

Six Sounds in Search of an Author A Technical Tutorial

This tutorial is meant to provide you with the technical skills to use Audacity, an open-source multi-track audio editing program, to complete the project “Six Sounds in Search of an Author.” If you can operate a tape recorder and a word processor, you have about 95% of the skills you need to use Audacity.

There are a number of good audio editing software packages that you can use. We will focus on Audacity because it’s powerful and free. For this contest feel free to use any audio editing program you want.

The Rules of the Game

For this project you are going to create a one-minute story with the following sound effects ([available here](#)). All sounds originally came from [Sounle.com](#) and were modified to facilitate editing.

- Phone Ringing
- Crickets Chirping
- Heart Beating
- Striking a Match
- Engine Vroom
- Water Splashing

Rules:

- You must use all of the sounds.
- You may use a sound more than once.
- You cannot use any other sound effects.
- You can manipulate the six sounds—e.g., trim them, add effects such as changing the pitch or speed.
- Your story must be a minute or less.
- It can be true life, drama, comedy, detective, romance, adventure, action, fantasy, horror, scifi...any genre you want.
- No profanity or use of personal information
- It can have characters and a narrator, just characters, or just a narrator.

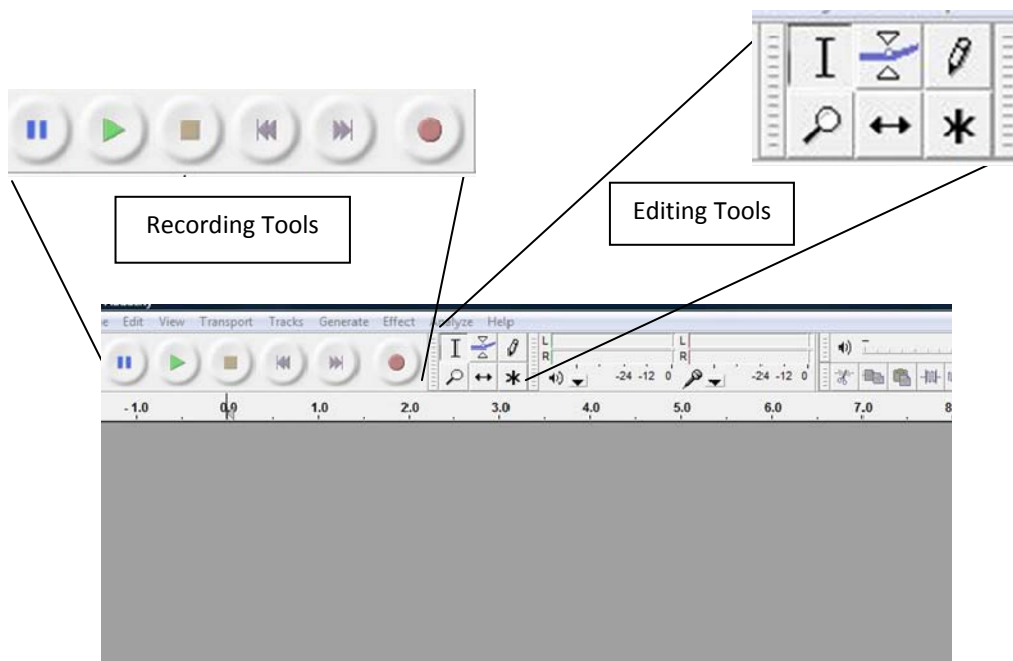
For a more detailed tutorial on Audacity, and additional ideas for using podcasting in the classroom, check out [Student-Powered Podcasting: Teaching for 21st-Century Literacy](#) by Christopher Shamburg.

Getting Started

First, go to the Audacity Web site (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>) and download Audacity. This tutorial uses version 1.3.9. If this is your first time creating an mp3 file with Audacity, you will eventually need the lame_enc.dll file (available [here](#) through the Audacity site). This file will help you later convert your project to an mp3 file. You should also [download the six sounds](#).

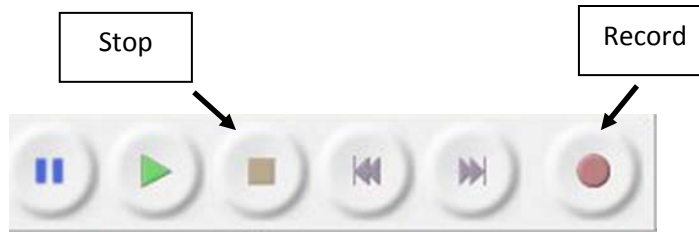
Once you download and install your software, you are ready to begin. Audacity is multitrack audio editing software—it gives you the ability to create, add, move, and manipulate multiple sound files and come out with a single product.

The first thing you should do is write and rehearse your one-minute story after you have listened to the six sound effects. As you write your story, note the pauses you'll need when you later add the sounds to your story. After you have your story, you can start up Audacity. The two sets of controls that you will primarily use are the Recording Tools and the Editing Tools.

