

Using Audacity

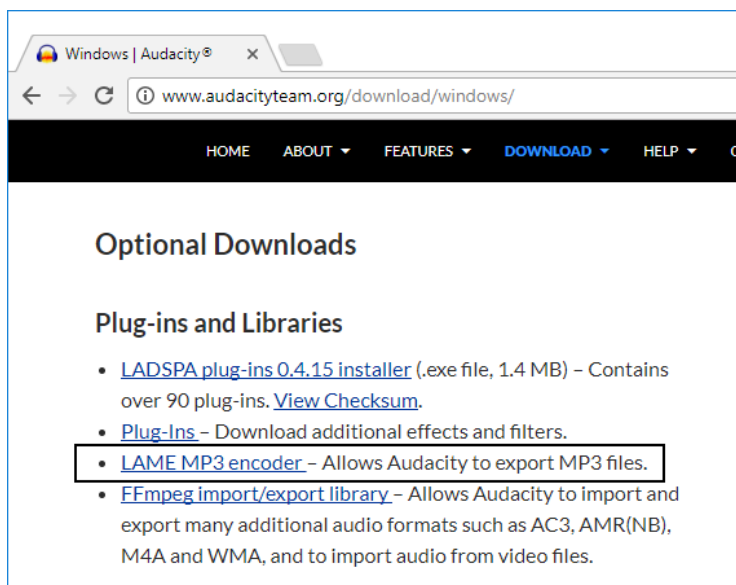
Audacity is free audio editing software which runs on all common platforms.

1: Installation

Download the installation file from audacityteam.org

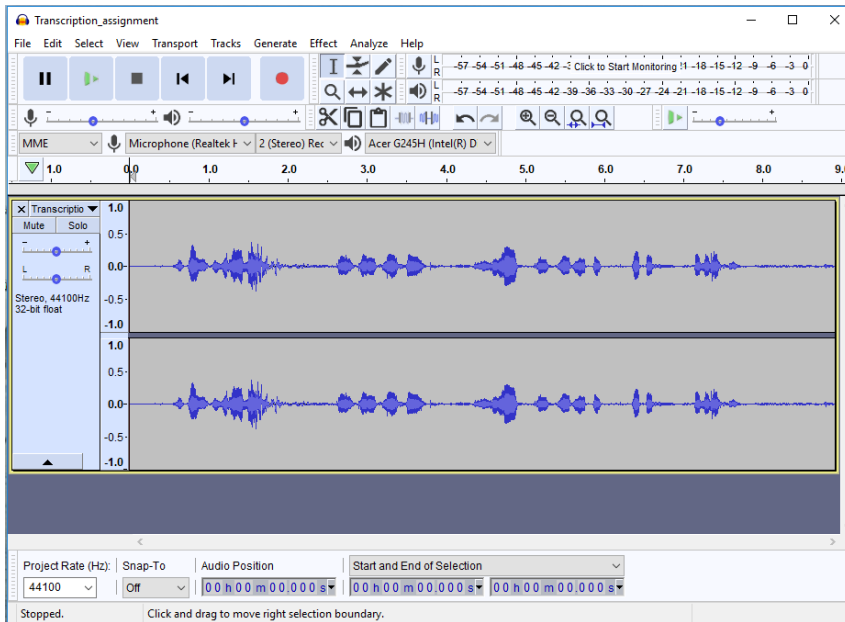


You should also download and install LAME – without this, you cannot save output from Audacity as an mp3 file. Follow the link from the main download page, and then follow the instructions



