

Digitizing Cassette Tapes

MCPL MEMORY LAB

The Memory Lab is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the Missouri State Library, a division of the Office of the Secretary of State.

Getting Started

Welcome to the Memory Lab. Review the next few pages to introduce yourself to the equipment and software you will be using. Then, you will begin the do-it-yourself digitization process.

Before beginning, please make sure you brought everything you need:

- Cassette tape
- Memory device such as a USB drive or external hard drive

This Memory Lab can only digitize cassette tapes. They look like this.



At this time, it cannot create digital files from other audio formats such as CDs, records, and 8-track tapes.



Getting Started: Equipment and Software

Cassette Deck: The cassette deck is where you insert your cassette tapes. It is connected to the computer, allowing your tapes to be captured and digitized.

Audacity: Audacity is an open-source software that allows you to record and edit audio. It also allows us to convert analog tapes to digital formats. It looks like blue headphones around a yellow circle.



Finder: Finder is the file system for Mac. It looks like a white and blue smiley face. This is where you will find your audio files after they are digitized.



Cassette deck operating information and the desktop location of the programs is on the following pages.

Getting Started: Cassette Deck Guide

You will only use side A of the Deck

Headphone plug in

Volume control



On/Off button

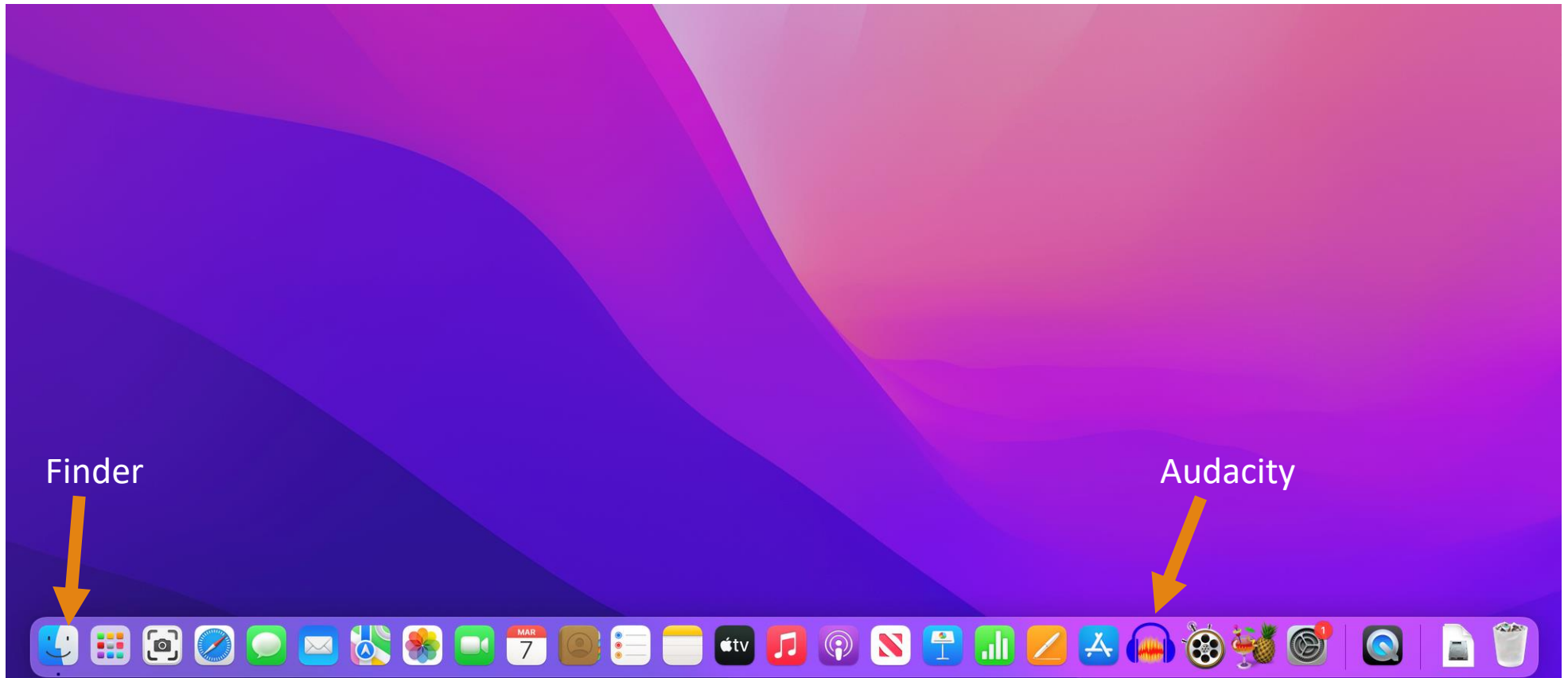
Play

Rewind

Fast Forward

Stop/Open the Deck

Getting Started: Desktop Screen Guide



Overview of Digitization Process

