

Preserving A Legacy

Audio Method

Recording audio of a family member's voice is a great way to cherish special memories and moments for years to come. It can be a powerful way to capture unique stories, laughter, and voices that will be treasured for generations. Whether it's an audio diary, a special message, or even just a casual conversation, being able to have an audio recording of your loved one's voice will be invaluable in the future.

a. How do I record audio?

The simplest way to capture audio is to use your smartphone voice memo app. This tool is quick to learn as it offers a few buttons for recording, renaming files, and creating organized folders. We linked some videos here for you to try it out yourself (Iphone [link](#)/Android [link](#))! To get the best audio for your interview recording, place the phone as close to the interviewee's mouth as possible - about 6-12 inches away! This is a great range that helps sound clarity and noise cancellation. (Note that all situations can differ so it's important to do some test runs to find the right setup for you).

*There are several sound recorders available that allow for high-quality audio capture as well. If you're more invested in capturing memories of a loved one then you can upgrade your equipment for your project but it's not necessary. More information can be found under **Advanced Tools** after Tips and Tricks.*

b. Tips and Tricks

Recording audio on a smartphone can be a convenient and inexpensive way to capture sound. Here are some tips to help you record high-quality audio using your smartphone:

1. Find a quiet environment: Background noise can ruin your recording. Try to find a quiet location; away from traffic, fans, fish tanks, animals, or echoes of your own voice. We understand how difficult it is to hide from these everyday sounds without going into a soundproof room, but the more you do to prevent distorted audio the better.

Tip: record audio in a room with carpet or a rug. Tile, hard walls, and windows create an echo especially in a closed room. Another option is to

record outside to avoid echo, but you will be at risk of picking up other unwanted sounds such as wildlife, planes, vehicles, and even wind.

2. *Hold the phone steady*: Stability is key to getting a clear and consistent recording. Use both hands to hold the phone steady, and try to avoid moving it around while someone talks into it.

Tip: Recording tools are becoming more accessible for smartphones. One of our favorites is the **tripod**. They're relatively cheap and useful in a scenario where movements aren't required. You can find them at your local superstore or Amazon.

3. *Use an external microphone*: If you plan to record frequently, you might want to invest in an external microphone adaptable to your phone. This can improve the sound quality of your recordings. Again, this is optional if your recording quality works for your project (most smartphones do a great job with audio).

Tip: Most headphones work well as an external microphone for smartphones, reducing the need for any expensive equipment.

4. *Use a recording app*: Almost all smartphones come with a built-in recording app, but you might want to try a third-party app that offers more features and settings, such as adjusting the gain or adding filters.

5. *Monitor the levels*: Before you start recording, check the levels on your phone's screen or in the recording app. When you speak into the phone you'll most likely see a waveform increasing and decreasing in height. That tells you how "strong" the audio is. You want to avoid a spike in the waveform; it means your sound is too loud to be registered on your recording device (i.e phone, mic, or sound mixer). A range within normal conversation should not spike unless there's something like laughter, coughing, or sneezing.

6. *Keep the phone close to the sound source*: Depending on what or who you're recording, you might need to change the distance of the phone to the sound source to capture it more clearly.

Tip: Don't get too close to your subject to avoid spiking the audio. You also don't want to be too far away and not capture crisp audio. As stated above the best distance would be 6-12 inches away. Be sure to listen to the recording to see if it meets your expectations.

7. *Avoid touching the microphone:* Be careful not to cover or touch the microphone on your phone while recording. This can create unwanted noise and vibrations. *See above for tripod tip #2.*
8. **SAVE IN OTHER PLACES:** It cannot be stressed enough that learning to save your files onto a separate location is imperative. Having cloud storage on your phone can be helpful but we advise that you shop for some external storage that connects to your computer. We personally use terabyte books that can hold large amounts of data. Depending on the size of your project you can save a lot of data with a 32 GB flash drive up to a 1 TB hard drive (or more). Do some research and know you can always buy more storage if need be, but it goes without saying that this is not a lesson you want to learn for yourself and buying extra storage is worth the investment.

By following these tips, you should be able to capture high-quality audio recordings using your smartphone and have audio documentation of your family legacy.

c. *Advanced Tools:*

There are a few other more costly but well-rounded tools to use when recording audio. Creating your own traveling studio can be helpful when performing lots of interviews in different locations. Here are some steps to get you started:

1. *Invest in a quality microphone* – Invest in a good quality microphone that is designed to capture sounds accurately and clearly. Some training might have to go into learning how to calibrate your mic, but it's nothing you can't find on youtube.
2. *Use an audio interface or recorder* – An audio interface is a device that connects your microphone directly to your computer to capture clear sound and fine tune your audio settings. You don't always need an audio interface to record; some affordable alternatives, such as the [Zoom H1n](#), provide you with the flexibility to save your recordings onto external storage devices (micro SD cards) with similar quality.

3. *Set up the recording space* – Make sure the recording space is quiet and free of background noise. You'd be surprised with how much ambient noise is around us day to day. Traffic, wind, AC/Heater, dogs barking, water running... it's a wonder how we don't go crazy hearing that all day. Even though we might not pay attention to it all the time these sounds have a way of amplifying during your recording session so we recommend taking headphones and your recording device to listen to the area you plan on recording. Nothing is worse than reviewing a completed interview with a fan turning on and off in the background. (but if this does happen there are ways to help reduce background noise and is subject to the type of audio editing software you decide to use). (External mics and recorders: Adjust the gain or microphone sensitivity if necessary to avoid distortion).

4. *Test your recording* – Before you start recording, test your setup to make sure the audio is being recorded properly. Take some time to learn how to use your equipment before taking on important recording sessions. Learn how the audio is affected by closed or open rooms, areas with tile v. carpet, outside v inside, etc.

5. *Record in mono* – Recording in mono can help reduce background noise and make it easier to edit later on. Mono simply means that audio from your mic is being recorded onto a single track that will be played on both speakers at the same time rather than dual tracks playing on separate speakers. (Another suggestion is to record at levels -10Db on your mic if possible and boost your recording level on the recorder/audio interface to capture a more studio-like sound).

6. *Editing* – Editing audio will require software compatible with your computer. Some of our suggestions can be found [here](#) as well as a quick review on audio/video transcribing software called [Descript](#). Descript reduces your editing time by letting you edit the transcription to make a cut in the actual audio which is incredibly useful when editing longform content and it allows you to add pictures, stock videos, even GIF's. Not to mention it does this with video recordings too so if you choose to upgrade your project to a video format then you can absolutely use this software again! (If you decide to download this software WATCH THE

TUTORIAL).

You will also need a computer with USB ports for a MicroSD/SD card adapter. Depending on the extent of your creative abilities, patience, and willingness to learn you can create something as simple as a burn disc or a full scale audiobook to share digitally with your family.

d. Resources:

Transcriber: [Descript](#) Tutorial, [Audacity Tutorial](#), [Free Audacity Alternatives](#)

Equipment: Tripod stand (any online search will get you started), [phone mics](#), [Zoom H1n](#) recorder (advanced)

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