2: Getting started

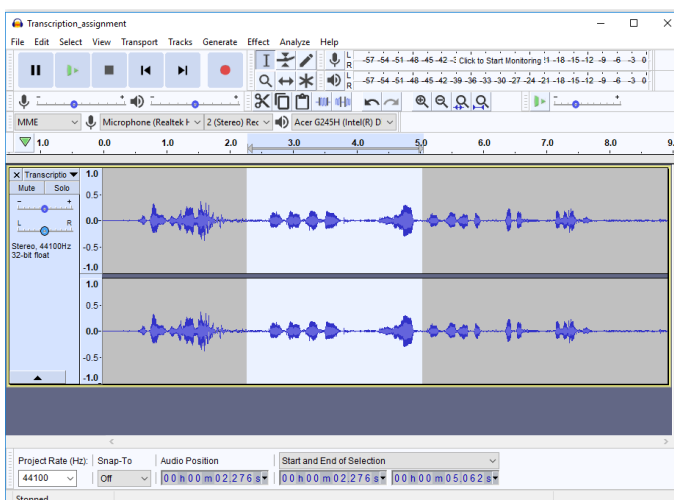
Audacity will open most audio formats; the most common ones you are likely to use are .wav (uncompressed) files and .mp3 (compressed) files. When you open an audio file in Audacity, it looks like this:



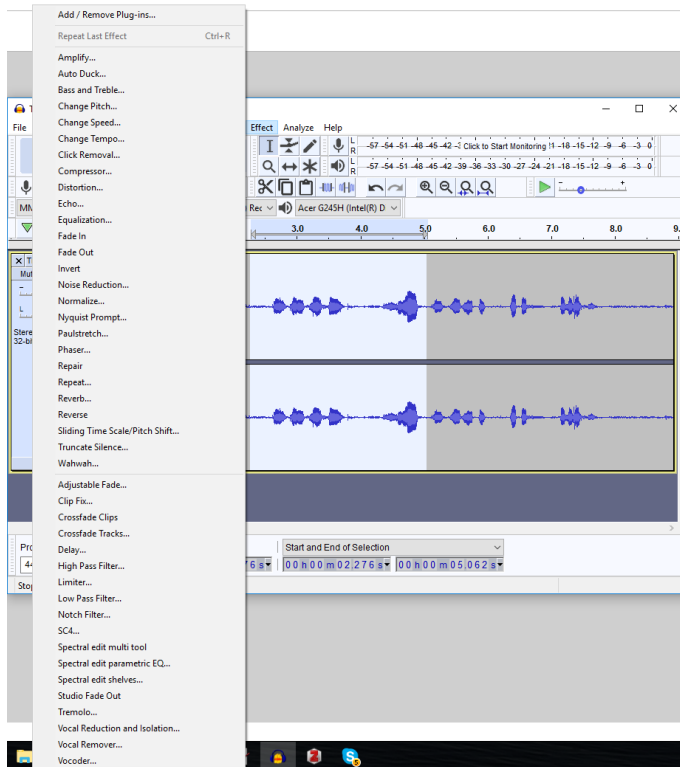
You are shown the sounds as a **waveform** – other views are possible, but we won't worry about them. The screenshot shows a stereo recording, there are two tracks which are very similar. The relationship between the waveform and the sound is simple – where the waveform is bigger, there is more sound, where there is only (or almost only) a thin line in the centre of the window, there is little or no sound. Play a recording, and the cursor moves across the waveform and you will be able to see and hear the correspondence. It is often easy to start editing audio just by looking at the waveform. If you want to see the waveform in more detail, use the **Zoom** menu (or learn the shortcuts: **Ctrl 1** = zoom in, **Ctrl 2** = normal view, **Ctrl 3** = zoom out).

3: Blocking and editing

To edit audio, you need to mark a section of the waveform which you can then work on. You do this by clicking and dragging with your pointing device – it's just the same as in familiar software and the result looks like this:



