

**COMPUTER GEEKS**  
PRESENTS

# tech-tips

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## Recording a Podcast with Audacity

**Tech Tip 108** - Scott Nesbitt

are versions that run on Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. There's even a [portable version](#) of Audacity that you can carry on a USB key drive enabling you to record and edit your podcasts no matter where you are.

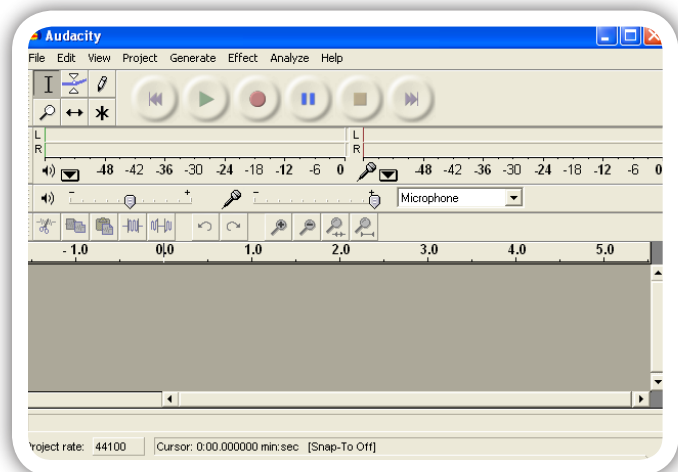


Like Web pages and blogs before them, [podcasts](#) have seen a surge in popularity. In many ways, a podcast is like having a personal radio show, except that your audience is the World Wide Web. Believe it or not, recording a podcast is easy. All you need is a microphone and the right software. A popular application for recording podcasts is [Audacity](#).

Note: This TechTip only covers how to set up and use Audacity to do a voice recording. A future TechTip will discuss how to meld in a backing audio track and to fade in and fade out audio.

### What's Audacity, and Why Use It?

[Audacity](#) is an Open Source sound recorder and editor. It has a number of features that enable you to record, modify, and export audio files. It's easy to use, free, and there



While Audacity isn't quite a professional-level tool, it has enough features and functions to handle most of your podcasting needs. Getting Started

If you don't have Audacity, download and install it. Installation in Windows is easy. Just run the installer and follow the prompts. For installation instructions for MacOS and Linux, check the Audacity Web site.

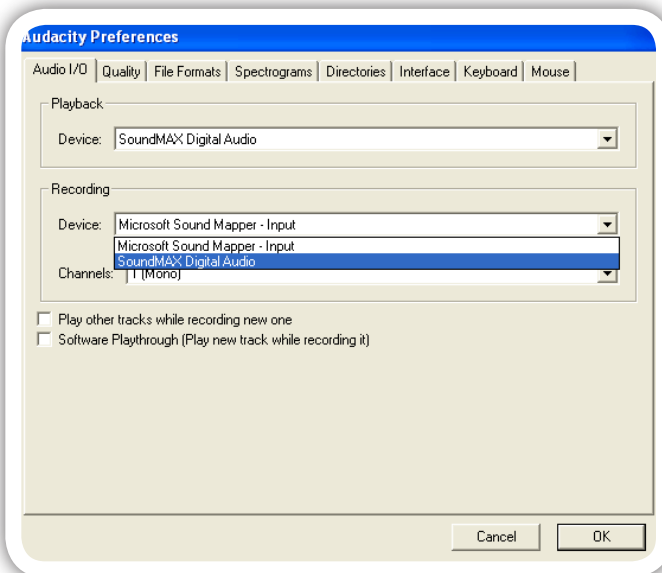
Most podcasts are distributed as an MP3 file. Unfortunately, Audacity doesn't support MP3s out of the box. But using the free LAME MP3 encoder, you can add this support to Audacity.

If you're using Windows, download the ZIP

file containing LAME. Then, extract the file lame\_enc.dll (which does the heavy lifting when creating an MP3) to any folder on your computer. You can put the file into the folder either where Audacity is installed, or in C:\Windows. The first time you try to import or export an MP3 file, Audacity will ask you to point it to where lame\_enc.dll is located. Once you do that, you're ready to go.

