BASICS – HOW TO RECORD YOUR AUDIOBOOK ON AUDACITY

Toni Runkle

BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

1. SIGN UP FOR AN ACX ACCOUNT. You must sign up as a narrator. Then you select your book to narrate. BRW must approve you, which they will because you've already talked to them about recording your own book. NOTE: You do not have to input bank info. BRW will give you the share of royalties that would normally go to an outside narrator.
2. Once they approve you through the ACX account, ACX will send the pdf manuscript to record. And they will assign a due date. This is flexible since it's your own book. You just need to contact BRW (through the ACX site) for the extension so ACX can see that it's been approved.
3. This website is where you will upload your tracks.
4. NOTE: The tracks must all be recorded individually. So you will record ONE TRACK AT A TIME and label it. Once you have finished all of them and made them ACX ready (usually with the help of an engineer who specializes in ACX) you will load them separately.
   NOTE 2: You must also record a title page and final credits which include the copyright and BRW as publishers. Also record any other pages such as dedications, etc. on separate tracks.

RECORDING YOUR AUDIOBOOK

GOAL: To record the best and cleanest audio track possible. The engineer will clean up the little things. Like breaths, levels that are too hot or too low, etc. But it's important to stay within the range.
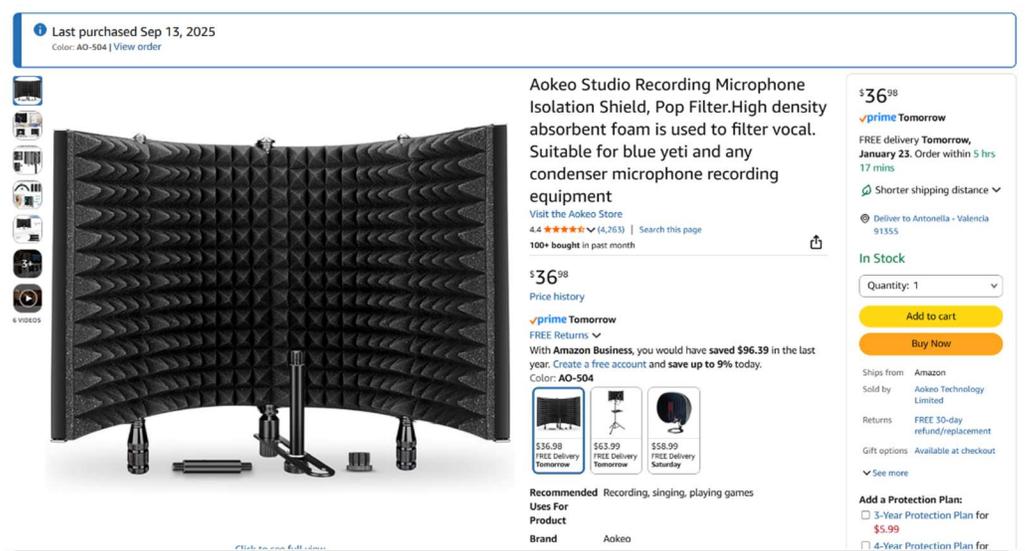
EQUIPMENT:

You'll need

1. A computer or laptop
2. Audacity Program version 3.7.5 or above (DOWNLOAD FREE)

3. A microphone and stand (NOTE: I used a Bumblebee mike. It was fine. Although a better microphone could probably handle louder noises, etc., better)
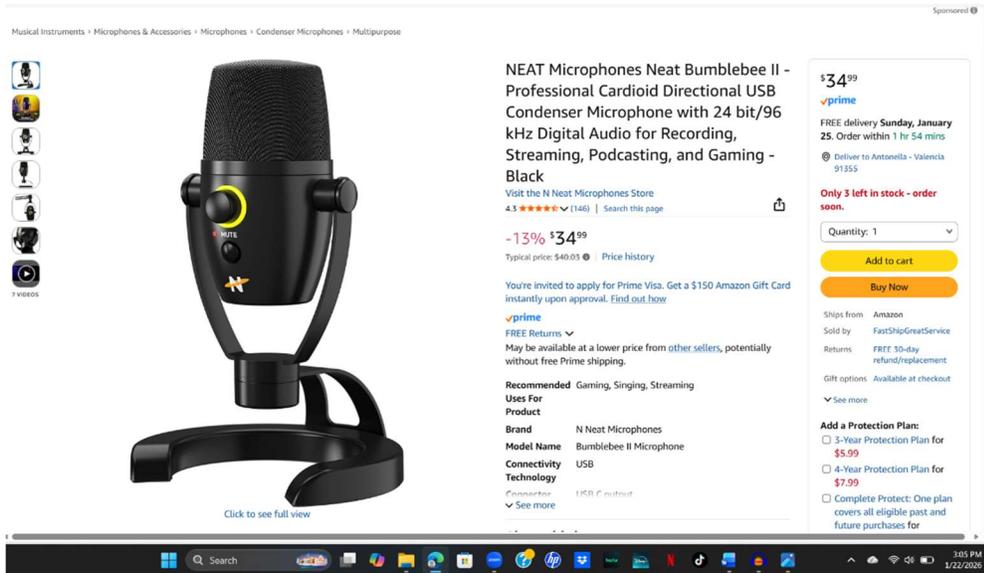
[Amazon.com: NEAT Microphones Neat Bumblebee II - Professional Cardioid Directional USB Condenser Microphone with 24 bit/96 kHz Digital Audio for Recording, Streaming, Podcasting, and Gaming - Black : Musical Instruments](#)

4. A pop filter and isolation shield. (Isolation shield is not necessary if you are in an extra quiet room but I recommend the pop filter)

[Amazon.com: Aokeo Studio Recording Microphone Isolation Shield, Pop Filter.High density absorbent foam is used to filter vocal. Suitable for blue yeti and any condenser microphone recording equipment : Musical Instruments](#)

5. Earbuds or headphones for the computer
6. A tall mike stand if you are going to stand to record.
   NOTE: I chose to sit because I was not only performing but I was doing the recording and editing and had to have easy access to the computer to stop and start as needed. Just be sure you sit up straight, so your voice is strong. I found that I did my best recording at the start of the day. If I recorded too long my voice would lose energy and it was obvious. I actually re-recorded a couple of tracks because of this issue).
7. A phone or iPad. Download your pdf file onto your device so you can prop it right next to your microphone and read from it. You can pause recording to scroll to the next page. If you work off a paper manuscript the sound of the pages turning might get picked up by the mike.)

RECORDING LOCATION

1. Choose a quiet location. I found a large closet is ideal. It's difficult to completely soundproof a room. (I tried, believe me). But a closet filled with clothes is perfect. No hard surfaces for sound to bounce off.

   If you choose a regular room, make sure it's away from outdoor noises like street noise. Turn off all electronics, HVAC, large computers. (You'd be surprised how the hum from electronics and computer fans can be picked up on your tracks. My desktop computer was a real culprit, so I switched to my laptop.) An engineer can likely clean up the noise, but your goal is to get the cleanest recording at the outset.

2. SET UP YOUR RECORDING SPACE.
   1. A table for your laptop.
   2. A surface for your microphone. If you are going to record while sitting.
      NOTE: Once you set this up, try to leave it in place until you're completely finished recording. You want to maintain a consistent distance to the microphone. I used masking tape to mark off where my microphone was so it would always be in the same position.
   3. Use a pop filter over your mouth to cut down any mouth noises and sibilance.
   4. A comfortable chair that doesn't make any noise.
   5. PLUG IN YOUR MICROPHONE to the laptop.

