



Editing an Existing Audio File with Audacity

The objective of this tutorial is to learn how to edit an audio file. To achieve this objective, we are going to import an existing sound file, remove all but 10 seconds of this file, apply a 1-second fade-out at the end, export the results, and play it in your favorite audio player. These steps will introduce the basic steps commonly used when editing the contents of an audio file.

Step 1: Find a file to edit

Audacity can import many common audio file formats, including [WAV](#), [AIFF](#), and [MP3](#). Audacity cannot import copy-protected music files.

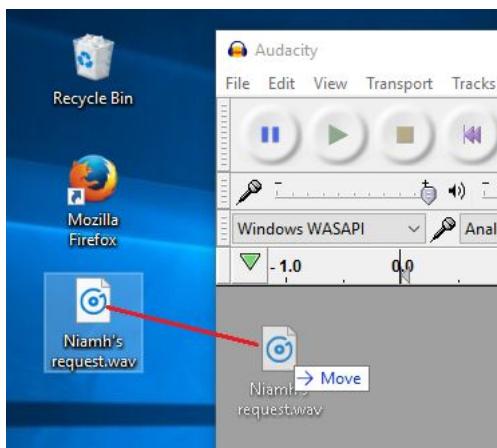
Don't have any audio files handy? There is lots of free music online! Here is one site where you can download free music: [Opsound](#)

The recordings on this site are free, distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike license](#), which gives you the right to create a derivative work without paying royalties, as long as you give credit and make your derivative work free, too.

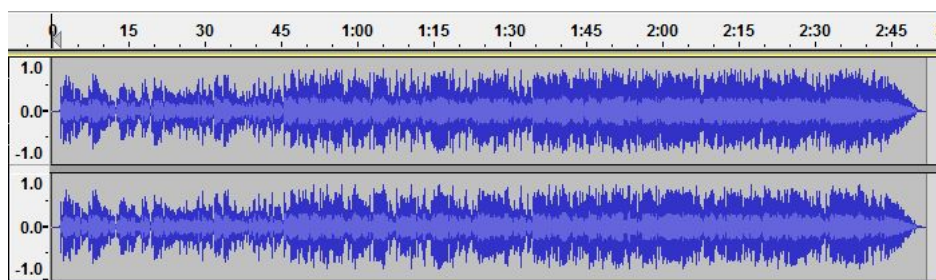
Import the file into Audacity

First launch Audacity, then import an audio file by selecting **File > Import > Audio...**

A quicker method is to just drag and drop the file as in the following example



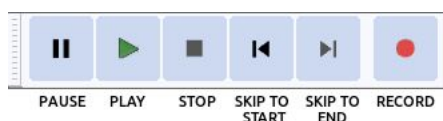
Step 3: Look at the waveform



This image above shows a stereo waveform. The left channel is displayed in the top half of the track and the right channel in the bottom half. The track name takes the name of the imported audio file ("No Town" in this example). Where the **waveform** reaches closer to the top and bottom of the track, the audio is louder (and vice versa).

The ruler above the waveform shows you the length of the audio in minutes and seconds.

Step 4: Listen to the imported audio



The image above shows [Transport Toolbar](#).

Click the *Play* button ► to listen to the audio. Click the *Stop* button ■ to stop playback. I

You can use the **Space** key on the keyboard as a [shortcut](#) for Play or Stop.

Click on Selection Tool I then click on the [waveform](#) to choose a place to start, then click the *Play* button ►.

Click and drag to create a selection, and then when you click *Play* button ► only the selection will play.

Step 5: Create a 10-second clip from your audio

You edit audio [waveforms](#) in Audacity in much the same way as you would edit text in a word-processing document. When you are editing text you first select the text you want to change and then choose what you want to do with it. You might want to cut or copy the text, delete it, paste new text in its place, or change it to bold. You do the same thing in Audacity: first zoom and select the range of audio you want to change, and then choose what you want to do with it.



The image above shows Edit Toolbar with the *Zoom buttons* highlighted. This 🔍 is the *Zoom In* tool, and this 🔍 is the *Zoom Out* tool.

To zoom in to get a closer look at the [waveform](#), first choose the *Selection Tool* I, then click near the point you're interested in, then click the *Zoom In* button. Keep clicking the *Zoom In* button until you see the detail you need. Note that when you click the *Zoom In* button the cursor is centered on the screen.

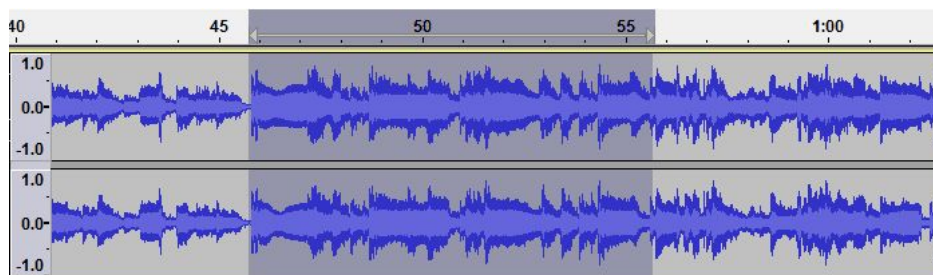
There are also menu commands and keyboard shortcuts for zooming. **View > Zoom > Zoom In** (or **Ctrl + 1**) is the same as clicking the *Zoom In* button. **View > Zoom > Zoom Out** (or **Ctrl + 3**) is the same as clicking the *Zoom Out* button. **View > Track Size > Fit to Width** (or **Ctrl + F**) will zoom the [waveform](#) so it fits in the window.

