



Audio Recording with a Smartphone

This is the Audio Recording with a smartphone session of the Digital Creation Hub workshops. I am very excited to be a part of this great project. Each module can stand alone – but, if you choose to take up more of the opportunities to learn from all the partners in the digital hub, you will truly build a whole lot of skills in the area of using digital technology for creative purposes.

Recording with a smart phone

Smart phones are amazing! There is so much you can do with them – apart from making phone calls! And recording audio is one of the amazing things that can be done with them. There are many apps that can be used to record audio on a smart phone. Choose the one you like – here at 103.9HopeFM we use [RecForge II](#) on android phones and on iPhones we have 2 that we use: [Recorder HQ](#) or, [VoiceRecorder](#) (it looks like a cassette tape)

There are 1000s of youtube clips with advice on how to audio record using a smart phone. I am suggesting these for you to view because they explain clearly and succinctly the basics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcZJEUtF0ec> Record better sound with your smartphone Dee Nimmin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J70p_dDm6K8 Using android as portable audio recorder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtrQm82zIW5>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02SDsUvCzZU>

As far as apps on smart phones go... There are three perspectives to consider. Cheap, easy, good (but in reality, only two of these are an option.) –You can have easy and cheap (free) but usually its not good. You can have good and cheap, but usually it won't be easy, and you can have good and easy, and usually it then won't be cheap! Having said that, these are fairly easy to use – but they are definitely cheap (free) and I have found them to be good!

So, if you can obtain a smart phone microphone, definitely use one.

however... all the fancy equipment in the world will not over-ride taking the environment you are recording in, into consideration.



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There are three main things that need to be considered in obtaining the best recording possible with your smart phone

Environment!! Environment!! Environment!!!

The next step after recording on your smartphone is to get the recording onto a computer and into Audacity to edit.

On a voice recording app, look for the settings menu and then look for the share option.

On some apps it appears to look like a small round gear. On some it is the 3 vertical dots and on others it is the square without a top line and an arrow pointing down in the middle of the square.

Record at the highest quality possible, ideally in .wav. There are lots of features in Audacity that with post recording editing can improve the sound of a recording. However, it is more ideal if you can record the best sound possible with the original recording.

Along with knowing how to use the recording app on your smartphone, it is very helpful to 'get your ear in'. To do this, try recording in similar spaces with a variety of different settings. Hopefully, you will be able to hear the difference between mic or no mic and, the different quality and sound file types. Also, it is very helpful to 'tune your ear in' to the environmental sounds.

Our ears are designed to filter out the sounds we do not need or, are familiar with and don't cause us any threat. So, we can be in an environment that can seem quiet, until you use a microphone to record it.

Sometimes called 'white noise' it is the ticking clock, the refrigerator, the wind outside, traffic noise, all these things will contribute to reducing the quality of your recording. So, learn to hear, to really hear your environment.

I went canoeing once, and it was a beautiful day, not many people around, and we were slowly and quietly paddling along a small river. I heard this amazing bird song and knew it would be wonderful to have as a sound in our sound effects library. I quickly whipped out my phone to record it. I could hear it so, so clearly and, there was no traffic noise, and we held our paddles still while I was recording.

When I listened back to the recording, yes, the bird call was there – but it was faint, and in the background. Nothing like what my ears had actually heard! – what I did record loudly and clearly was the leaves rustling in the trees, with the gentle – very gentle breeze that was blowing.

Thank you to our core funding organisations and project sponsors





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Lesson learned – I needed to tune in more accurately to my environment and try as much as possible to become more aware of the ‘unwanted or not necessary’ noise that my brain unconsciously filters out.

Another aspect of controlling the recording environment is to look for uneven surfaces and soft furnishings/surfaces. Sound reverb is not ideal in voice recordings. Sound waves bounce off flat surfaces and create reverb in recordings. And, whilst most people don't have access to portable sound-proof studios – there is a lot that can be done to reduce reverb in your recordings if you can record in spaces with uneven and soft, sound absorbing surfaces.

I look for corners, ideally with curtains. Carpets, or put rugs, and cushions around the place. Remember back to your childhood and playing in homemade ‘blanket forts’ – that is an ideal environment for recording in!!

Hanging blankets or towels around the place you are recording can also really make a difference. Some suggestions are to use a clothes horse, or even on the back of doors. Some people record in their walk-in closets or face their clothes cupboard and record there.

As you find yourself in different environments, start to really listen, and identify places with little or no reverb and that will make it easier to identify the next time you find yourself needing to record an interview with someone.

Knowing the type of microphone you are using also helps with how you use it. Some microphones are uni-directional. This means they only record from the end of the microphone. Others are omni-directional or cardioid (heart shaped) in the way they record. Omni directional means they will record all around, and cardioid in a heart shape around the mic. Knowing your equipment will help when you are setting up your equipment and space. The gain control on a microphone refers to the sensitivity of the mic. Not the volume. So, to reduce background noise being recorded, turn the gain down. When you do this, it is important to get very close to the mic so your voice can be recorded clearly.

The best way is to have a go.

Here are some suggestions for you to try:

Try a recording on your phone, without a mic

Try a recording on your phone with a mic

Find a partner: Try a recording on your phone conducting and interview



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Recording sound effects – you never know when you might need a door closing or opening sound, or a tap running. Use your creativity and see what you can find. – if you are willing to help us at 103.9HopeFM, we are building our sound effects file. So if you find an interesting sound, please email it to manager@esphopefm.com.au

Have a walk around your immediate space, and record in different spaces.

When you have done some recordings, use the share settings on your phone and share the audio files to your computer. To keep the sound files at the best quality, its best to either upload by wifi sync, or email the audio files. Link sharing is another way to transfer audio files without losing quality. Methods such as messenger or sms will reduce the quality (size) of the file in order to be able to send. So its best to avoid these options.

Have a good listen to compare the quality – and then, to edit 😊

To edit your audio files using audacity. Open [Audacity](#) on your computer. You can then click and drag the audio track from where you have it on your computer into the open audacity. From now you can edit it using any or all of the effects in audacity.

When you are finished the audio file can be exported to where you want to save it.

For more information on how to edit using Audacity please see the session on how to use audacity to record and edit.

I wish you all the best in creating your amazing audio projects.

Meredith Waters