SET YOUR RECORDING LEVELS

Once you have the physical environment set, it's important to set the levels on your computer to meet the ACX requirements. (SEE BELOW) Once you set these, DO NOT change them until you complete your entire audiobook. Keep them consistent and check frequently that they are set correctly as sometimes you can lose your settings when you unplug your mike or turn off your computer.
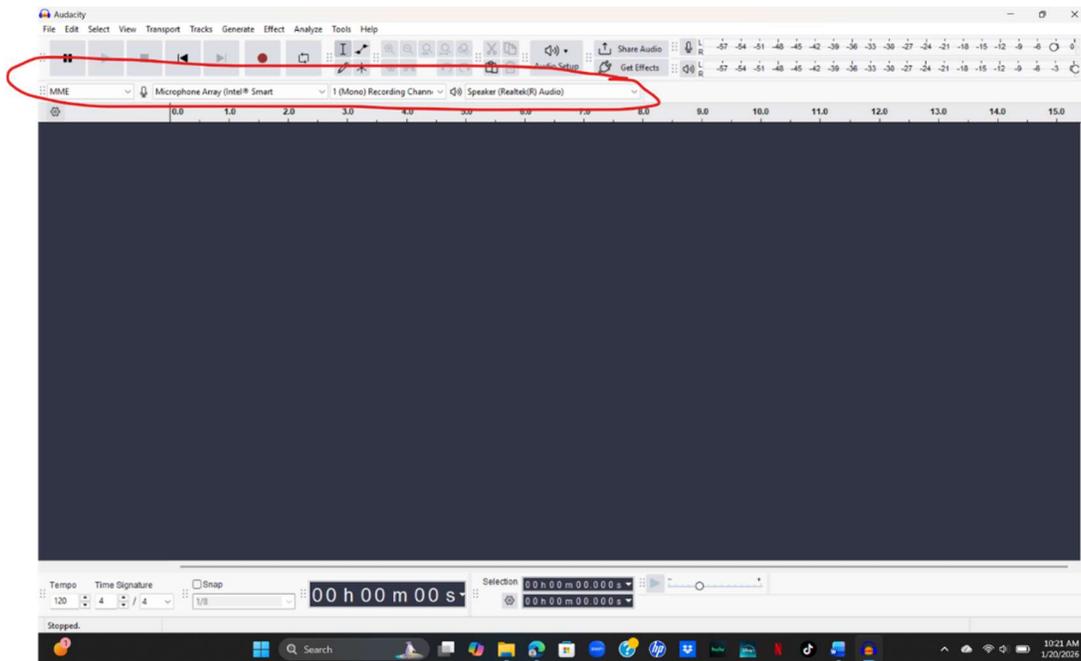
1. OPEN AUDACITY - version 3.7.5 or above (DOWNLOAD FREE)
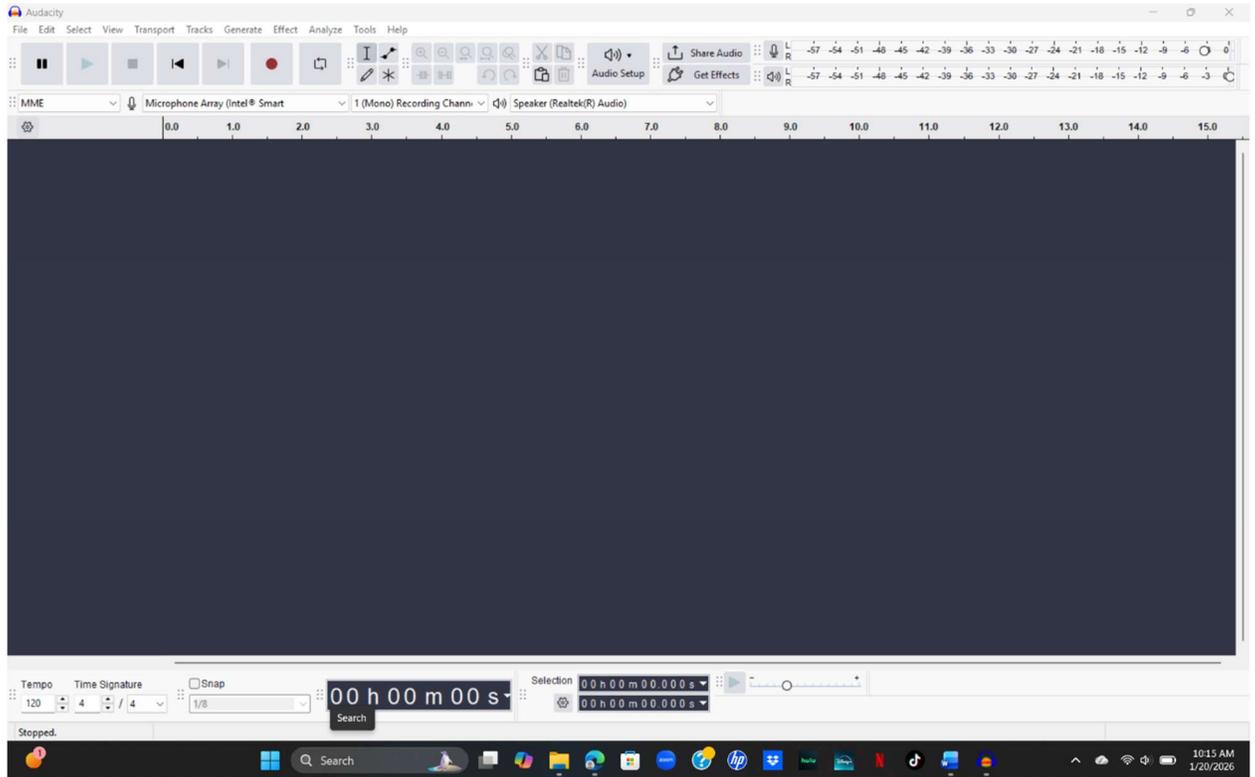
2. CHOOSE TOOLBARS YOU WANT to VIEW (Example – see the ones that are checked)
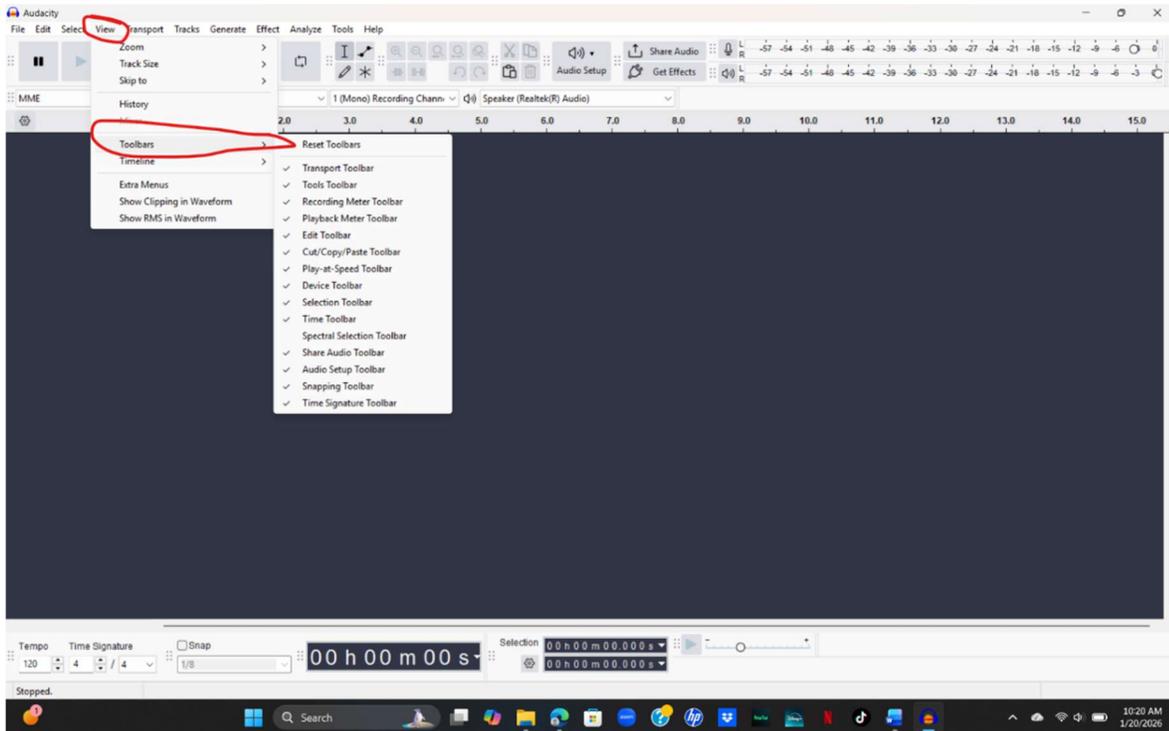
NOTE: I LIKE HAVING THE TOOLBAR BELOW WHERE I CAN SEE IT so I can make sure I've selected the correct microphone, playback and mono track (This is the Audio set-up toolbar)

