

Notes for Audio Recordings

There is not a lot you can do to control your recordings if you are using a phone. If you are willing to spend money, there are great microphones out there to help you. If you don't have a microphone and only have your phone, you need to **choose your space with care**. The acoustics of a room have a very direct impact on the quality of your recording.

Room tone:

Every room will have a different "tone" to it. This is the sound of the room without the subject you're recording. These sounds are a problem because they will take away from your subject (e.g. your voice), and will also cause continuity problems when you're editing. Usually, your brain filters out any strange background noise. Try a test recording of your rooms to find out how noisy they are.

Room tone might have

- A noisy refrigerator
- Running water pipes
- Sounds of people outside

What to do?

Make sure your room is silent. Turn off the fridge. Turn off the forced air heating. Record at 2:00am, when there are few cars outside.

If you can't find a silent room, **record 30 seconds of "room tone"**. This 30 seconds will be used to fill in strange gaps and silences in your audio.

Room reflections:

Every room will reflect sound differently. Every hard surface will bounce your voice back to you, a few milliseconds after your voice. When this happens, your voice will sound echoey and muddled. This is called reverberation. Some reverberation is great, like in a professional theatre. In the typical apartment or home, rooms don't reflect audio frequencies equally, leading to strange problems with recordings.

What to do?

Find a room with lots of padding. If it absorbs water, it will absorb sound. Record under a large blanket. Carpeted rooms are better than hardwood floors. Record in a closet with lots of clothes. Make a fort with couch pillows. The idea is to absorb your voice, so that it doesn't hit the walls and reflect back to you.

Keep your voice close to the microphone. The closer your voice is to the microphone, the greater the relative volume to its reflections. Recording 10 ft away from your phone will make your voice the same volume as the reflections, making a very muddled sound.

If you place your phone on a table, put a cloth or towel underneath it. This is to prevent sounds from bouncing off the table and making a short reflection.

Some other things to look out for:

1. Watch how you hold your phone. Your hands will cause vibrations and noises on the phone, and could cause problems for your recording. Best to not hold your phone, lie it on a table, on a cloth or towel.
2. Wait four seconds after you press record and four seconds before you stop recording. Students sometimes press record as they start speaking, cutting off the beginning of their words. It also helps to take a breath and relax.
3. Be careful not to breathe directly into the microphone. Breathing into a microphone will cause wind noise in your recording, which is impossible to remove.
4. Wear headphones as you're recording, to know what your audio sounds like.
5. Use an app like Apogee MetaRecorder (the free version lets you record for 1 minute. The paid version is only \$7). It records with little noise cancellation and compression, in a higher quality audio format. This will make it easier to correct your audio later if you need to.