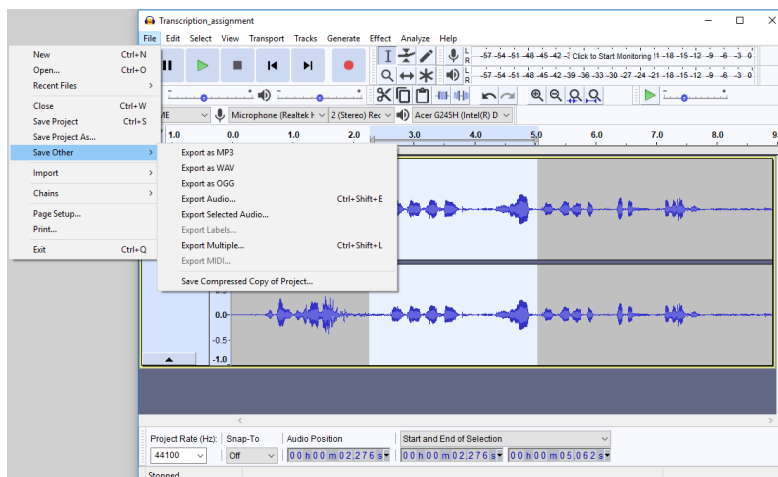
Once you have marked a block, pressing the Play button will play just the marked section (**Shift Play** will repeat the section until you go crazy!) A marked block can be deleted or copied just you would move text or part of an image; it can also be exported (see below). But you can also apply effects to a marked block – there are plenty of choices on the **Effects** menu:



The effects you are most likely to need are **Amplify** and **Fade In** and **Fade Out**.

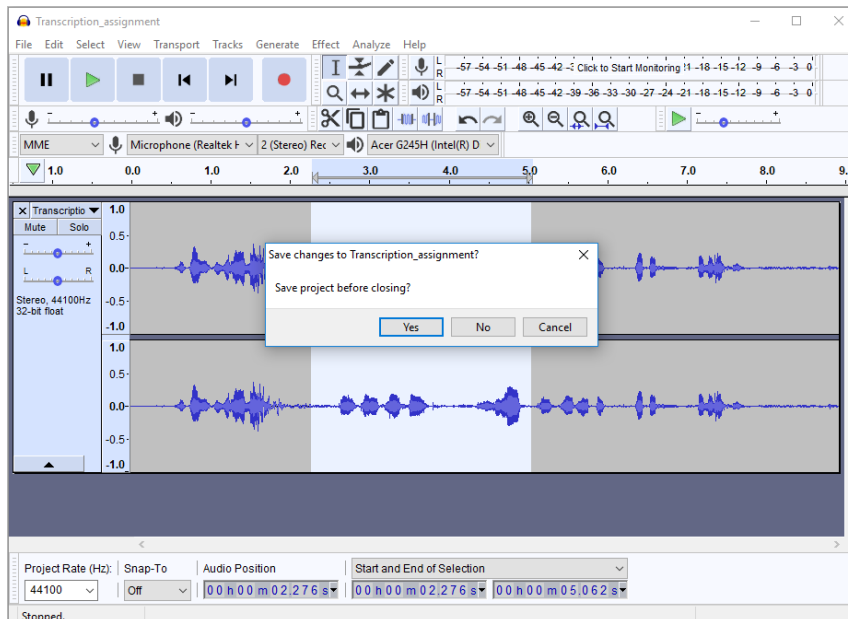
4: Saving edited audio

When you have a clip edited as you want it, you will want to save it. But you should not do this by choosing **Save** from the **File** menu – that saves an Audacity project, and that is not a file type you can use for anything else. Instead, you should **Export** your work: choose **File > Save other**. You can export a whole file, or a selection from your file. And you can export in various formats: the important choice here is between uncompressed (.wav) and compressed (usually .mp3) formats. We will discuss these choices in class. This is what the relevant screen will look like:



5: Exiting Audacity

When you choose to close Audacity, it will ask you whether you want to save your work:



This is potentially confusing – if you choose **Yes** here, what will be saved is an Audacity project file (a wrapper which holds information about the source audio and how you have manipulated it). If you want to keep your work, you should *always* export it as audio (see above). Whether you then want an Audacity project is up to you. I never bother – but if you have done a lot of editing on a file and you want to be able to track that later, it may be worth creating a project.

6: Other stuff

Audacity has a lot of functionality – we have just touched the surface here. Documentation is adequate; online forums are often informative.

One main function of the software is making recordings. We haven't covered it here, because it means that you have to have a computer (and a microphone) when you want to make a recording and that may often not be possible. But it is not difficult – if you think you might want to use this function, connect a microphone to your computer and start playing!