3. SET YOUR AUDIO SETTINGS (Examples) Mono, etc.
Select your PLAYBACK DEVICE
Select your recording Device
Select your Recording Channels
(Do this individually or via Audio Settings. You can Rescan Devices to make sure the correct ones are selected, though I recommend you manually select to be sure)
NOTE: Always do a test of your microphone to make sure it is recording. For some reason even when it was selected, it wasn't recording properly. Sometimes I'd have to unplug it and plug it back into my laptop. Maybe it was just an issue with my laptop).

# OPEN AUDIO SETTINGS
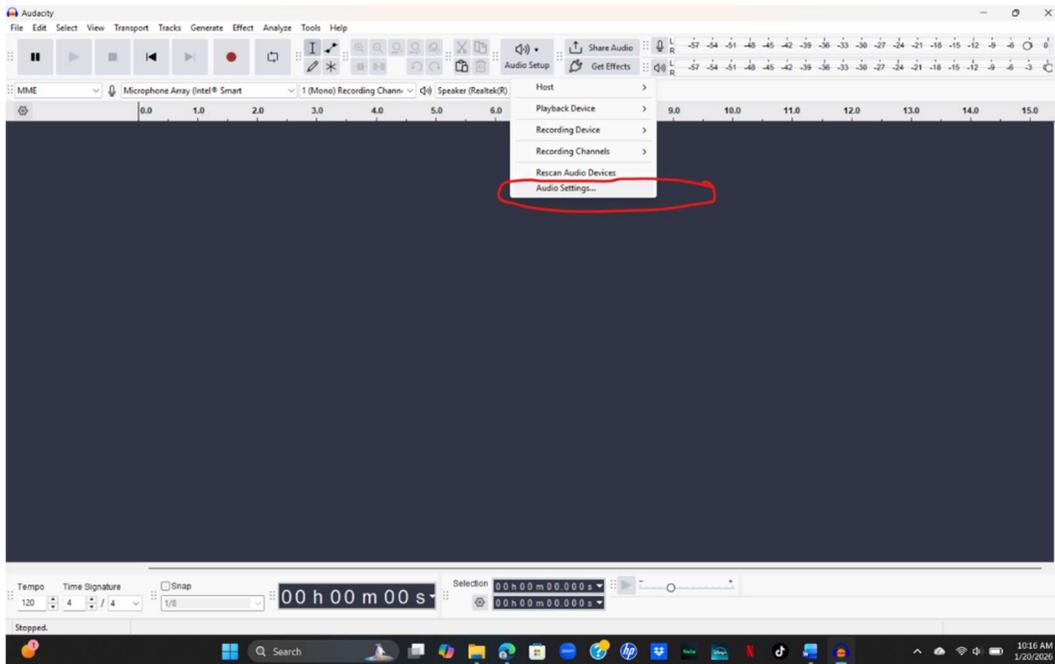
THE FOLLOWING ARE YOUR SETTINGS:
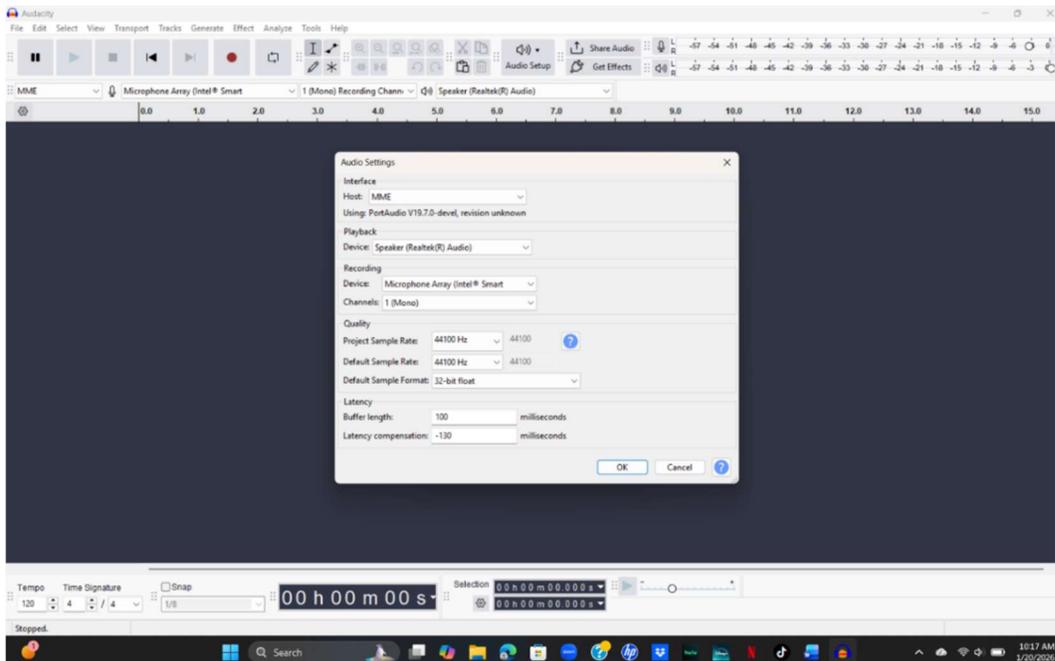
4. SET YOUR RECORD AND PLAYBACK LEVELS. (I did 94% record and 100% playback)
You have to adjust this based on your voice. You want to make sure that your voice doesn't go into the red too often or record too low.

When recording in Audacity, aim for peak audio levels between **-18 dB and -12 dB**, ensuring they rarely touch or exceed **-6 dB**, to avoid digital clipping (distortion) while maintaining a strong signal. Use the Recording Meter to watch your levels, keeping the waveform in the upper half of the track without going into the red zone (0 dB) for quality audio with headroom.

NOTE: It's tempting to have your headphones on while recording. So you're hearing yourself. But I wouldn't recommend it. I found it distracting. But whatever works for you.

