and right arrows to shrink the selection



Option 3

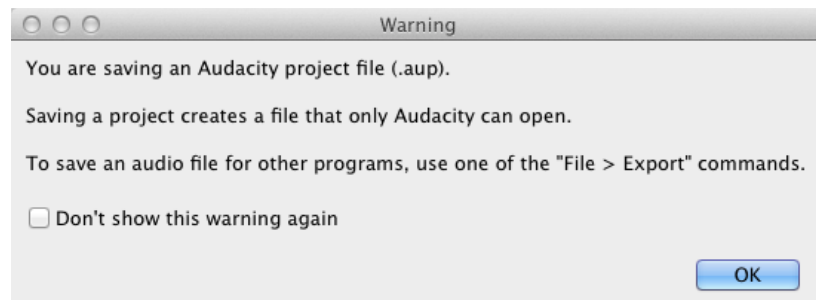
- Click on the blue wave form to place the cursor
- Fine-tune position using arrow keys if necessary
- Go to **Edit > Select > Track start to cursor** to select all audio from the beginning up to the cursor (playhead)
- Go to **Edit > Select > Cursor to track end** to select all audio from the cursor (playhead) to the end of the track

Select an entire track

- Click on the **Track Header** area

Saving your project

- To save, go to **File > Save Project**
- A dialog will open warning you that you are saving your file as an Audacity Project (which can only be opened again in Audacity).



- Click **OK**

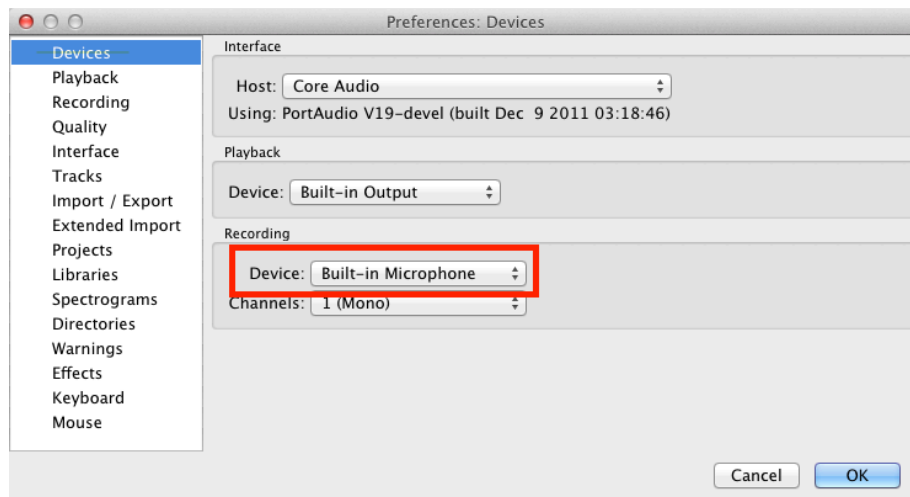
Later on, we'll save the file in a different format so you can share it with others, play it on an iPod or burn it to CD.

Recording a solo over the backing

The next thing you might want to do is to record a solo over the backing track you've just created.

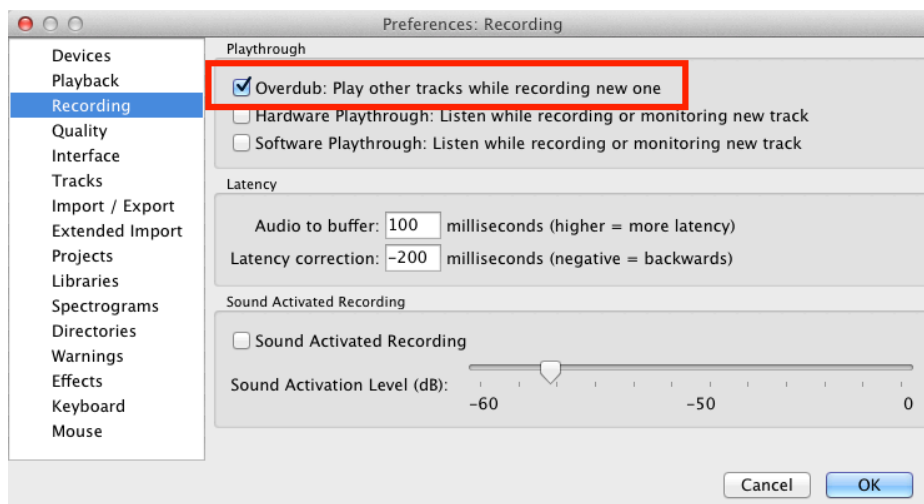
Set up your microphone

- Plug your microphone into your computer
- Go to **Audacity > Preferences** (Mac) or **Edit > Preferences** (PC)
- Click on **Devices** in the left-hand column
- Under **Recording**, choose your external microphone or the built-in microphone



To hear other tracks while recording

- Click on **Recording** in the left-hand column
- Check the box next to **Overdub: Play other tracks while recording new one**



Make sure you put headphones on your singer or instrumentalist so they can hear the backing track while they record. This will also stop the backing track playing out of your in-built computer speakers, preventing Audacity from re-recording the backing track at the same time.

To start recording

- Place cursor at the beginning of the section to be recorded
- Click the **Record** button
- The soloist will perform their part
- Press **spacebar** or the **stop** button to stop recording
- Save!

Basic mixing

Before you share your song (see below), you'll need to check that the levels of the backing track and the solo are OK.

Increase or decrease the volume of a track

- Use gain slider on track header to adjust the volume

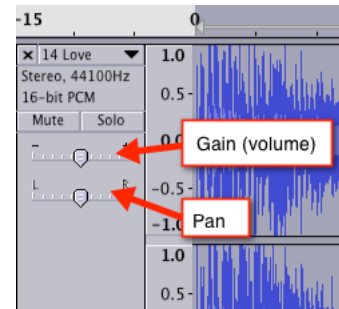
Mute (and Solo)

If you want to create a "karaoke"-style backing track you can mute the solo part

- Use the mute button on the track header

Pan

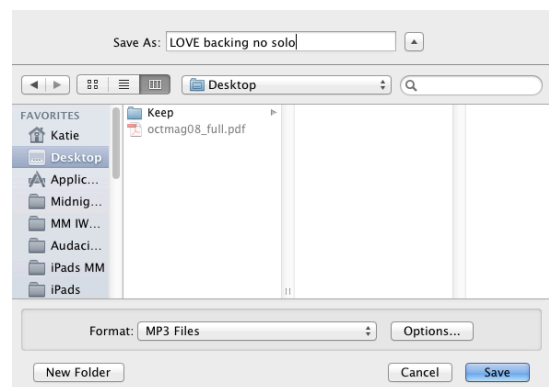
- The pan slider will move the audio to the left or right channel



Sharing songs with others

In order to share Audacity files with other people (that don't have Audacity), you'll need to save them in a format that can be played back with Windows Media Player or iTunes, or be burnt to CD.

- Go to **File > Export**
- A **Save As** dialog will open: give your file a title and choose the saving location. You'll also need to choose the file format for exporting (ie. MP3 or WAV)
- Click **Save**
- Next, the **Edit Meta Data** dialog will open: leave the settings as they are and click **OK**
- The file will be exported in your chosen format



You can now play the track back on your computer using your chosen media player or you can burn it to CD.