

Recording Tips

Independent Recording

Whether you're preparing for a recording on your own to capture audio-only or perhaps include screen capture or other computer-based video recording, we have some advice that should help you get ready.

If you are using Audacity or other audio software, 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're ready to record. CTL Help has a resource that is mostly aimed at [how to install and use Audacity](#) for this purpose, including fundamental editing techniques. Read below for some general advice on recording audio.

Microphone:

Find a USB-connected microphone or headset and make sure to test and adjust your audio (input) settings. For the best quality, we recommend you skip the built-in laptop microphone and traditional 3.5 mm audio jack headsets. (If you don't have a USB headset for recording, it's still better to go with the 3.5 mm audio jack headset rather than the laptop's built-in microphone.) For help adjusting your settings on a Windows computer, visit this site. For a Mac, visit this site. For tablets (iPads and other), view the manufacturer and/or software-specific support sites.

Prepare the Lecture:

To prepare yourself, **take the same advice for Studio Recording offered by our 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's 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.

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:

For more information, see the CTL Teaching Toolkit's website:

<http://tinyurl.com/JHSPHtoolkit>

- Record and save a **separate audio file for each slide**. (Very helpful if you plan to upload your audio file to a VoiceThread.)
- Record and save a **longer audio file** where you either *make a sufficient and noticeable pause* to indicate a new slide **or even announce each slide number** as you progress through the lecture. NOTE: If you do opt to make a longer recording, you're strongly encouraged to at least limit a single audio file's length to cover only one section of your lecture at a time. (Sections should be about ten to twenty minutes long.)

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 is happening.

As you record, remember that most software will let you at least pause your recording. Allow yourself to pause!

Editing Audio:

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 are using screen capture software (recording your computer's screen and yourself using a camera connected to the computer), make sure to practice, practice, and practice again prior to your actual recording. Read below on some general advice for recording video (specifically, screen capture) from your computer.

Software:

Make sure you're **familiar with at least the basics of your software**. One popular option for screen capture is Camtasia, by TechSmith. Another is Adobe Captivate. Both are available in the Johns Hopkins IT Software Catalog. And free to all JHSPH faculty is Adobe Connect, which can be used to record either a live or a "fake" lecture.

Prepare the Lecture:

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

- Any documents, specifically PowerPoint files, should be final. **This means proof-reading everything!**
 - Read through the text that you will be showing to make certain it's coherent.
 - Check spelling.
 - Check that hyperlinks work.

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- Check that you've thought about accessibility concerns, such as the fact that color alone should not be used to communicate content.
- For PowerPoint files, please consider asking an Instructional Designer for the most up-to-date JHSPH 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. (Chances are your PowerPoint file will be available/distributed beyond your video recording.)
- Make certain to 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's helpful to first empty/delete any temporary files from your system - even emptying your "recycle" or "trash bin" - to free up computing resources.

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 above for Audacity and other audio software:

- **Try to use a USB-connected microphone** and make certain to **find the best settings for your microphone**.
- **Prepare yourself by having notes or a script**, speaking directly to your audience, being able to explain any complex equations or other graphics, keeping accessibility in mind.
- **Consider where you will want to put in pauses or breaks**. (Additionally, remember you will be "multitasking", so it may be an even better idea to record in smaller segments!)

Software Reminders:

Know when the recording truly starts and ends. For Camtasia and other software, there is often an on-screen "countdown" between the time you click start and the time the recording actually begins. The same is true for ending a recording. You do not want to accidentally chop off the beginning or end of your lecture; it is easier to remove "dead air" and/or the "design view" of a PowerPoint 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 (audio out - what you would typically hear through the computer's speakers).

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