RECORDING LEVEL:
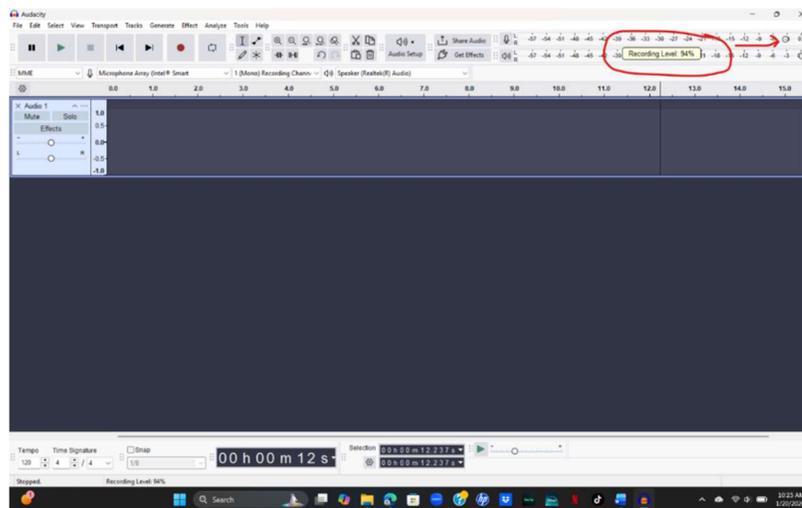
PLAYBACK LEVEL:
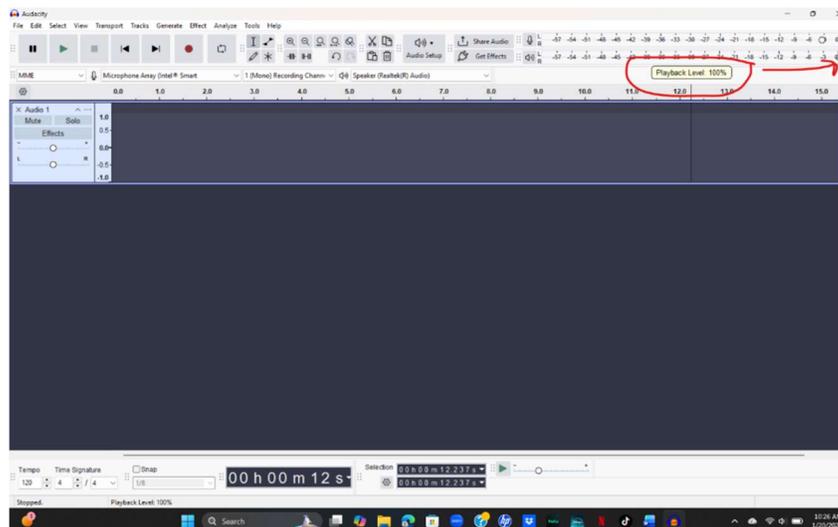
5. KEEP RECORD LEVEL CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT YOUR WHOLE BOOK. (You can set it from your microphone OR the program).
6. FOR PLAYBACK. I suggest headphones or earbuds here. You can clearly hear the recording and any mistakes or issues. The sound is much better than the sound coming from the computer speakers. Otherwise, you can miss recording problems like dropped word endings, extraneous noises, breaths, etc.
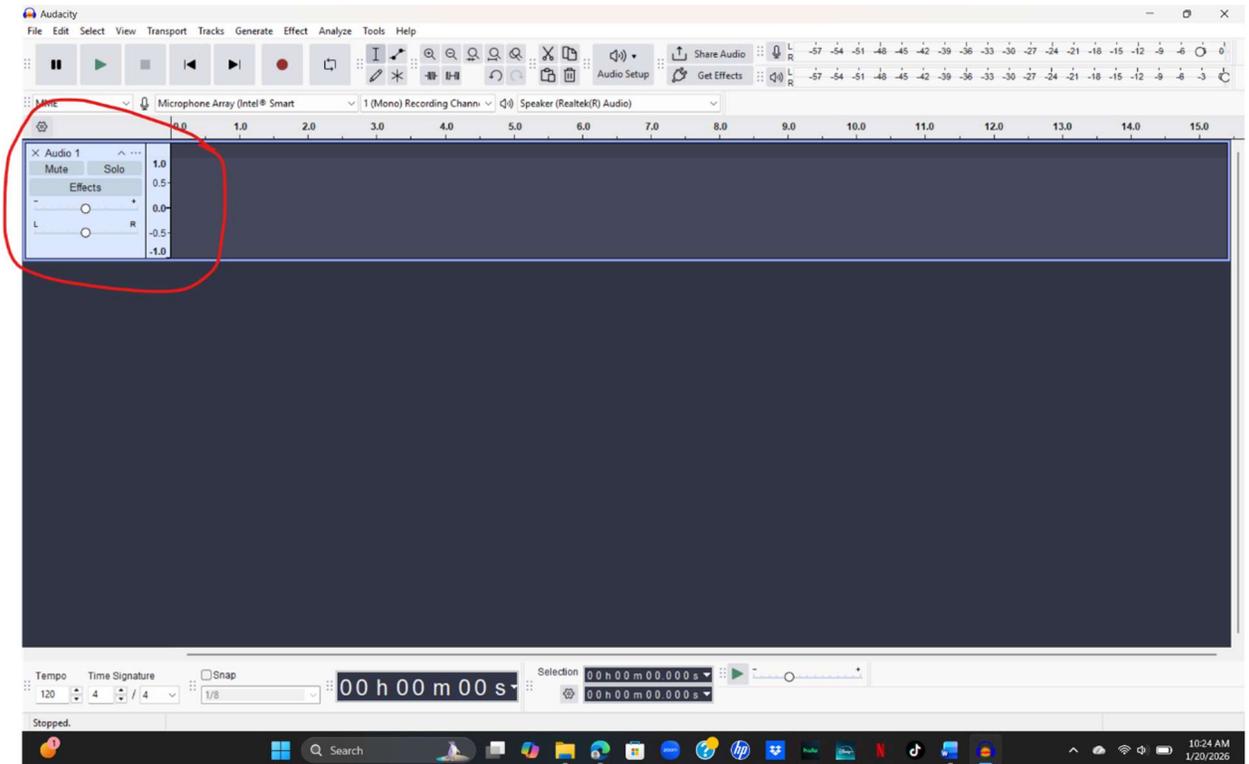
RECORDING YOUR TRACKS

1. Before you begin, again always double check your settings. Make sure your microphone is selected and that it's not recording from the computer microphone. (I learned this from my own error)
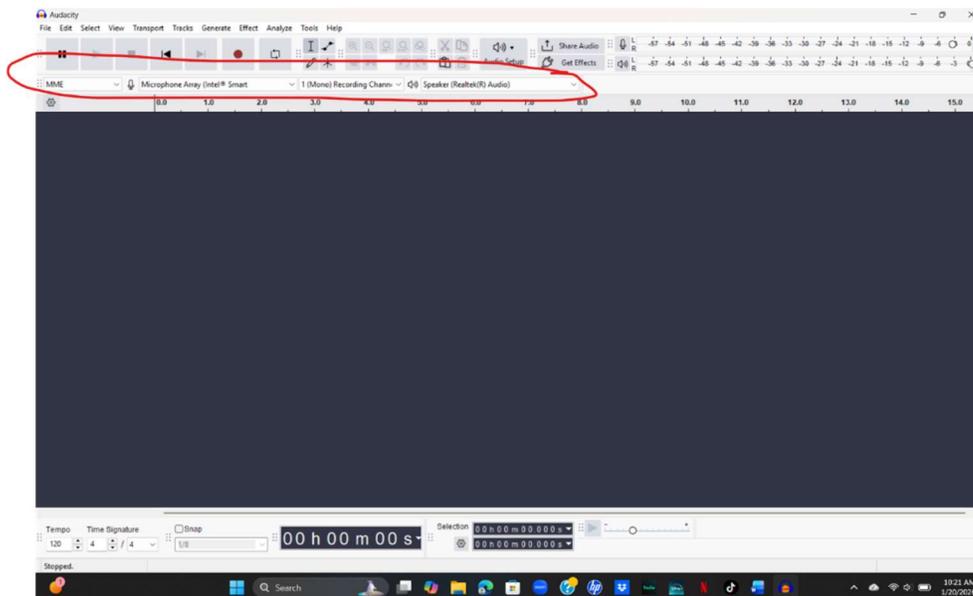
3. Open a mono track
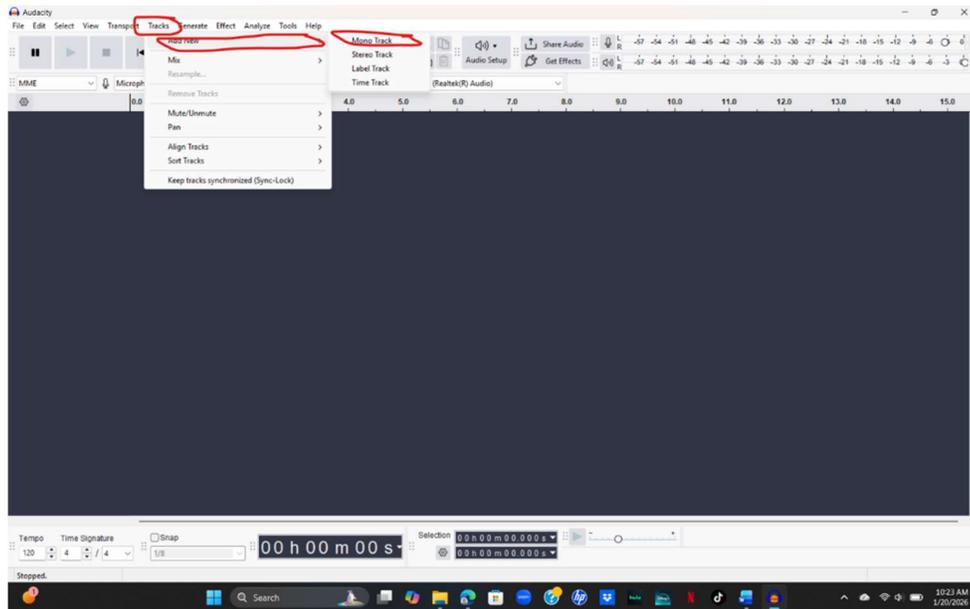
MONO TRACK 1 – See circled/default settings below. You will be able to mute your track from here if you need to edit on a second track.

