AUDACITY is a freeware software application that can be used to record and modify sounds. It is a fairly powerful application – and actually can make quite sophisticated recordings. Here is a VERY QUICK AND ROUGH guide to making your own recordings!

TO DOWNLOAD THIS PROGRAM:

- Go to http://audacity.sourceforge.net/
- Click on download – and follow the instructions.
  (forget the BETA version – it can be volatile)

You should also take the time to download LAME. This is another freeware application that allows you to save your recording files in an MP3 format (useful if you wish to make a CD!). Again, click on the LAME icon and follow the instructions.

ONCE YOU HAVE DOWNLOADED THE PROGRAM(S):

Click on the AUDACITY icon or file location.

The program opens and you will see a blank grey page with a menu bar.

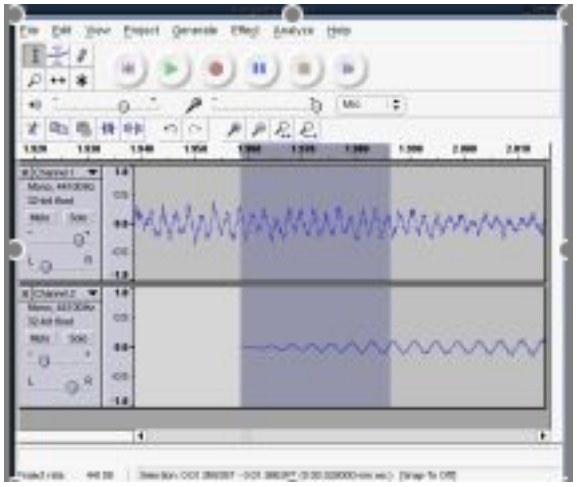
YOU SHOULD DO A COUPLE OF THINGS BEFORE STARTING YOUR RECORDING.

First – you will need a microphone. Generally you get what you pay for….inexpensive mics will not necessarily record complex sounds in an active acoustic environment – BUT you can get decent enough results by using your mic judiciously!

1. place the mic in a location that will allow the least amount of interference from movements of your hands, electronic sound (lights, computers, heaters, etc) If you are lucky enough to have a variety of mics – you may want to try different ones to listen for the best overall sound in your particular situation…..in our case in class we'll use mics that are OK for close up voice recording – not so good for acoustic, outdoor, large group, etc recording situations.
2. Look in the top right hand area of the menu bar – you should see a small icon of a mic – With your mic plugged in, try some test sounds – you should see a red pulsing area just above the mic icon. This tells you about the input level – if the red line is constantly over to the extreme right side, your recording levels will likely be too high – causing a noisy sound – try easing the input bar under the mic icon – see if your test sounds can cause a red fluctuation that rarely touches the right hand side.

By the way – make sure you can hear your recording product – either through a headset or the computer's speakers. If you can't hear very well you can adjust the sound output through expanding the slider bar under the speaker icon (just to the left of the mic one) Your computer MAY have its output volume turned down. (or muted) On a PC you can alter this by going to the CONTROL PANELS menu and expanding the sound output….

Let's try recording something!



With the mic plugged in, click on the round red dot and start making your sound. You will see a graph appear. This is a visual representation of the sound. When you want to stop the recording click on the yellow square button. Voila! (alternately you can pause using the blue parallel bar button…)

To hear your sound recording, press the green arrow button. To stop this playback, press the square button again. (or blue pause buttton) YOU MAY NEED to click your cursor at the beginning of the graph. Indeed you can start listening to your sound wherever you want – simply click the cursor on the desired starting point and press the green arrow…

SAVE YOUR WORK frequently. (FILE – SAVE or COMMAND –S)…..Audacity has a tendency to crash in some environments. (depending on the operating system of your PC perhaps and/or the sorts of things you are asking it to do.) You will save yourself a lot of grief if you get into the habit of saving your work each time you do something. (*Trust me, I know this from first hand experience!!*)

With the sound file you are ready to do a couple of things: you can add a second (or third or multiple) voice to your original file. Simple click on the red dot again and start making your sounds. With a headset, you'll be able to hear the original sound as well as make a sound along with the original…this can be fun especially if you like singing or playing along!!)

