

Making audio recordings

Remarks, tips and hints for recording audio

Requirements:

- Audio recording app. (MD rec., Flashcardrec. Camcorder)
- Manuals for the devices.
- Sufficient empty media.
- Enough spare batteries, or a separate power supply for the recorder
- Microphone(s) (depending on the situation: small tripods, windshields, etc.)
- Small headphones for sound checks.
- For digitization: A USB port with an audio device, or a soundcard for processing
- An appropriate digitalization program: 'Adobe Audition', 'Audacity' or similar.

1. General

- Familiarize yourself with your recording and digitizing equipment.
- Please refer to the manuals(s) if something is unclear and also to ensure you are operating the devices correctly
- Make sure that you have a fully charged and stable power supply, or fresh batteries.
- Before starting with the 'real' recording make a test recording to check whether everything is set-up and connected correctly.
- Speak and record the text of the tape label ID, and label the media (cassette or tape). This is necessary for later identification.
- Make a sound check to the test recording.

2. Recording audio

- If you must record outdoors try to find a quiet and shielded place out of the wind.
- If necessary use windshields for the microphone(s).
Do not expose the equipment to the sunlight for too long, as devices may heat up so that the given specifications are no longer valid. Try to find a shaded place.
- Place the microphone as close as possible, but not too close to the point of interest.
- Be aware of the characteristics of the microphone. Make sure that the microphone does not 'listen' to the ground or face in the wrong direction.
- Do not use long extension cables. Keep the microphone cable as short as possible.
- Because of the physical construction, most 'asymmetric' microphones are sensitive for hum and other noise. 'Symmetric' microphones don't suffer from this but are not always compatible with the standard recording equipment.
- Keep your microphone surfaces clean. A fly or a bee may completely disturb the recording when flying around the microphone because it smells good.
- Set the recording level of the device so that the signal is not 'over-recorded' and also not too weak. Especially for digital recorders, recording too loud gives an ugly distorted sound. -3db is a good peak level.
- Recordings on digital media have to be either a sample rate of 44.1 Khz or 48 Khz and a resolution of at least 16 Bits. (also called linear PCM recording)
- Do not make recordings in MP3 or the ATRAC format (MiniDisk) for later archiving, unless there is really no other option.
- Never record in LP (Long Play) mode with digital devices. This will produce nonlinear audio files. (see the separate sheet of Audio Compression Techniques.)