WHEN YOU BEGIN TO RECORD.
1. Record 2 seconds of silence
2. then read "CHAPTER 1 and chapter title" if you have one. Give a couple of seconds before you begin reading the chapter.
3. Leave no more than 10 seconds at the end of the chapter.
   ACX has specific rules about beginning and end times, but if you use an engineer like we did to finish up the tracks, they'll take care of that. (I gave 5 seconds at beginning and 10 seconds at end. Just to be safe)

REMEMBER. RESCAN AUDIO DEVICES if you've stopped recording and come back. Whenever you start recording again, double check your settings. You can re-scan your devices to make sure they are selected or do it manually.
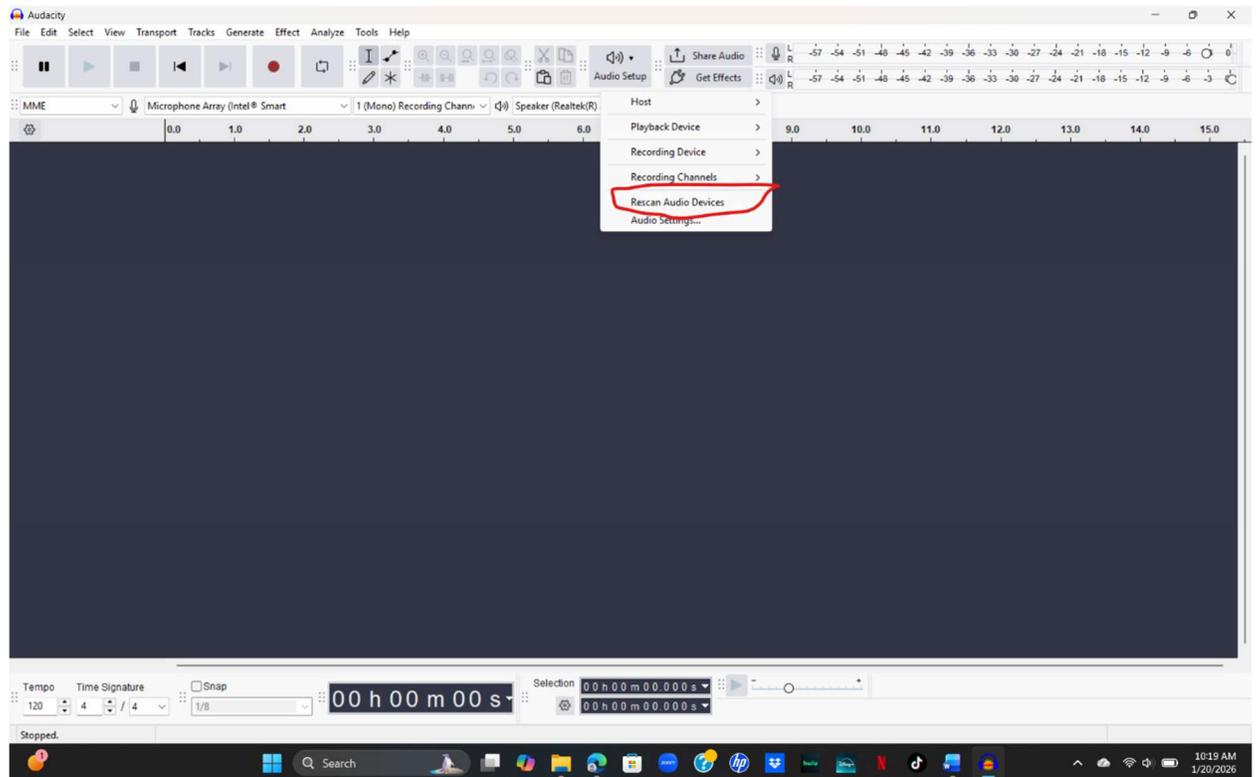
TO EDIT WITHIN YOUR TRACK.
If you make a mistake as you're recording, you can easily pause and go back over the mistake on AUDIO 1 and fix it.
However, if you find a mistake AFTER you've recorded the whole track, you cannot just record over it that section. It will erase everything that follows. Instead,