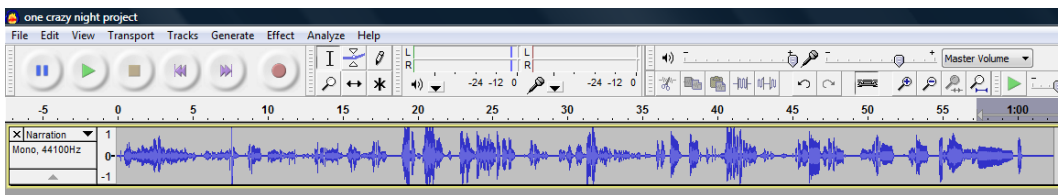


Recording Original Sounds

Attach a microphone to your computer (or speak into the one built in), press the record button, and record your story. Hit stop when you are done recording.

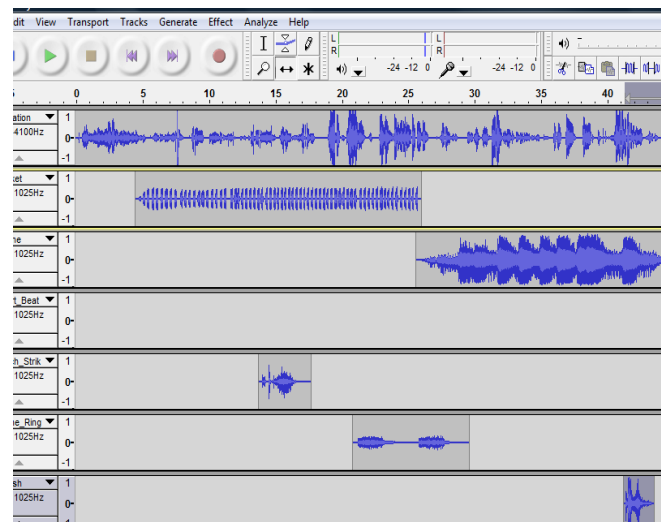
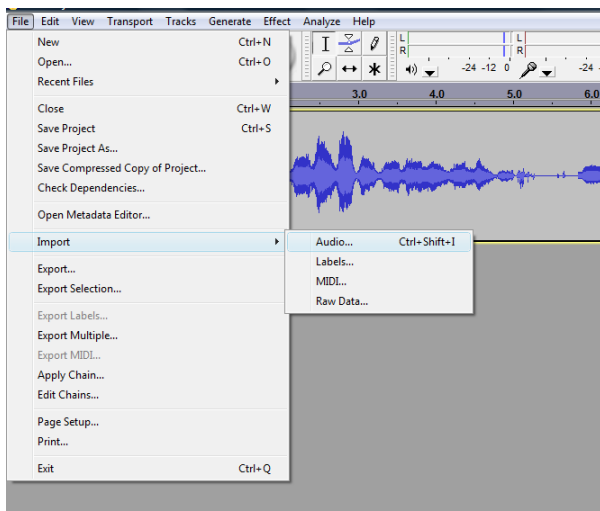


You will get a track that looks something like this.



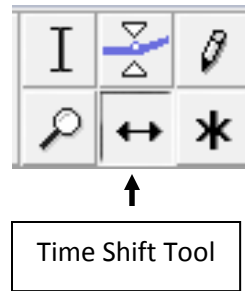
Importing Existing Sounds

After you [download the 6 audio files](#) you will need to import them. Got to File / Import / Audio and select the files. Each imported sound will be on a new track.



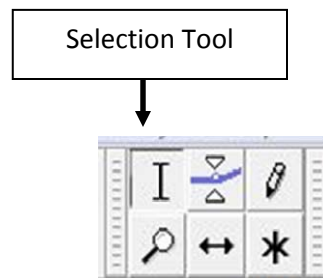
Shifting and Editing Individual Sounds

You can move the sounds along the timeline by clicking the Time Shift Tool and then clicking on the sound in the track.

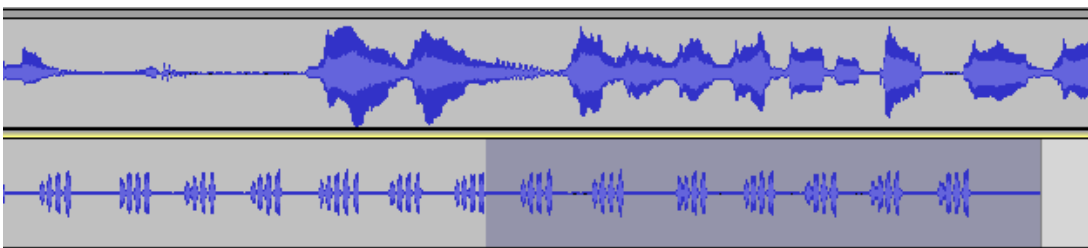


Put the tracks wherever you want in the timeline. You can even shift an individual sound to another track.