Now that you are aware of the equipment and software you will be using, you are now ready to digitize your cassette tape.

The digitization process is broken down into four parts:

1. Digitizing your cassette: During these steps, you will insert your tape into the cassette deck and use Audacity to record it. You may record the entire tape or individual sections.
2. Editing your recording: You can use Audacity to edit your audio recording. You can remove whole clips or pieces from your recording such as dead air.
3. Saving your recording: At this point, you will export your recording from Audacity as an .MP3 file and save it to your storage device.
4. Finishing Up: Lastly, you will use Finder to open and listen to your recording. You will also close the Audacity program.

Digitizing Your Cassette

You are now ready to start digitizing your cassette tapes. You will use the tape deck and audacity to listen to your tapes and record them. You can record your whole tape or sections of it.

1. Turn on the cassette by pushing the power button.
2. Plug your headphones into the small silver box on top of the deck and put them on.

3. Push the stop/eject button and insert your tape into the cassette deck. Make sure the bottom of the cassette, where the tape is exposed, is facing down. Close the deck.



4. Rewind your tape to the beginning if needed.

5. Next, open Audacity. It is located on the bottom tray of the desktop, toward the right side. It looks like blue headphones around a yellow circle.



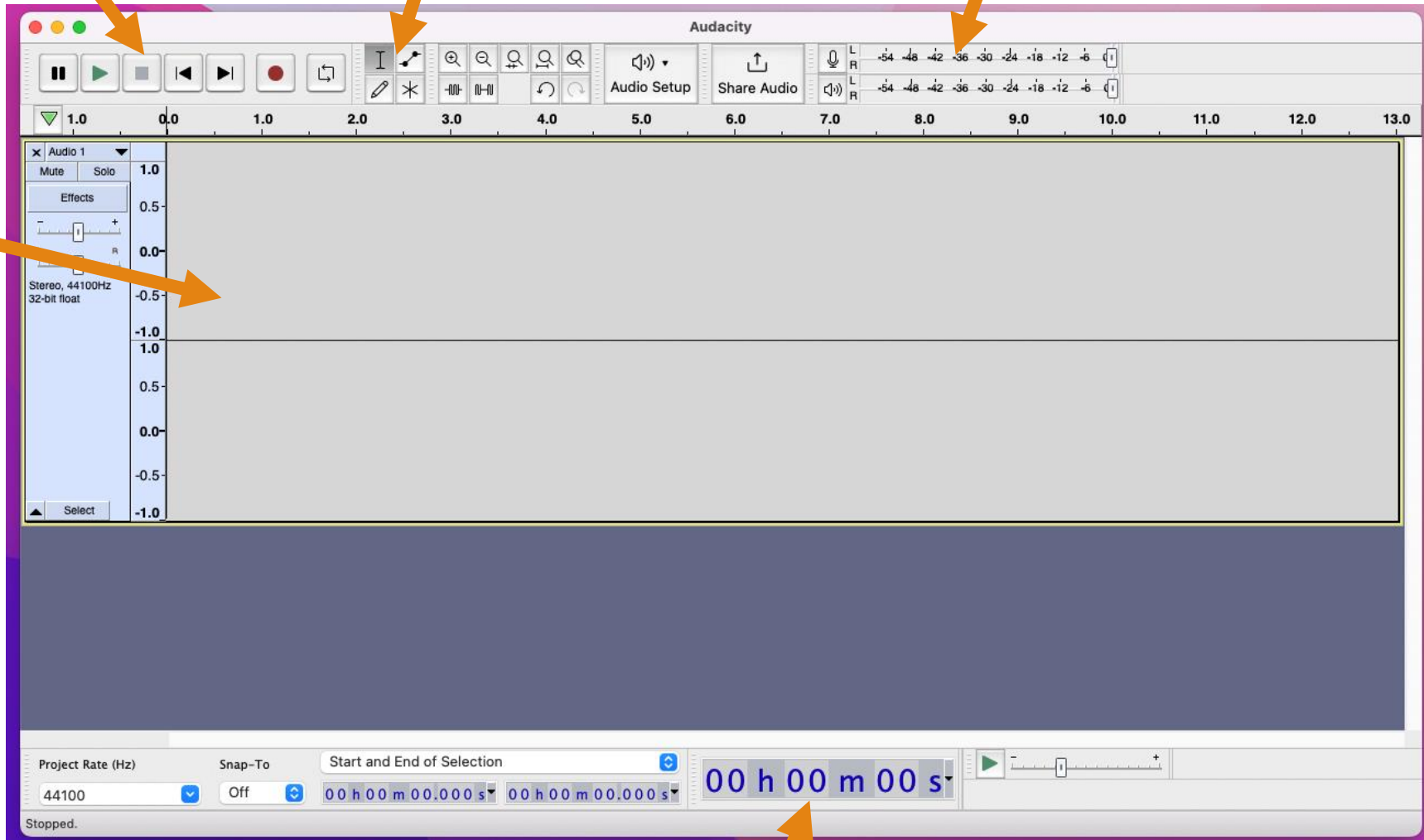
6. Audacity will open. It will be a primarily white and blue window with a toolbar at the top. Briefly familiarize yourself with the program by looking at the next page.

