

I'm Walter Gajewski, welcome to episode five, "Free Software for Recording and editing Digital Audio."

Last week I talked about using free software for organizing and editing your digital photo files. This week, I'd like to discuss free sound recording software. It's called Audacity and is available for PC's, Mac's and even computers running the Linux operating system.

Actually, Audacity does much more than just record sound. It is a full blown audio recording and processing workstation that rivals the best of the commercially available audio applications. It even includes features missing from some of its high priced competitors.

Even if you already have an audio application on your computer, I would recommend taking a look at Audacity. It has become the application of choice for a lot of podcasters therefore there are a lot of tutorials available on line and many experts willing to answer questions about creating audio files with Audacity.

You can download Audacity along with its most popular add-on, an MP3 plug-in called LAME, from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

That's a u d a c i t y dot s o u r c e f o r g e dot net.

There is no www at the front of the address.

Once you're at the Sourceforge page, click on the DOWNLOAD tab. I would recommend downloading and installing version one point three point two, even though it is listed as a beta test. This new version has some nice added features and hasn't been causing problems, as far as I know.

Click on the download of your choice, depending on which operating system is installed on your computer. You will now see a link that will download the application to your computer. Also available from that page is a section titled "Optional Downloads." From that list, download and install the LAME MP3 encoder. Make sure you keep track of which folder you designated to hold the installation of the MP3 encoder because the first time you try to save your Audacity project as an MP3 file, you will be asked to locate the LAME encoder.

To record your first narration, you'll need to plug a microphone into the mic input of your computer. Any number of inexpensive

microphones will work but it's probably most convenient to purchase one of the popular headsets with built in microphone.

Typically, the two mini plugs from the headset will plug into the computer's headphone and microphone inputs respectively.

When you're ready to start recording, launch Audacity, click on the round red record button and start talking. You can stop the recording process by hitting your computer's space bar. Use your computer's HOME key to get to the start of the recording you just made. Hitting the space bar again will cause your recording to play back.

If your recording didn't work, there are two common errors to look for. First, your microphone may have an on/off switch. Make it's in the ON position.

Also, your PC's microphone input may be turned down or muted. To remedy this situation, go to the computer's desktop. Click on the Start button and then select Control Panel.

When the control panel dialog box opens, click on "Sounds, Speech and Audio Devices and then click Sounds and Audio devices.

The Sounds and Audio Devices Properties box will open. Click on the Volume tab and then on the Advanced button.

This will reveal various volume sliders. Here you can slide the Mic Volume to full and you can also make sure that the microphone's mute box is not checked. Now you can close all these dialog boxes and try recording your narration once again.

Once your voice is recorded, you can select the recorded track by clicking on the visible waveform with your mouse. Now go to the top menu and click on Edit, Select. . . , All.

Go again to the top menu and select Effect, Normalize. . .

When the "Normalize" dialog box appears, make sure to check both the "Remove DC Offset" and the "Normalize" boxes and then click OK.

You can trim out any unwanted sections of your audio file by dragging your mouse across the unwanted material and hitting the "Delete" key. This will remove the unwanted material.

When you're finished editing your file, save your work and then select File, Export As. . .

From the dropdown list, select MP3. . .

Because this is your first project, Audacity will ask you to locate the MP3 encoder you installed earlier.

Then you'll be asked to name your file and pick the folder that will contain that file.

After closing Audacity, find your new file and double click on the file's icon. Your newly recorded MP3 file will now play in one of your computer's audio players.

In a future installment of Tech Tips, I'll talk about how to use that MP3 file in a podcast of your own.

I'm Walter Gajewski. Thanks for listening.