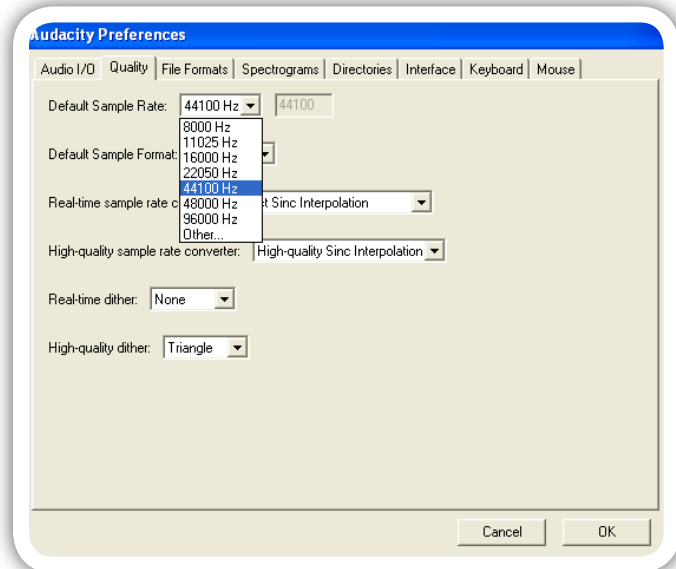
## Configuring Audacity

While you can use Audacity's default settings to record your podcast, you can improve the quality of your recordings by tweaking Audacity's preferences. To do this, select Edit>Preferences. On the Audio I/O tab, you can force Audacity to use an audio driver other than the one that comes with Windows. On my computer, this is the Sound MAX Digital Audio driver which I've found produces better output than the default Windows driver.



Next, click the Quality tab. Notice the Default Sample Rate dropdown list. The sample rate determines the overall quality of the sound - the higher the rate, the better the sound. The preset value is 48000 Hz.

Change that value to 44100 HZ. This may seem strange, especially considering that you want



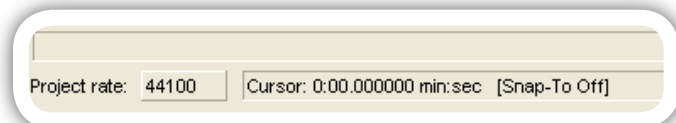
the best quality audio for your podcasts. But it isn't strange at all.

Why? Some media players, especially those that are embedded in Web pages and used by podcast hosting services, don't support higher sample rates. When the audio is played back, a phenomenon called chipmunking occurs. Remember the annoying voices of the characters in the cartoon *Alvin and the Chipmunks*? That's chipmunking. The lower sample rate, while slightly decreasing the audio quality, also gets rid of the chipmunking problem.

If you want to change the sample rate of an Audacity project, you can do so by clicking the Project Rate button in the bottom-left of the interface and selecting a new rate.

## Recording with Audacity

Create a new Audacity project by selecting

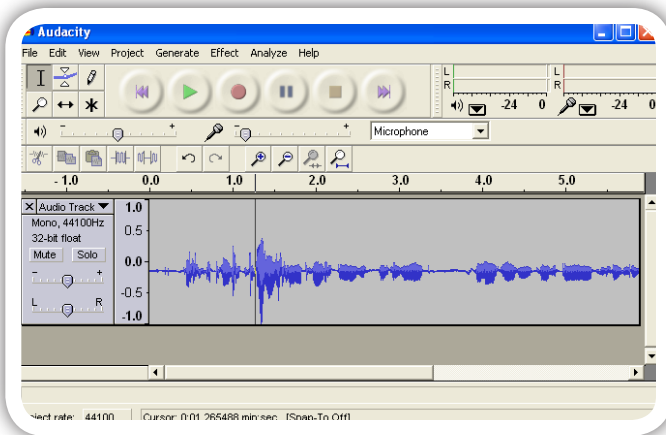


Project>New Audio Track. Then, save the project by selecting File>Save Project As. Make sure that your microphone is plugged

in. Click the Record button on the Audacity toolbar and start speaking. Make sure that you speak steadily and clearly, and try not to breathe into the microphone. If you get tongue-tied or flub a few words, don't stop recording. Just take a moment to regain your composure, and then keep going - you can edit out any mistakes later.

