

## Sharing audio stories

Audio is a great way to share stories about your organisation and your community. These stories can be shared via podcasts, audio diaries, narration or even through sound bites. Recording audio is a relatively simple thing to do but it's important to get it right because there's nothing more off-putting to listeners than poorly recorded and edited audio.

### How audio can help your Learn Local?

Audio is a great tool for Learn Locals. It can be used to share stories about your organisation, your learners and your community. These stories can be shared via podcasts, audio diaries or even through sound bites. Audio is often referred to as essential but invisible, and this remains true even when recording video. In fact, the number one reason why a video fails is because it's accompanied by poor quality audio. Beautifully shot video will never compensate for inaudible, crackly, scratchy, tinny, gusty and/or unbalanced audio.

### Things to think about

Recording audio is a relatively simple thing to do. For example, you can record audio on your smart phone or tablet. Regardless what you choose to record your audio with, it's important to get it right because there's nothing more off-putting to listeners than poorly recorded and edited audio.

#### **Location, location, location**

You really need to think about where you are going to record your audio and the noise level in that location. For example, are you planning to record outside? If so, wind or background noise is really distracting if it isn't managed properly.

Think about what's going on in that space – is there passing traffic, rustling trees or children playing? All these sounds can interfere with the quality of your main subject's recording. Oh, and if you are inside, avoid large empty rooms that might create an echo.

#### **Keep it consistent**

Where possible, it's best to find and maintain a good recording environment. You will always get better results when you have some control over the recording. However, this does mean be able to record in the same room each time and use the same set up for your microphone and recording device. By using the same environment and settings, you can control the ambient noise etc. but clearly often this is not feasible.



## **Invest in a microphone**

Most smart phone mics don't have much range. Investing in an external microphone that hooks into your smart phone, tablet, camera or recording device will greatly improve your audio recordings. There are heaps available on the market and you don't need to spend a fortune either.

## **Test it**

Even when you are using the same recording environment and settings, never assume that all will be OK. Always take the time to do a test recording before starting in earnest.

## **Editing your audio**

It is rare for a recording not to require some form of editing. Audio editing is often required for fine-tuning or to improve the quality of your audio project or video.

Here are some tips that may help you out.

### **Save the original**

Always remember to download and save the original version of your audio file. This is done to avoid editing disasters where you are left with a flawed edited version and no way of fixing it.

### **Avoid over editing**

It can be tempting to use some of the audio editing tools that; for example, reduce background noise or change the pitch of the speaker. Do this judiciously and make sure you only apply the changes to the affected areas – not the whole audio.

### **Don't overdo the music**

Background music should improve the experience not overwhelm the listener. In fact, it's better when the listener is not overly aware of it. If your audio has a speaker or narrative, loud background music will be very distracting and listeners may need to strain to hear what the presenter is talking about. Background music must 'invisibly assist your video or audio project – rather than distract.

Getting the volume right takes a lot of practice. There's no formula but you will get a feel for what works over time and by making many adjustments.

### **Patience is a virtue**

Audio editing can take a lot of time so you will need a lot of patience. You might need to sync audio with video or you might be cutting out 'umms and ahhs'. It requires quiet and focussed attention.

## Audio tools

### **Audacity**

Audacity is open source audio editing software. It includes a set of tools that can help you edit your audio files and even add effects via a reasonably intuitive interface.

<https://www.audacityteam.org/>

### **Ocenaudio**

Another useful tool is Ocenaudio that does not have as many features as Audacity but is reportedly easier to use.

<https://www.ocenaudio.com/>

### Need more help?

There are plenty of tutorials available on YouTube. Here is just one example:

<https://youtu.be/ZWoycsTWLQk>