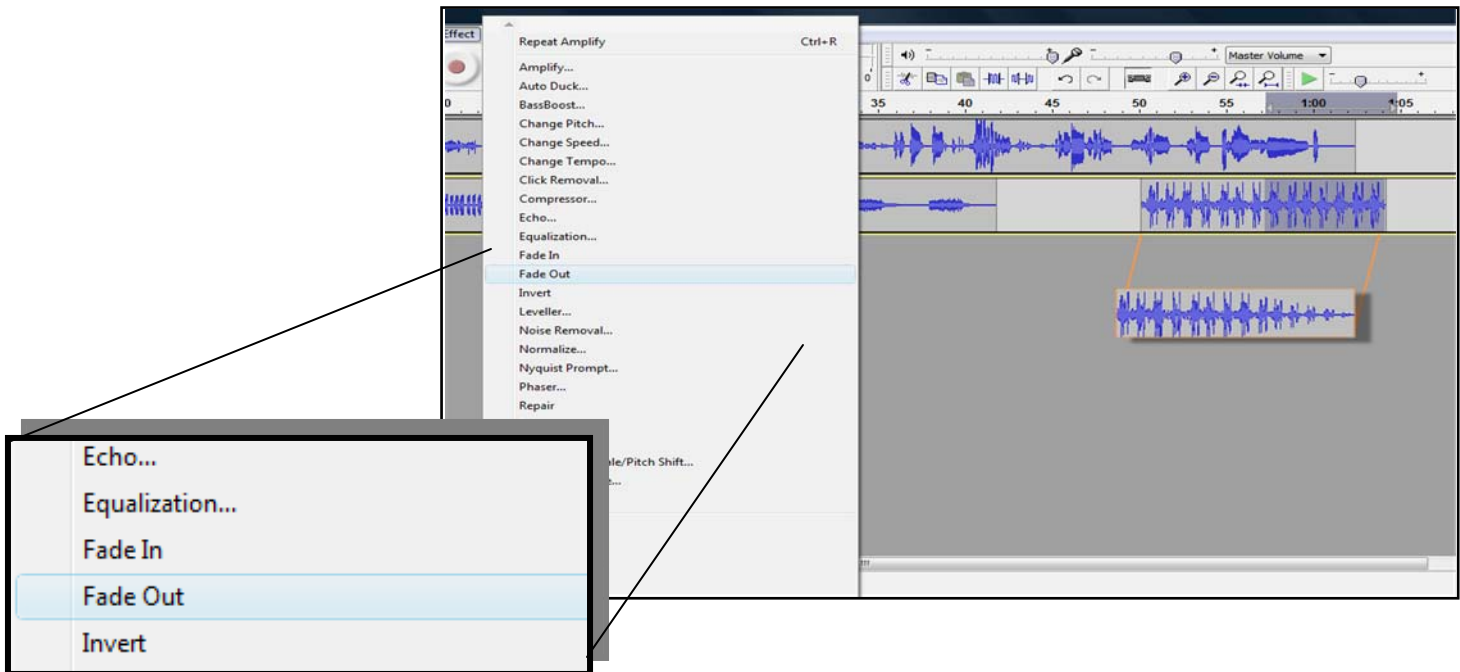
You can cut, copy, or delete segments of the sound on a track by using the Selection Tool. If you make a mistake, just go to Edit / Undo...



For example, if you want to shorten the sound of the crickets, select a part of the cricket sound and then press delete. You can also copy and paste selections.



You can also select sections and add effects. Audacity 1.3.9 comes with over 35 effects. For example, if you want to end your story with the sound of a heartbeat fading out, simply highlight the end of the heartbeat and then choose the fade out effect. You can preview different effects and experiment with different effect combinations.



Continue to tweak by trimming, moving, and adding effects.

Exporting as an mp3

When you have your project the way that you want it, you should export it as an mp3. Go to File / Export and choose mp3.

With Audacity 1.3.9 you will likely be asked to supply the metadata, fill in your name, the story name, and whatever other information you feel is helpful. You will then have to select (pull down) .mp3 as the file type to save as.

The first time that you export as an mp3 you will have to locate the lame_enc.dll file. This file will encode your project to an mp3 file (there are patent restrictions that prevent *Audacity* from including it). You can get a download link for lame_enc.dll file at the *Audacity* web site (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>).

Or, you can click “download” when you are prompted to ‘get lame’. This file you a self extracting executable file (it might have a .exe extension) which means you will have to “run it” to get the lame_enc.dll file out. After you install the lame, your project will be converted to an mp3. You should also save the project, the .aup file. This project is yours for editing, but it is difficult to send or play on another computer, so please make sure you have the mp3 file to submit.

Good luck and feel free to email me with any questions...cshamburg AT gmail DOT com