Recording Professional Voice-Overs

Overview

Lesson 1: Tips for Recording High Quality Voice

This lesson outlines techniques and methods used to reduce background noise, improve voice recordings and improving the quality of a sound recording.
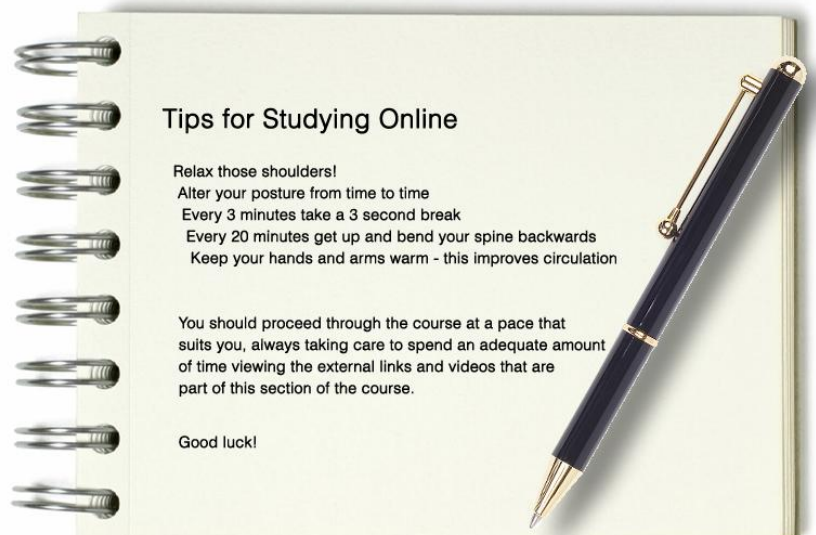
Lesson 2: Setting Up Sound Levels in Audacity

This lesson illustrates further Audacity techniques to edit audio and to set up sound levels for recordings.

Lesson 3: Mixing Voice and Background Music in Audacity (advanced)

Advanced techniques used to mix music and voice will be discussed.

Lesson 4: Sample Lesson Plan: Geography & Podcasting

Tips for Studying Online

Relax those shoulders!
Alter your posture from time to time
Every 3 minutes take a 3 second break
Every 20 minutes get up and bend your spine backwards
Keep your hands and arms warm - this improves circulation

You should proceed through the course at a pace that suits you, always taking care to spend an adequate amount of time viewing the external links and videos that are part of this section of the course.

Good luck!

Lesson 1: Recording High Quality Voice

Sound recording can be a very technical skilled and demanding activity. However with the advent of modern PCs and Internet communication, this has become much simpler and easier to accomplish.

Figure 1.1 A Sound icon

Introduction

Home recording and podcasting are increasing in popularity every day. The equipment used for these applications has become more sophisticated, practical, accessible, and affordable

The purpose of this guide is to help you, the podcaster, capture better sound for any recording projects such as:

- monologues,
- round table discussions,
- interviews,
- music performances, or
- creating audio tracks for videos.

This lesson takes a step-by-step approach to discussing principles, products and, as well as helping get past some of the most common problems.

Start with Good Sound.

Good sound starts with one basic principle:

The better the original source recording, the better the final audio output will be

The most important goal to getting a good recording is to make sure that your initial recording of voices and instruments provide a good starting points for mixing and combining into a final program.

To give yourself the most control, each voice or input has to be controlled and edited individually.

In professional recording studios, every individual voice, instrument, and sound effect is recorded separately, so that they can be mixed together to form the right sound.

Figure 1.2

In a home studio, there may not be time or equipment to record every single thing separately, but at least separate voice tracks from instrument or music tracks. This will allow adjustments to change the level or tonal quality of each voice or instrument separately, so that the
changes you make to one track are not also applied to another track that does not need it.

If this is your first podcast, keep the following points in mind while planning for recording a podcast:

- choosing an appropriate recording location

- selecting equipment, accessories, and even cables and adapters
- recording the audio

The best way to eliminate unwanted background and ambient noise is to make sure that it is not recorded in the initial recording.

What is Good Sound?

The concept of 'good sound' is a combination of three components:

Audibility

- Is it loud enough?
- Is the sound loud enough so the listener does not have to strain to hear it or reach for the volume control?

Intelligibility

- Is it clear enough?
- Intelligibility describes how clear the recording is.
- Intelligibility is critical in spoken word recordings, because it determines whether the listener accurately hears the difference between words like "cat" and "bat".
- Poor intelligibility can be the result of poor pronunciation by the speaker, poor recording, or simply too much undesired ambient sound or noise.
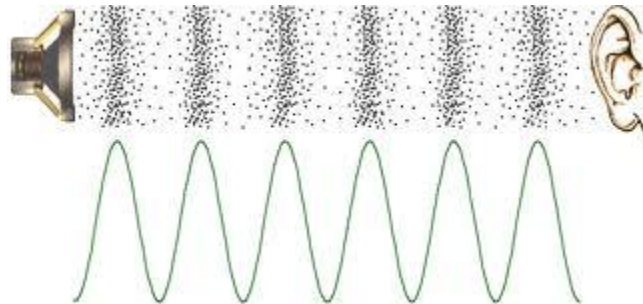

Figure 1.3 Sound waves

Fidelity

- Does it sound like 'being there'?
- Each component of the sound path can affect the tonal character of the sound arriving at the listener's ear.
- This changes the realism and accuracy of the recording.
- While the listener can hear your words and music clearly and at a comfortable level, if it does not sound like the original performance, then it lacks fidelity.
- One example is that maybe speech is warm but unintelligible does the listener little good.

But ultimately, "good sound" is 100% subjective on the part of an audience. If they

believe your recordings and podcasts have good sound then the recording quality is good enough.

The Recording Environment

The 'deader' the better.

As recording equipment becomes more compact, you can look to smaller and smaller spaces for your home recording and podcasting needs.

This is desirable because it provides more possibilities to find the most acoustically neutral (quietest and least reflective or 'dead') areas for recording. Smaller areas also make it easier and less expensive to improve the acoustics.

The following points detail what environmental problems to avoid:
- Avoid reflective or hard surfaces, such as windows or concrete walls. Deaden these surfaces them with acoustic foam, carpet, blankets, or heavy drapes.
- Avoid fans, air conditioning units, furnaces or other appliances that generate mechanical or electrical noise.
- Avoid other people. Use a sign to alert family and friends to stay away while making a recording.

Make a few sample recordings.

Your brain is quite good at ignoring background hiss or mechanical noise, so make a recording of a chosen areas for a minute or so. Then listen to them on your MP3 player or
computer. This will provide a baseline to eliminate any undesirable noise picked up by a microphone.

Tip: Can't find a "dead" enough space?
Sing or talk into the closet. One trick is to open the closet door, throw blankets or sleeping bags over the wide open doors, and position the microphone so that the least sensitive side of the microphone is facing into the back of the closet. The more clothes in the closet, the better! This absorbs many of the reflections and can give you a more intelligible sound.