You can also have fun manipulating your sound file.

If you wish you can expand or contract the graph of your sound – use the VIEW menu for this.

You can ask Audacity to manipulate your sound in various ways (change pitch or tempo, for example) Use the EFFECTS menu…

The best thing is to simply attempt your own manipulations – be daring – see what happens.

What sorts of things can you use Audacity for?

• recording poetry
• recording musical performances in class, or of your own
• editing sound files – for use, say, in video or slideshow soundtracks
• creating soundfiles
• make your own karaoke machine….

Audacity is capable of quite a bit – don't be afraid to see what you can do with it!!

TO SAVE AND EXPORT YOU WORK

Initially simply save your Audacity files as aud. Files – Audacity does this automatically when you use the Save command. When you FINISH working on your sound file, you can **EXPORT** the file in a variety of ways. One common industry standard way is as a .wav file. This type of file can be used by other applications quite readily (as can *Ogg Vorbis*), and has some advantages regarding file sizes, but probably for your purposes the best way to save your files is by putting them in a MP3 format. Although these are generally a lot larger, most computers have the capacity to read MP3 files, whereas you might need to download more software in order to use Ogg Vorbis and/or .wav files. If you find you want to start exporting large files, certainly you should acquaint yourself with these other formats because they will use smaller sized files. BUT, to export to an MP3 file, simply use the FILE menu, scrolling down to EXPORT as MP3 and follow the instructions. (By the way this only works if you have downloaded the LAME application). There is a slight oddity with this application in that it doesn't like multiple users. If you are using LAME on a computer that someone else has used (and has used LAME on) you may need to find the LAME location.
Type: <C:\Program Files\education software\presentation and Multimedia\audacity\lame-3.96.l\lame_enc.dll> in the area when prompted. This should then allow you to save as MP3 in a designated location (I use desktop for convenience, then move it to where I can find it later …)

HAVE FUN! BE DARING!

Try this also:

IMPORT a WAV file or an MP3 file so that you can work with that sound in AUDACITY

For this, you'll need to have a saved WAV or MP3 file on your computer.

WAV files stands for Waveform Audio Format and is essentially a digital method of sampling sounds.
There are LOTS of places to find sample WAV files – here is one:
http://www.wavsource.com

If you find a WAV that you like, you can save it to your computer's hard-drive. In a PC world, Left Click on the link for the WAV file you want to save. (MAC users need to use ALT Click and the file should automatically go to the downloads folder – notice the name of the file before you click on it – that's what it will be called in 'downloads')
IN PC: Select SAVE TARGET AS, then name your file (and remember where you put it!)
Now you thus should have a copy located somewhere on your computer. (Many WAVs are free, there are LOTS of others that can be purchased.)
Once you have a WAV file (or a collection) you can IMPORT into AUDACITY, and then work on the file as you wish – adding more sounds to it, cutting and pasting, etc etc….
(NB: Not all free WAVS are sufficiently well saved that they'll be useful in Audacity..)

MP3 files are standard files for music. NB: You may need to convert some music files from M4a files – iTunes typically saves things as M4a files. It's an easy-ish conversion to make in iTunes – under the FILE menu, select "create new version' and then "create MP3 version"
Remember where you save this new file.

KEEP Going there is MORE

TO IMPORT A FILE INTO AUDACITY:
IN THE PROJECT MENU. SCROLL TO 'IMPORT' - use browse to find the location of your WAV or your MP3 file, then select it – and 'voila!' you'll have a new file in Audacity that you can manipulate however you wish… use Effects to fade in or out parts of your file, make it play at a faster (or slower) tempo, (good for marching and moving songs…) make it play at a higher pitch (if you think the singer has performed it in an inappropriate key for your Karaoke party…make the song sound like it's being sung in a mine shaft, etc. etc.

So, now you can create a short soundfile – maybe it would be a 'soundscape' that you invent with sounds of crickets, wind rustling in trees, water lapping on the shore…
Or ~ You could create a song with sound effects…
Or --- whatever you like!!

Need help??? Be sure to ask!! I'll do what I can to assist – I promise.

Cheers
DB