

LibraryCall's **TIPS FOR RECORDING AUDIO**



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Are you ready to create audio content for your Dial-A-Story or StoryWalk® program? Whether you're recording with a smartphone or a digital microphone, these tips will help you achieve a more professional-quality recording.

Select Your Recording Device

There are many options out there for recording audio, ranging from simple tools like your computer's microphone and built-in recording app (which is totally sufficient) to highly complex and costly recording studio equipment. Every library will have access to different tools and technology guidelines, but here are some of the more common recording devices that may be available to you:

1. **Smartphones.** Modern smartphones typically come with reasonably good built-in microphones and voice recording apps that allow you to record and apply basic edits.
 - Advantages: widely available; you can achieve a fairly high-quality recording with some advance preparation of your recording space (see below)
 - Disadvantages: audio quality will not be as high as a good external mic; you may need to use your own device
2. **Computers.** You can also use the built-in mic and voice/sound recorder on your PC or laptop to create your recording and apply some simple edits.
 - Advantages: widely available
 - Disadvantages: vibrations from the computer's hard drive and fan, or even the floor and table, may be picked up by the mic; computer mics tend to be awkwardly positioned, making it hard to get the mic near your mouth at an optimal recording range. If you have access to a headset microphone, this may provide better mic positioning. However, be aware that low-quality headsets come with low-quality microphones.
3. **Digital microphones.** If you have access to a digital mic or the resources to purchase one, these tools can give you a much higher recording sound quality at a reasonable price. High-quality USB mics start around \$50 and are simple to use because they can be connected directly to a computer.
 - Advantages: higher quality sound

- Disadvantages: may require purchasing a microphone; USB mics can also pick up vibrations from your computer
4. **Regular telephones.** If you want to keep things simple, or you don't have access to the tools listed above, LibraryCall offers a Call2Record feature in the LibraryCall Manager that allows you to record your stories by dialing into our hotline using any phone. Simply click the blue Call2Record button under "Our Recent Uploads" on the main page of the LibraryCall Manager and follow the instructions we have provided.
- Advantages: quick and easy; does not require transferring files to the LibraryCall Manager
 - Disadvantages: low-quality sound recording; if you want to edit your recording, it will require more steps

LibraryCall Audio Basics

- The LibraryCall Manager supports MP3 files. If your recording is not an MP3 file, convert it to an MP3 using our simple file converter: <https://manage.librarycall.com/converter>
- Files must be 25 MB or less. A good rule of thumb for MP3 audio is that 1 minute of audio takes up about 1 megabyte of space.

Prepare to Record

Once you have selected your recording device and application, take a few minutes to prepare your voice and your space. This can make more of a difference than the quality of your mic.

1. Warm up your voice by practicing your script or saying a few tongue twisters to improve your diction, clear your throat, and prevent stumbling over words. Tips to prevent dry mouth and a congested sound: limit drinks that lead to dehydration and phlegm right before recording (caffeine, dairy), chew sugar free gum or eat sour candy to get your salivary glands going (but spit out gum before recording!)
2. Silence background noises on your recording device. If you are using a smartphone, put it in Airplane Mode to avoid text messages or other alerts while you're recording. If you are using a computer, turn off any alerts that have a sound component.
3. Prepare your "studio." Ideally, you will have a quiet space in which to record. Shut your windows and doors, and turn off any machines or devices that make a constant noise. If you can, fill your recording environment with soft items (carpet, rugs, or all those puppets and scarves you use at storytime) to absorb sound and muffle any errant noises. We know this can be challenging if you're recording at a library full of other people and an

HVAC system that you have no control over. Other options: record in your car, in a closet, ask to arrive a little early when things are quiet.

4. If you are using a smartphone, set it on a vibration-free surface so it won't rattle. Try using a stack of books and/or a towel. The mic should be facing up. Try not to touch your phone, headset, or digital mic while you record. All mics will pick up rustling and bumps.
5. Consider microphone placement. If you're too close to your mic, the audio may become distorted; if you're too far away, it may sound distant. To get a more professional sound, ensure your mic is pointed directly at your mouth, roughly 8-12 inches away.
6. Make a test recording, then listen to it carefully to find any other issues you may encounter before getting started. Using headphones will help you hear the nuances of your recording.

Recording

When you're ready to record, take a deep breath because you've got this!

- Take your time, especially if you're trying to record everything in one take. Speeding through your script can lead to simple errors.
- Stand up while recording or find your best seated posture. This will give you better breath control and may help you feel more animated and energetic.
- If you have access to a digital version of the story or script you're recording and a touchscreen, this can minimize the sound of pages turning.
- If you plan to use an audio editor, don't hesitate to pause and repeat yourself when you make a mistake or a loud noise happens in the background. It is easier to delete a phrase than it is to edit out the sound of a plane zooming overhead while you're speaking.
- Have fun! This will come through in your recording.

Editing

Once your recording is done, you can upload it directly to the LibraryCall Manager. Or, if you have the time and capacity, you can spend a few additional minutes applying some basic edits. Two simple editing techniques that make a huge impact on the quality of your finished recording are trimming and background noise removal.

- **Trimming.** It's almost always a good idea to trim the very beginning and ending of your recording. This removes the clunking noises that occur when you press record and stop.

You may also wish to delete mistakes or unwanted noises in the middle of your recording. If you are using the audio recorder that comes pre-installed on your phone or computer, it most likely comes with a trimming feature. This app may be called something like Voice Memos or Voice Recorder.

- **Background noise removal.** More sophisticated built-in recording apps may also offer an editing option that improves the sound quality by removing background noise. For example, in Apple's iOS 14, the Voice Memo app has an "enhance audio" feature that is surprisingly good. It uses Machine Learning to cut out background noise and room reverberation. If your built-in app doesn't offer this feature, you can consider downloading a free audio editing application like Audacity or Lexis Audio (see below).

More advanced editing techniques you can apply include:

- Adjusting volume, either to the whole recording or to parts of it.
- Adding music and sound effects.
- Removing plosives– the strong burst of air that occurs when you say certain consonants – p, t, k, d, g, and b.

Other Tools We Recommend

If you want to take editing to the next level, here are some tools we recommend beyond the app that comes with your phone or computer:

- [Audacity](#): an open-source digital audio recording and editing app
 - Pros: totally free and open source; robust
 - Cons: steep learning curve
- [Lexis Audio Editor](#): a free recording and editing app for iOS, Android, and Windows
 - Pros: Allows you to trim, remove background noise, fade in/out, add some effects like echo, upload and mix in sounds from your phone (sound effects, music)
 - Cons: learning curve (not as steep as Audacity); not as robust as Audacity or paid apps
- [Freesound.org](#): if you want to get fancy and add sound effects and music to your recordings, this collaborative online repository of Creative Commons licensed audio samples offers over 500,000 sounds and effects.

We recommend using YouTube to find video tutorials to get you started with each of these tools. We'd also be happy to walk you through some basic editing techniques. Reach out to us at <https://librarycall.com/contact>.