1. ADD SECOND MONO AUDIO TRACK. If there is a line or section you have to redo in the middle of the track, instead of re-recording the whole track, add new AUDIO TRACK 2 then record the edit and splice it into AUDIO TRACK 2.
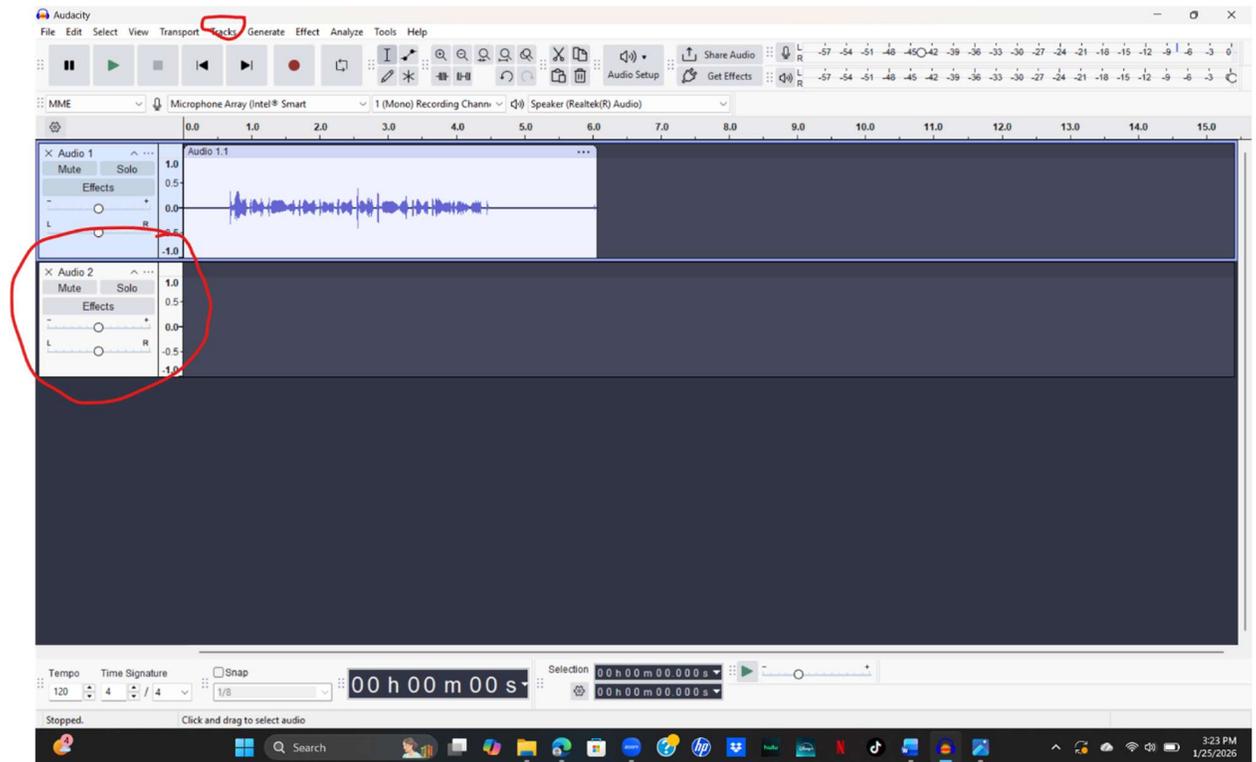
SPLIT THE TRACK WHERE THE mistake is. Cut out the mistake. Just highlight and delete the bad section. Or if you want to add something, just spread the tracks apart with your cursor.
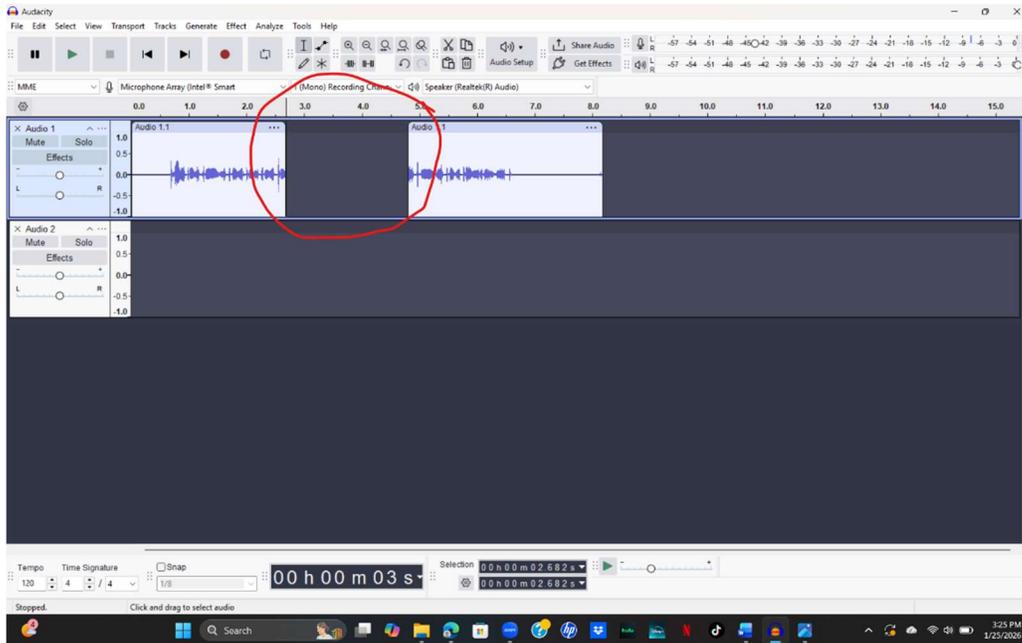

RECORD NEW LINE ON TRACK 2
1. You can mute Track 1 or Listen to it as a lead-in with SHIFT D – this will give you an 8 sec lead in before you start to record your new track. BUT you must select your starting point with your cursor on TRACK 2 at the beginning of the gap.
   HINT: If you go back and feel that there isn't enough of a beat between lines or scenes, you can record a bit of room tone on AUDIO TRACK 2 and splice it into TRACK ONE. Or COPY a section of silence/room tone from TRACK 1 and put it in where needed.
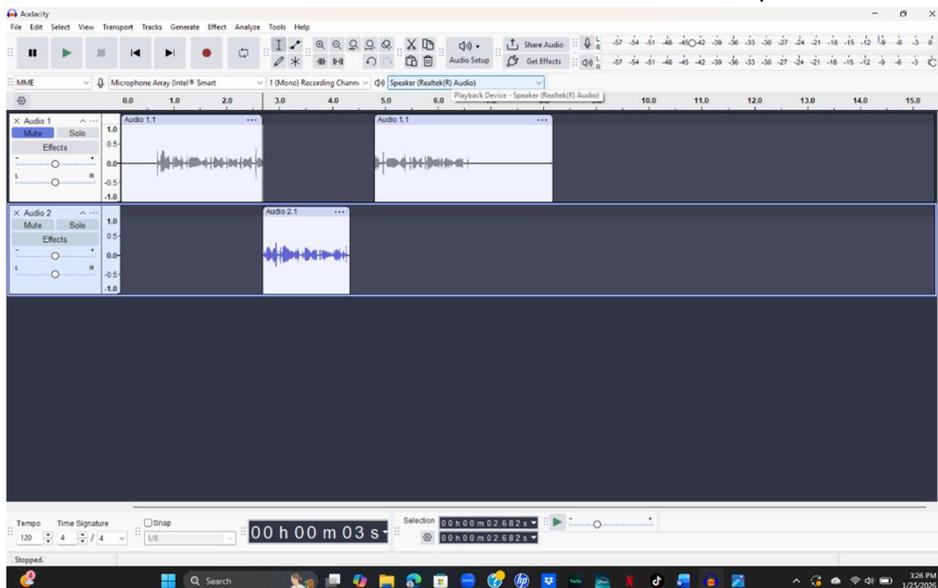
1. AFTER YOU HAVE RE-RECORDED to your satisfaction. Use your cursor to move the segment from AUDIO 2 to the gap in AUDIO 1
2. Use your cursor to move the segments together to eliminate the space.
3. Highlight the sections with the split tracks – Or control A for the whole track
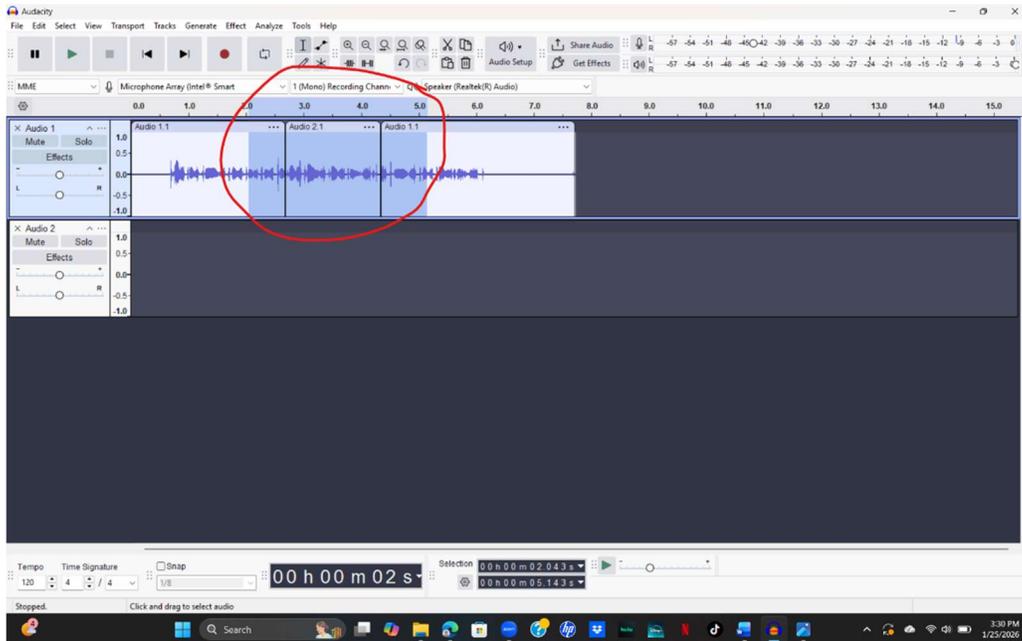
4. CTRL J will join the selected gaps together for a seamless track.
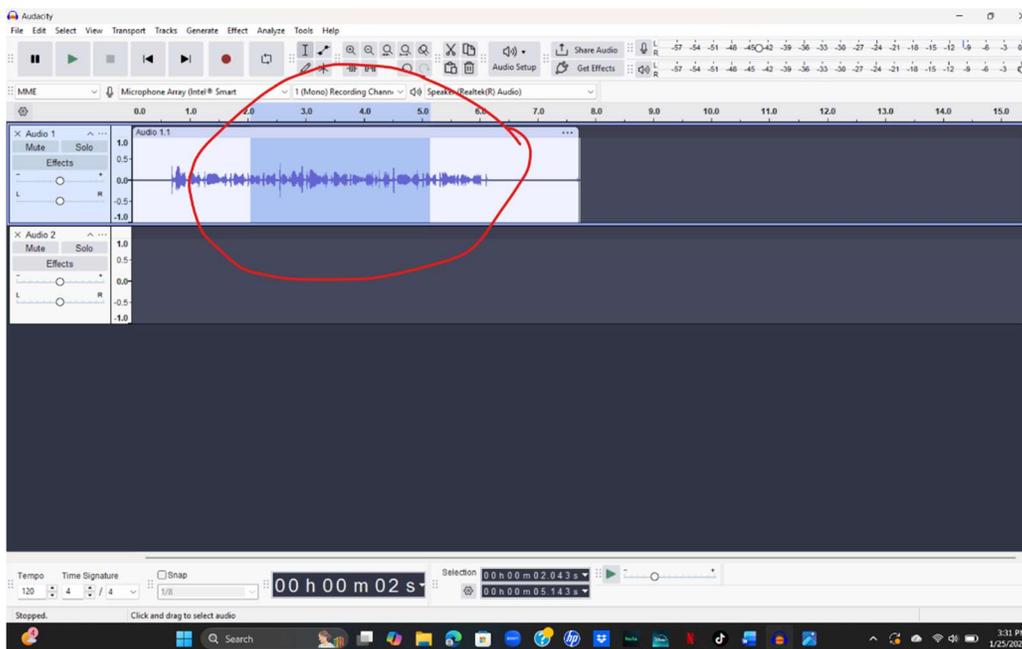
NOTE. If you have anything you want to cut out of AUDIO 1, you can just highlight that section and hit DEL. It will be gone and the track will remain seamless.
Remember you can always UNDO something you've done.

