

# Editing Full-Length Interviews

We encourage you to edit the interviews (.wav files) from your collection for use by your organization. Working with sound can be intimidating at first, but it will be rewarding once you've learned the necessary skills.

StoryCorps uses a professional program called ProTools to edit audio; however, this may be too expensive for most organizations. We recommend that you download free editing software, such as a program called Audacity. It will enable you to excerpt and edit 40-minute interviews into more usable two- to four-minute segments, or cut up to eight minutes of raw audio.

If you've never edited audio before, set aside at least one full day to learn how to operate Audacity. After you've mastered the program, editing individual segments should be pretty simple, and the amount of time it will take to create a finished product will depend on how much editing you do and how long your piece is. If you are familiar with editing, the amount of time needed to learn Audacity decreases accordingly.

Directions on how to download, install, and use the program are at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net> and <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/manual-1.2/tutorials.html>.



## WORKING WITH AUDACITY SOFTWARE

**IMPORTING AUDIO.** To get the audio from the your CD or data file into Audacity, you'll need to import it onto a track. To create a track, go to the Project menu at the top of your screen and choose "Import Audio." Then, select the audio you wish to hear and edit. You should be able to "see" the file—every peak and valley in the wave formation is somebody talking or taking a breath.

**PLAYING AUDIO.** Toward the top of the Audacity screen, you'll see buttons that look like ones you would see on a CD player. They work exactly the same way. To begin to hear the audio, place the cursor at the beginning of the track and press the "play" button or just hit the space bar. You can stop listening by pressing the space bar.

For questions or help with editing, visit <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/contact>.

**EXPORTING AUDIO.** When you've excerpted the audio selection you want to use, you'll need to export that piece of audio. You can do this by going to the File menu and choosing "Export as a Wav" (high quality) or "Export as an Mp3" (slightly lower quality). Next, name and save the file. It will then be ready to put on a CD, on your website, in a podcast, etc.

We recommend editing segments in mono format rather than stereo. Select a track, then click "Stereo Track to Mono" under the Tracks menu.

StoryCorps' own edited segments highlight people's personal experiences and their emotional reactions to them. You may be interested in editing interviews in a similar way, or you may want to highlight specific issues talked about in the interview that specifically support your organization's mission or goals. We recommend that you include both interview participants' voices in all segments. This emphasizes the conversational style of an interview, as well as the authenticity of the ideas being shared.

Before making the edited segment publicly available, we recommend that you call both interview participants as a courtesy.

## All edited segments should be:

- Faithful to the overall tone of the conversation and representative of the substance and feel of the interview.
- If posted online, in a format that users cannot download but that permits Internet streaming of the clip.
- Not more than eight minutes in length; StoryCorps recommends segments of less than or about three minutes.
- Cohesive, telling a particular story or sticking to a defined theme.
- Presented in a manner that shows care and an intent to honor the source material.
- Truthful; we suggest that you verify the hard facts in the segment (see page 12).
- Accompanied by the following credit language or alternative language approved by StoryCorps:  
  
“Produced by [INSERT NAME OF PRODUCER] with interviews recorded at StoryCorps, a national nonprofit whose mission is to provide Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of our lives. [storycorps.org](http://storycorps.org).”

Before distributing a story, you will need to make sure that everyone who listens will understand the segment and ensure that the information presented in the segment is truthful. To do that, you must gather background information about the story and write a brief (two- to three-sentence) introduction.

### Here's how we do it:

- After editing the segment, we call the interview participants and play it for both people to confirm that we've gotten their story 100% correct.
- We double-check names, spellings, and ages with the interview participants.
- We confirm all dates, historical events, and other information in the interview that could be verified by a third-party source.

### For example:

- If an interview participant remembers hearing Martin Luther King Jr. speak in your city in 1963, double-check that Dr. King spoke in your city at that time. Memories fade—the speech might have been given a few towns over or in a different year.
- Calling a local librarian is a fast way to confirm facts about local history. They are often our go-to researchers for historical data. Librarians ordinarily have a working knowledge of local history and have the tools and skills to look up information quickly and accurately. Additionally, they're almost always ready and willing to help. They may prove to be your best resource.
- Once you've confirmed the facts, take five minutes to write an introduction to your story so that everyone who listens to the piece can fully appreciate it. Although the people editing the story will have heard the entire 40-minute interview, the people listening to what you present will hear only a few minutes of the recording. Make sure your listeners have all of the information they need to understand both interview participants.
- These steps will leave you with a better, clearer, more powerful story in the long run.