

# Beginner's guide to Audacity audio editor

Audacity enables you to alter the sound of a recording (eg change bass and treble, add an echo, change the speed or pitch), combine recordings together, and “chop up” a recording to remove parts of it (eg removing mistakes in a recorded speech).

## 1. Opening and viewing the audio

Choose File/Import Audio to bring in an audio file. A horizontal “track” will appear showing the audio waveform, from left to right. Like a word processor showing the text of a document, so the waveform represents the audio. In a vocal recording, individual words can be seen as shapes on the waveform, the vertical height showing the volume, and the width showing the amount of time.

## 2. Playing audio

There are play/stop/forward/rewind buttons at the top left, but the quick way to play/stop is to press the space bar. As the audio plays, a vertical line (or “playhead”) scrolls along the waveform. When you choose to stop, the playhead rewinds to where you started playing.

You can import more than one audio track (eg adding background music to some speech). If you do so, both will play at once.



## 3. Using the Selection Tool

Click anywhere on the waveform and press <space> and playback will start from there.

Click and drag to make a selection (always press Z after making a selection - see “Zero Crossing” below) in order to apply audio effects or to select a section to remove.

## 4. Editing audio.

- i) To remove audio without leaving a gap, make a selection, then press <backspace>.
- ii) To remove audio and leave a silent space, make a selection and choose Edit/Split Delete.
- iii) To cut audio into pieces, place the playhead where you wish to cut and choose Edit/Split.

## 5. Using the Time Shift tool to move audio

This tool enables you to drag audio earlier (left) or later (right) in time. If you have two tracks, or have made a “split edit” (see ii and iii above), you can move pieces of audio relative to each other. If you add a new empty track, you can drag audio onto that and overlap it with other audio. Return to the Select tool to reposition the playhead or make more selections.

## 6. Using Effects to amplify and fade.

It is useful to give all your audio the same range of volume. To do this, select a whole track, go to Effect/Amplify. Make sure New Peak Amplitude is set to 0, and press OK. This will increase the volume of the track if necessary.

To fade in or fade out sound, select the area where you want the fade to occur, and choose Effect/Fade In (or fade out).

## Zero crossings

When selecting sections of audio waveforms, it is important to start and end where the waveform crosses the zero axis (see the right hand side of this diagram). If this is not done (the left of the diagram shows a glitch in the smooth waveform), audible clicks can be introduced to the sound. Fortunately, Audacity can find the nearest “zero crossings” for you: just press Z after making a selection. Using this won't guarantee that your edits are perfect, but it will help.