Use the Zoom commands so that you can make maximal use of your Audacity window to see as much detail as you need, or to make sure you see the entire file when necessary.

Walk through deleting all but approximately 10 seconds of selected audio

To cut this audio file down to exactly 10 seconds, use these following steps.

1. With playback stopped, click near the point where you want the 10-second piece to begin.
2. Zoom in until the **Timeline** shows 10 seconds or more before and after the cursor.
3. While holding down the **Shift** key, click 10 seconds to the right of the cursor.
 - a. Note that this is just like selecting a range of text in a word processor

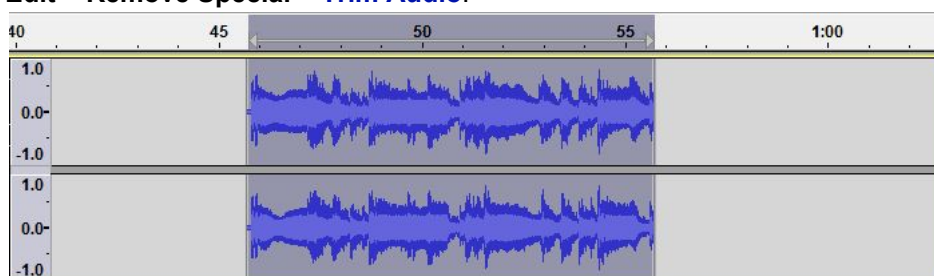


- 4.
5. Press **Space** to listen to the entire selection. Playback will stop when the end of the selection is reached.
6. Adjust the start and end of the selection with the mouse as follows.
 - Move the pointer over the start of the selection - the cursor will change to a left-pointing hand.
 - Click and drag to adjust the beginning of the selection.
 - You can adjust the end of the selection in a similar manner.
7. Press **Space** to listen to the adjusted selection. You do not have to listen to all of it; press **Space** again at any time to stop playback.

A convenient way to listen to only the adjusted start of the selection is to move the mouse pointer a little after the start of the selection then press **B**. The selection plays from the start of the selection to the pointer. To hear the adjusted end of the selection, move the pointer close to the selection end, then press **B** to play from the pointer to the selection end.

You can also play a length of audio *either side* of the selection by pressing **C**. This lets you make sure there is no audio you want to keep that will be removed. Playing either side of the selection would also be useful if you later wanted to **cut** a small piece out of that selection - you would select the small piece to be cut, then could preview how the audio would sound after the cut.

You've now selected the portion of the audio that you want to keep. Make sure you have pressed **Space** to stop if the track is still playing, then to delete everything *except* the selected audio, click on **Edit > Remove Special > Trim Audio**.



If you make a mistake, you can always click on **Edit > Undo**. Audacity has unlimited Undo and Redo. You can undo your editing actions all the way back to when you imported the file. You can also Redo actions that you have undone.

Step 6: Fade out the last second

1. Click the *Skip to End* button ►| .
2. Zoom In until you can see the last two or three seconds of the [waveform](#).
3. Click in the waveform about 1 second before the end.
4. Click on **Select > Region > Cursor to Track End**.
5. Click on **Effect > Fade Out**. The last second of the audio is smoothly faded out.

Note that we always select some audio first, then choose what action we want to perform on it.

Step 7: Export the resulting file

When you save an Audacity project with **File > Save Project** you are doing just that - saving an [Audacity project](#). Audacity projects can be opened only by Audacity. If you want other applications (such as iTunes or Windows Media Player) to be able to open this file you need to **export** it. Before we export this 10 second clip to a separate file we're going to simplify things a bit. Go to the [Import / Export Preferences](#), and under *When exporting tracks to an audio file* uncheck "**Show Metadata Editor prior to export step**". Metadata Editor adds extra information about the speech or music into the file - see [For More Information](#) below to learn more. You can go back to the Import / Export Preferences at any time to re-enable Metadata Editor.

Exporting a WAV file

- Click on **File > Export > Export Audio...** - the standard "Save" dialog for your operating system appears.
- Give the file a different name. Audacity always suggests a name for the file that is the same as the name of your Audacity project. It is always best to alter this so you do not confuse your exported file with your Audacity project.
- Choose a location to save the file in the usual manner.
- At the bottom of the Save dialog is a dropdown menu labeled "**Format**". From this menu choose "WAV (Microsoft) signed 16-bit PCM".
- There are no options for the WAV file format, so there is no need to click the Options button.
- Click the Save button to complete the export of your project to a WAV file.

Step 8 - Testing your new Audio Production

To demonstrate the difference between an **Audacity project** (the AUP) file, and a sound file you **export from** an Audacity project:

- Click on **File > Close**, saving changes if asked.
- Find the AUP file on your computer and attempt to open it with the audio player of your choice (for example iTunes, Windows Media Player). You cannot.

- Find the exported WAV file on your computer and attempt to open it with the audio player of your choice. Success!

You cannot open an Audacity project in a media player. Only by exporting your project can you listen to it in a media player.

Once you've exported your project you may want to keep the original project file (AUP) and its associated _data folder around in case you want to make some changes to it in the future.

Additional videos to help

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7fNSq6QTN0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFX4NLFvivc>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHe_Og-yEow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJhllsLH32I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iP0d9RDOV3g>