Recording and playback controls.

Editing controls.

Recording level controls.

This is a track. It appears once you start recording.



This timer shows how long you have been recording.

7. Use the rewind, fast forward, and play buttons on the deck to get your cassette tape to the spot where you want to begin recording. Make sure your headphones are plugged in to the small silver box so you can hear the tape playing.

8. When you have found your starting point, push stop on the cassette deck.

9. Click the red circle button at the top left of the audacity screen.



10. Push play on the cassette deck. Your audio is now recording.

11. Click the stop button (the black square) at the top left to stop recording. Push the stop button on the cassette deck to stop your tape.



12. To listen to your recording, click the play button (green arrow) at the top left of Audacity.



Editing Your Recording

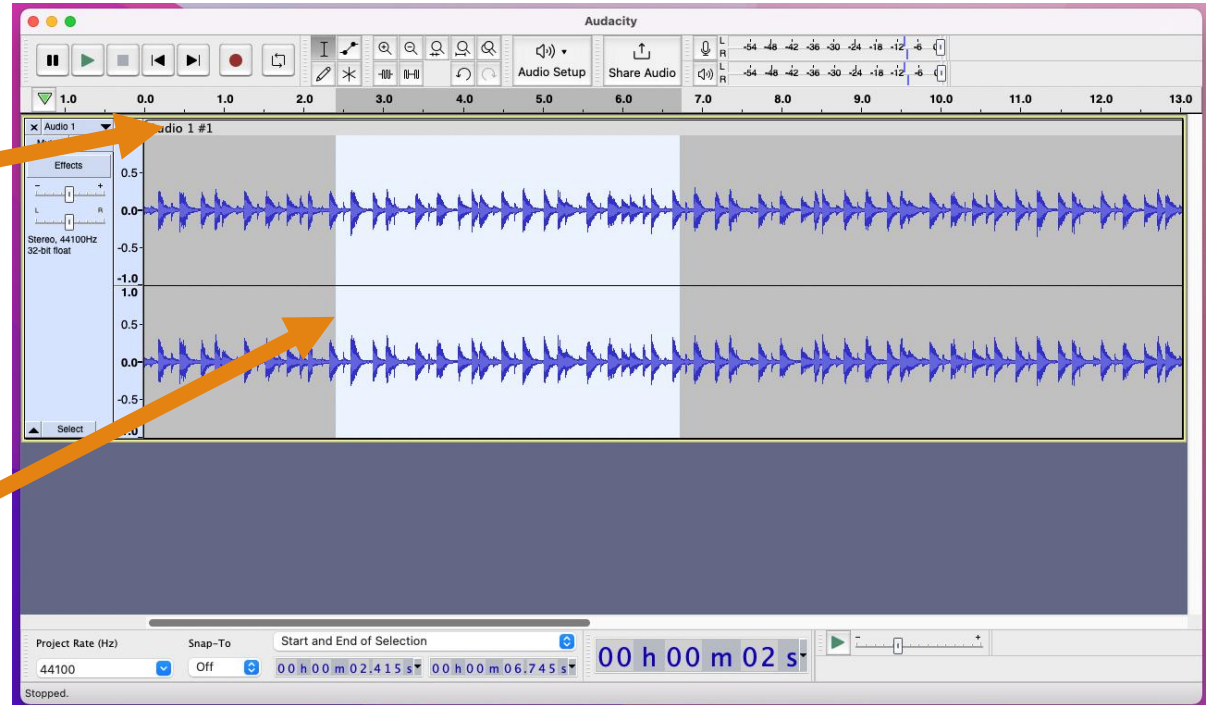
You can use Audacity to remove clips or pieces from your recording.

