

# Recording Tips for Independent Recording

Whether you are preparing for a recording on your own to capture audio-only, PowerPoint with narration, or perhaps a screen capture or any other computer-based recording, we have some advice that should help you get ready.

No matter the software you are using, make certain to practice, practice, and practice again prior to the time you've set aside to do your actual recording. You should be familiar with your software by the time you are ready to record. While CTL (the Center for Teaching and Learning) can't provide much in the way of software support, **read below for general advice on recording.**

## Preparation

### Microphone

**Use a USB-connected microphone or headset, Bluetooth earbuds, or other high quality external microphone and make sure to test and adjust your audio (input) settings.** For the best quality, we recommend you skip the built-in laptop microphone. For [help adjusting your settings on a Windows computer, visit this Microsoft support site](#). For a Mac, visit this [macOS User Guide page on adjusting the sound input settings](#). For tablets (iPads and other) and other mobile devices, view the manufacturer and/or software-specific support sites.

### Talking Points and Narration

To prepare yourself, **take the same advice for Studio Recording offered by a CTL senior audio producer.** Specifically:

- Consider using notes or a script to stay on-track. While you want your narration to sound natural, you want to make sure you cover all your points and decrease the chance you will incorrectly state something. Also, while anecdotes can be helpful in presentation and instruction, it is tempting to allow conversation and tangents slip in that offer little value but take up precious time. Notes or transcripts will lessen the chances that this will happen.
- Speak directly to your audience and not in the third person. (e.g., "In examining this heat map, we can infer ..." versus "In examining this heat map, the students will infer ...")
- Guide your audience through any illustrations or graphs, highlighting the key points in your audio, and [keeping accessibility in mind](#).
- Remember that you will have the option of pausing, re-recording, and editing your audio file.

## Visuals

Make certain your visual materials (i.e., PowerPoint presentation and/or other programs you want to show) are fully prepared.

- Any documents, specifically PowerPoint files, should be final. **This means proof-reading everything!**
  - Read the text that you will be showing to make certain it's coherent.
  - Check spelling.
  - Check that hyperlinks work.
  - Check that you've thought about [accessibility, including not using color alone to communicate information](#).
- For PowerPoint files, please consider using the most [up-to-date BSPH template](#). If you do not want to use that template, please make certain you are at least using best practices to create an accessible file. (Often, your presentation's PowerPoint or PDF version of the file will be available or distributed beyond your video recording.)

## Breaks

**Before you begin recording, consider where you want to put in breaks.** Depending on how you plan to use your audio recording, and presuming you will be using a presentation format, you could opt to:

- Record and save a **separate audio file for each slide**. (Very helpful if you plan to record inside PowerPoint or upload your audio file to a VoiceThread.) This allows you to re-record gaffs or interrupted audio and is much easier than editing or fixing longer recordings.
- Or record and save a **longer audio file** where you either ***make a sufficient and noticeable pause*** to indicate a new slide or other logical transition **or even announce each slide number or transition** as you progress through the lecture. These pauses will appear in any sound wave files that may be used for editing purposes and make trimming, or editing, the audio easier.
- Limit your recordings to **cover only one section of your lecture at a time**. (Sections might be about ten to twenty minutes in duration.)

## Software

Make sure you are **familiar with at least the basics of your software**. One popular option for screen capture is Camtasia, by TechSmith. Another is Adobe Captivate, part of the Adobe Creative Cloud. Both are available in the Johns Hopkins IT Software Catalog. And free to all BSPH faculty are [Microsoft PowerPoint](#) (which allows capturing "picture in picture" video over slides), [Microsoft Stream](#) (limited to 15 minutes), [Zoom](#), and [Panopto](#). Zoom and Panopto can be used to record either a classroom session or a prerecorded lecture or interview.

## Recording

### Sounds of Silence

At the beginning of your recording, make sure to remain silent for at least three to five seconds after you click/select to start recording. Often people start talking before the actual recording starts and are surprised when their introductory words are cut-off.

**Remember that most software will let you at least pause your recording.** Allow yourself to pause!

### Audio Reminders

Presuming you are recording an audio narration as a part of your screen capture, you will want to follow most of the steps advised earlier in this document, summarized here:

- Use a USB-connected microphone or headset, Bluetooth earbuds, or other high quality external microphone and make sure to test and adjust your audio (input) settings.
- Prepare yourself by having notes or a script, speaking directly to your audience, and explaining any graphics including complex equations.
- Consider where you will put in pauses and breaks.

### Notes for Screen Capture

**If you are using screen capture software** (recording your computer's screen and possibly video of yourself speaking), make sure to practice, practice, and practice again prior to your actual recording. Heed the following advice specific to this type of recording:

- Close the programs – including email! – that you do NOT want to use/show in your recording.
- Make certain that your computer is able to consecutively run the recording software and the other program(s) you want to show. (Opening the software isn't necessarily a good enough check. Do a test run!) It is helpful to first empty/delete any temporary files from your system (even emptying your "recycle" or "trash bin") to free up computing resources.

**Know when the recording truly starts and ends.** For Camtasia and other software, there is often an on-screen countdown between the time you interact with a command (such as clicking a button or selecting a menu item) to start the recording and the time the recording actually begins. The same is true for ending a recording. You do not want to accidentally cut off the beginning or end of your lecture; it is easier to remove silence and/or the design view of a presentation than it is to re-record your introduction or conclusion.

**Know what the software is actually capturing.**

- You may be able to record video of yourself with a camera connected to or built into the computer.

- You may be able to specify that only a specific cropped area on your screen, a specific window or program, or everything you see on your monitor is recorded on the video. If you are recording your entire screen, you may want to clean up your desktop and, again, make sure to close any programs (such as email or messaging) that offer distracting pop-up notifications, which also may reveal personal information.
- You may be able to specify that only your voice (audio input) be recorded, or optionally include the sound coming from your computer (what you would typically hear through the computer's speakers).

## Editing the Recording

**After you record, take the opportunity to edit your recording.** At the very least, trim the beginning and end of your track and check to see if some simple enhancements – such as volume control – are in order.

If you have recorded narration in PowerPoint, with a single audio file per slide, make sure the audio icon (usually a speaker) is hidden while playing in presentation mode and its volume is set to maximum. Display and go through the entire slide set in presentation mode, stopping and re-recording individual slides if needed.

If you have recorded using Zoom, Panopto, or Microsoft Stream, there are some very basic editing options you can perform in the cloud through your web browser: [Trimming Zoom Cloud Recordings](#); [How to Edit a Panopto Video](#); [How to Trim Videos in Microsoft Stream](#).