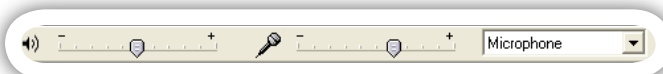
Also, try to include a few seconds of silence here and there throughout the recording. This will be useful later when you need to [remove noise](#).

When you're finished, click the Stop button on the Audacity toolbar.



Before you record for real, however, you should do a couple of test recordings to check whether or not the microphone volume is set correctly. If you find that the volume is too high or too low, you can adjust it using the volume control in Audacity.

## Editing the Podcast



Once you've recorded your podcast, listen to it. Doing this will give you an idea of the quality of the sound and help you locate any portions of the recording that you need to cut - either because of a flub or you just don't want it in there.

To delete a portion of the recording, just highlight it by pointing and clicking with your mouse. Then, press the Delete key on your keyboard.

Just as you'd move blocks of text around in a word processor, you can move chunks of audio around in an Audacity project. Highlight the portion of the recording that you want to move, then press CTRL-X on your keyboard. In your recording, click wherever you want to put the cut audio and press CTRL-V to insert it.

You can do the same thing for audio copied from another Audacity project or an audio file that you've imported into Audacity. In both cases, though, make sure that the playback of the audio is stopped and not paused. If it's paused, none of the editing features are available.

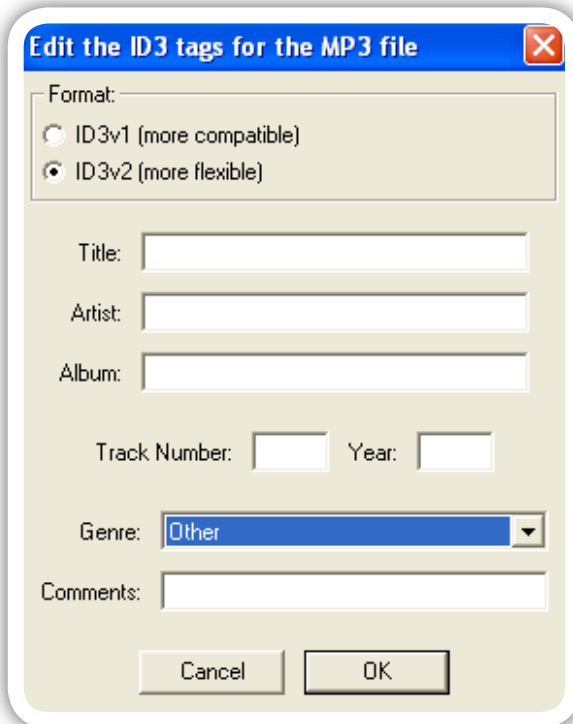
If you've noticed noise in the recording, you can use Audacity's tools to remove it. This [TechTip](#) explains how.

## Saving the Podcast as an MP3

Remember earlier when you installed the LAME MP3 encoder? Now it's time to use it. Select File>Export as MP3. Audacity will ask you where on your computer you want to save the file. After you specify a folder, Audacity displays a dialog box where you can edit the information about the MP3 file:

This step is optional. Once you click OK on the dialog box, Audacity saves the file as an MP3. Depending the length of your recording, the export could take anywhere from a few seconds to a minute or more.

You can also save portions of your podcast as an MP3. You might do this to create a few seconds of audio that acts as a preview. Or, if this is your first podcast, you can do this to save an introduction or ending that will be used with future editions of your podcast.



**Edit the ID3 tags for the MP3 file**

Format:

ID3v1 (more compatible)

ID3v2 (more flexible)

Title:

Artist:

Album:

Track Number:  Year:

Genre:

Comments:

To save a portion of the podcast, highlight it by clicking and dragging with your mouse. Then, select File>Export Selection as MP3. Once again, you'll be asked where you want to save the MP3 file. After it's been exported, you can open the MP3 file in Audacity (select Project>Import Audio), then copy and paste the audio into another project.

Audacity provides you with all of the tools that you need to record and edit your podcasts. Once you get going, Audacity is surprisingly simple to use. With a little practice, you'll be podcasting with the best of them.

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