1. These are the editing tools. They are located to the right of the record button on Audacity. The selection tool (it looks like a capital “I”) is what you will use to edit. Click it to make sure it is selected.



2. To delete entire clips click the name of the clip in the track section to highlight it. Push the delete key on the keyboard.

3. If you would like to remove a piece of your recording, click and drag to highlight the section. Then push the delete key.

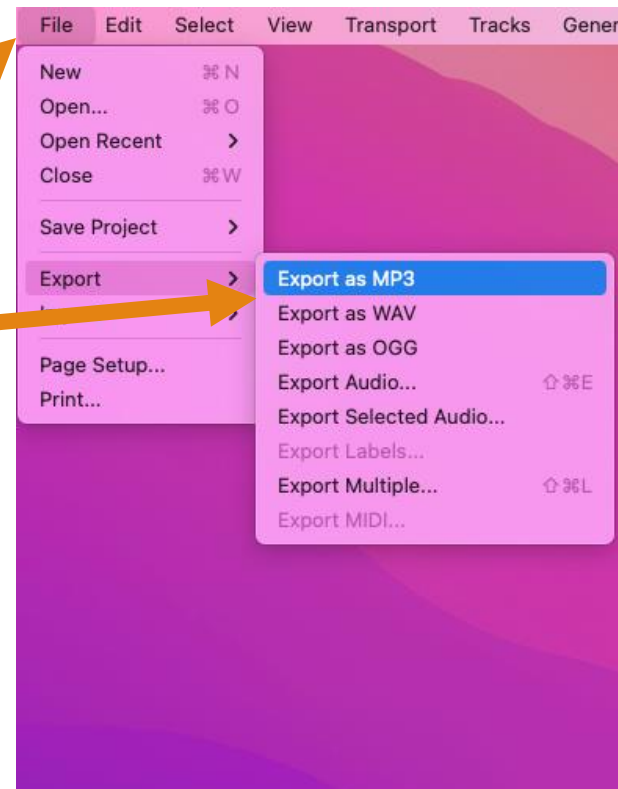


Saving Your Recordings

Now you will export your recording from Audacity as an .MP3 file and save it to your storage device.

1. Click File at the top left of the computer screen.

2. Hover over Export and click Export as MP3.

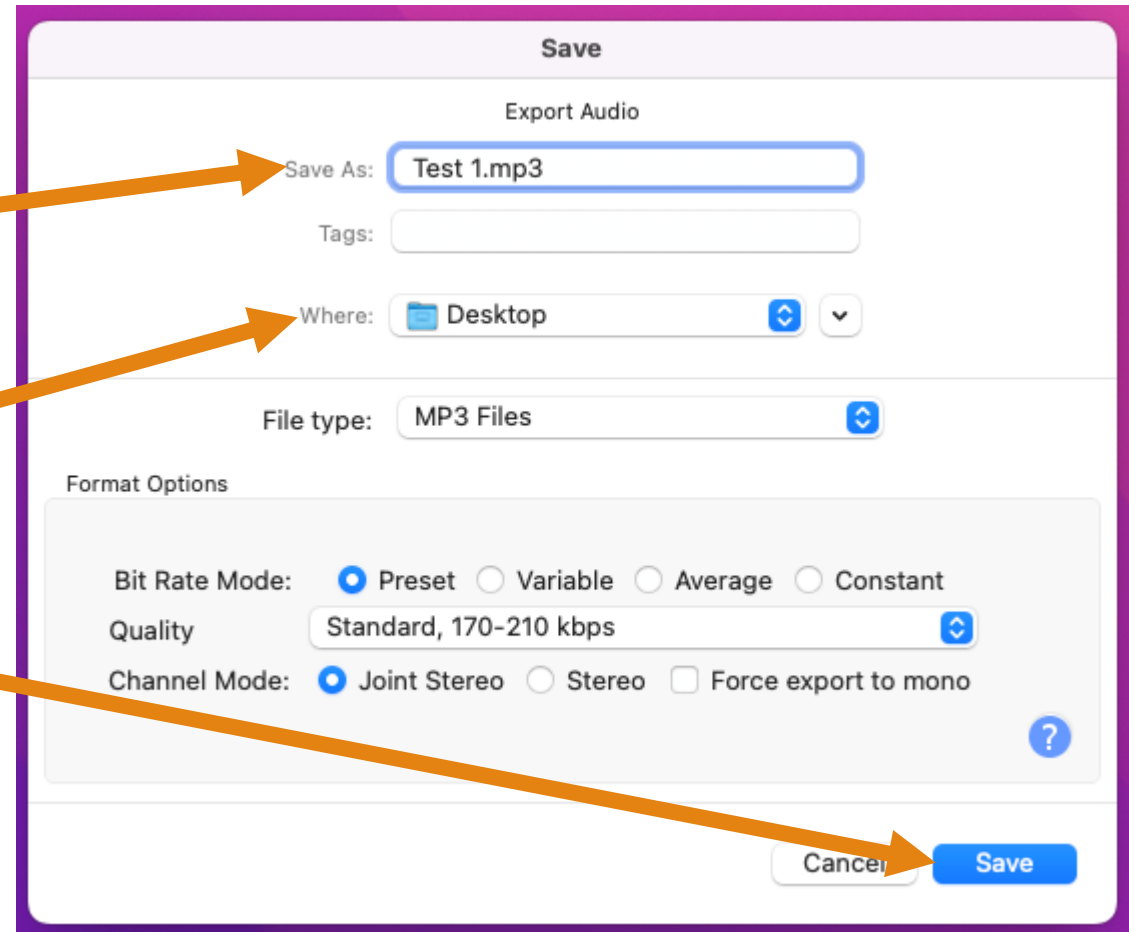


3. A Save box will pop up.

4. Name your recording file in the Save As box.

5. Find your storage device in the Where box and select it. You can also save it on the desktop if you are using cloud storage.

6. Click the Save button. Your recording will be exported.




Finishing Up

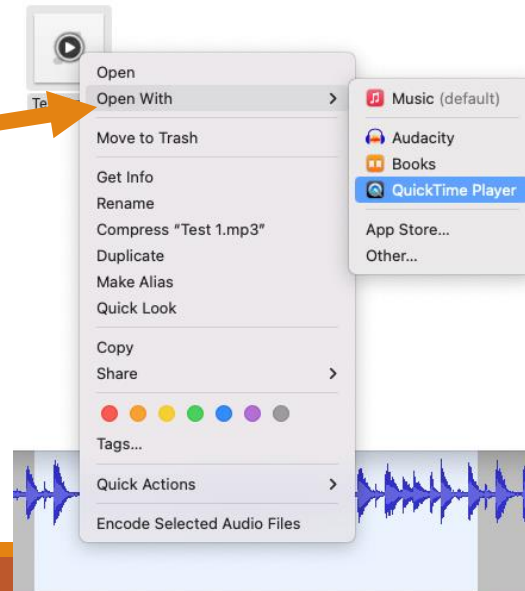
After all your tapes have been recorded and saved, you can now listen to your recordings and close Audacity.

1. Open Finder to find your files. It is located on the lower left of the screen. It looks like a blue and white smiley face.



2. Locate your file and right click on it.

3. Hover over Open With and click  QuickTime Player. Your audio file will open up and you may now listen to it by clicking the play button.



4. Close the QuickTime player after you have finished listening.

5. Close Audacity by clicking the red X button at the top left of the window.

6. A box may pop up asking you to save the project before closing. Your files have already been exported to your storage device, so you can click No.

7. Safely eject your storage device by locating it in Finder or near the top right of the desktop. Right click on its name and click Eject.