5. Remember to delete Audio 2 Track before saving it.

HOW TO SAVE YOUR PROJECT.

1. Create folders on your computer to save your tracks. I save the project as both an audacity file AND a WAV file. I make separate folders for those. It is the WAV file that you will send to AUDACITY
2. Save each chapter INDIVIDUALLY! That is how you will have to send them to Audacity. Audacity will put them all together into one audiobook file.
3. Label each chapter – CHAPTER 1, CHAPTER 2 etc. When you send them into Audacity you have the option of also labeling them with the chapter title if you have one.
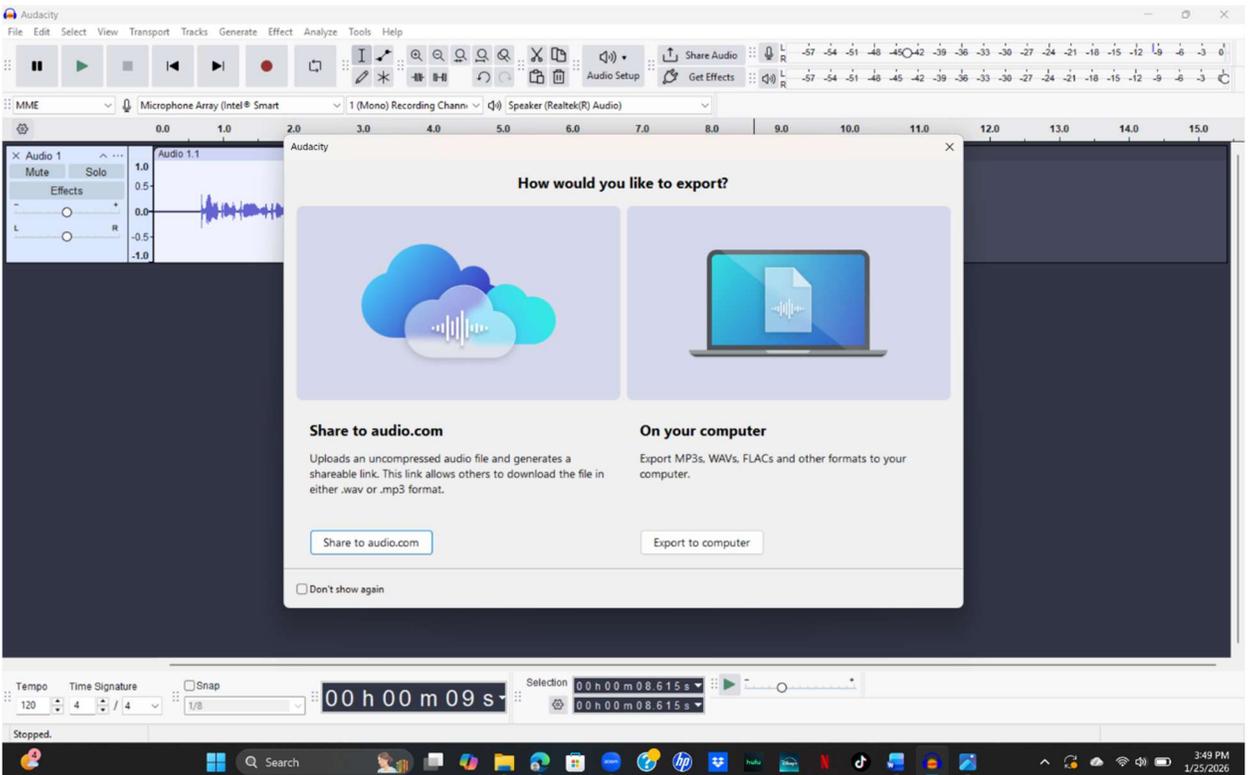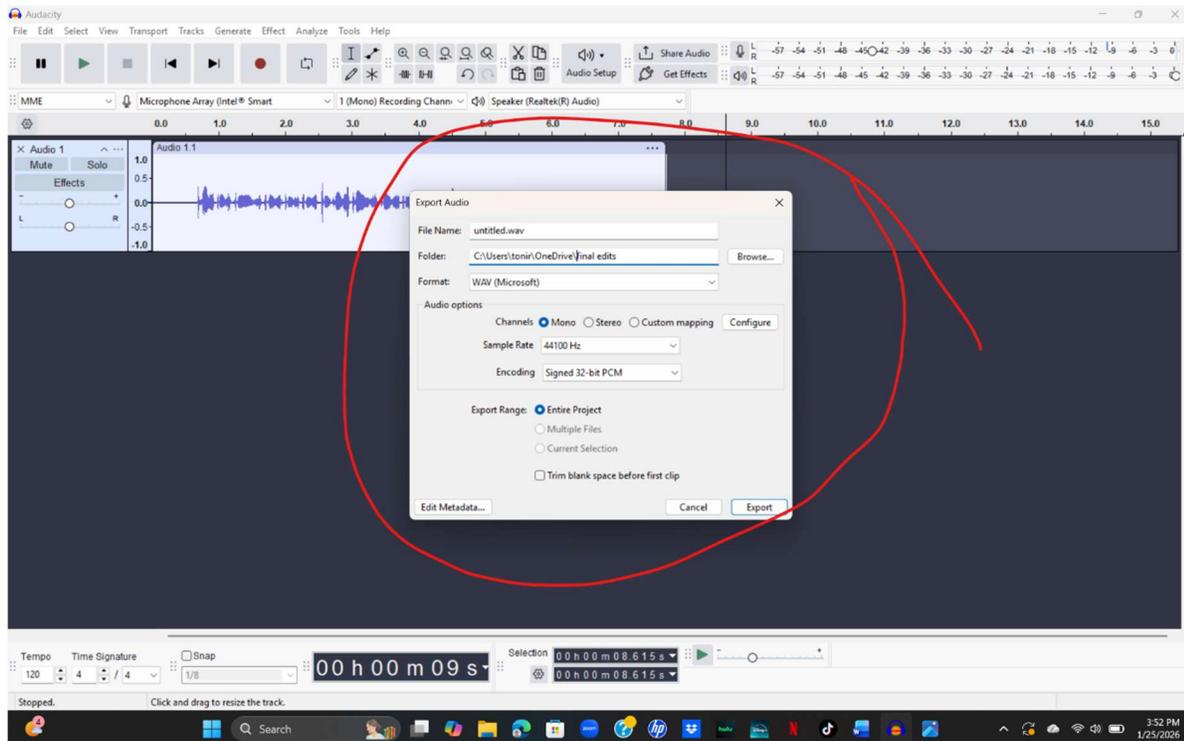
SAVE AS AUDACITY FILE
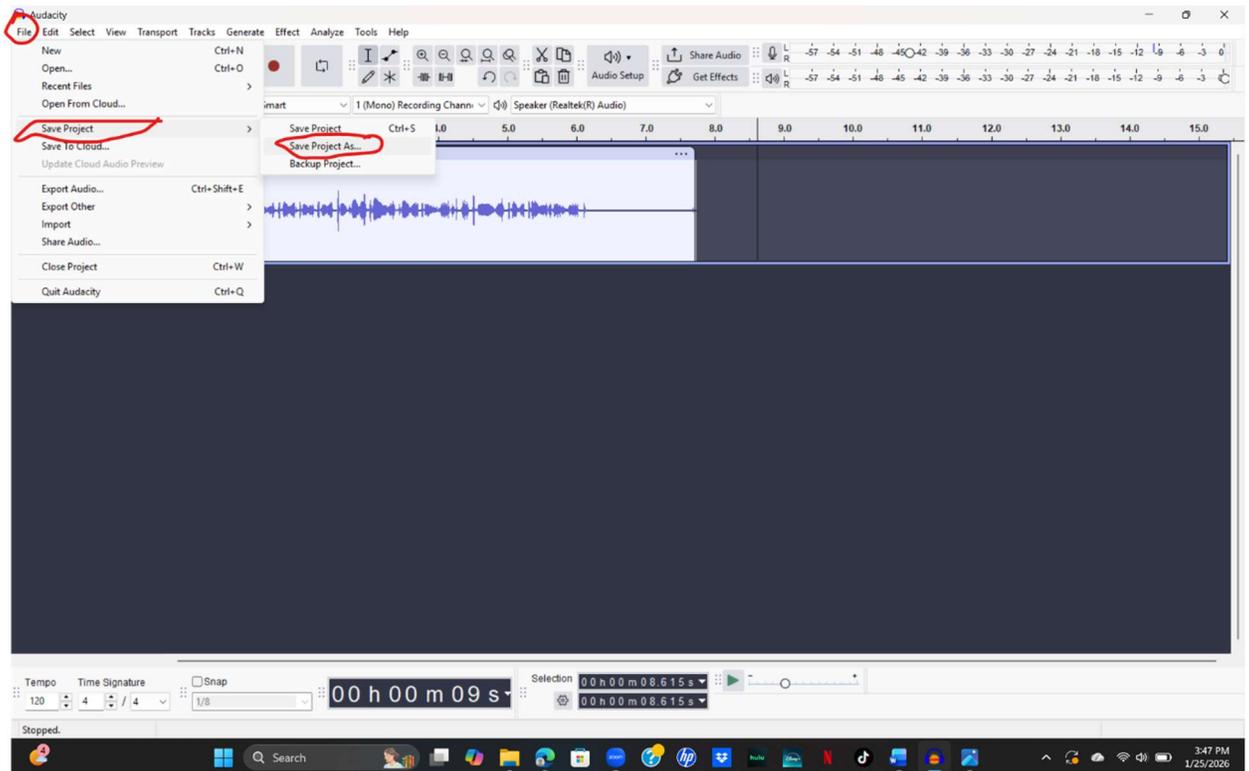
SAVE AS WAV FILE. EXPORT
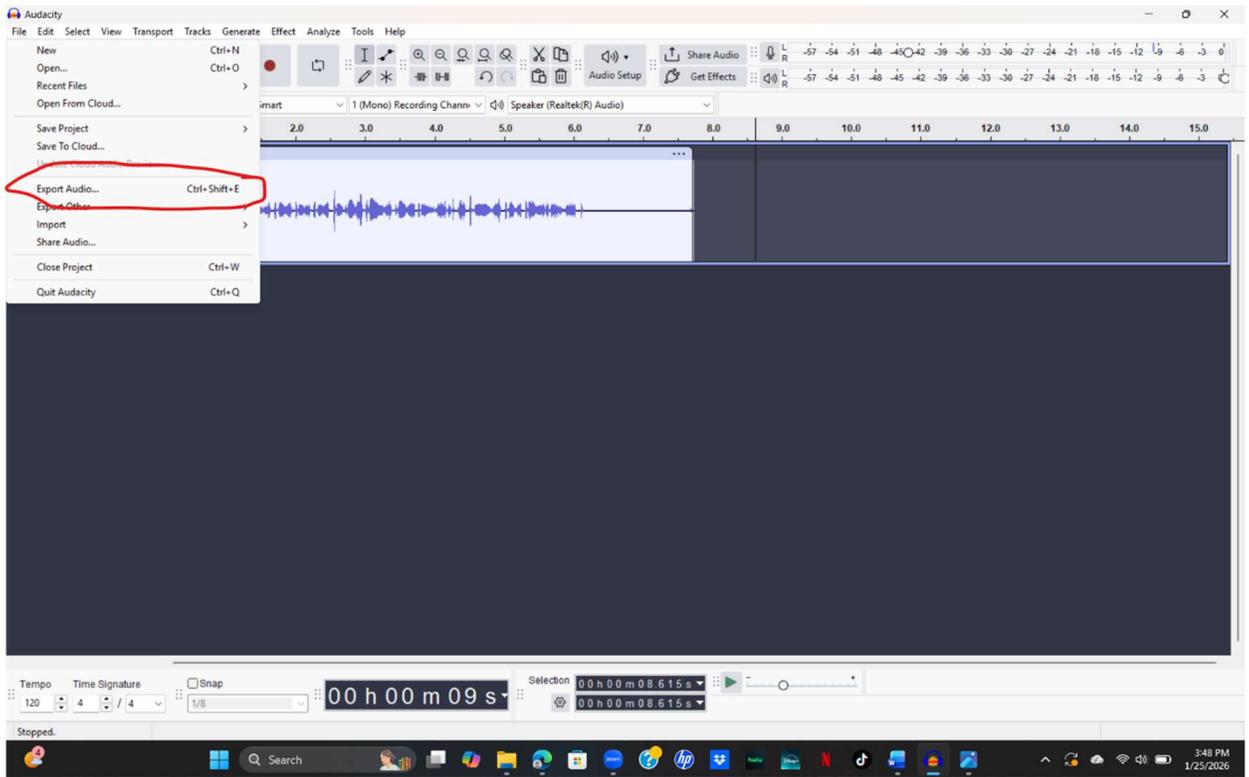
CHOOSE "ON YOUR COMPUTER" Export to Computer

SELECT THE FILE TO SAVE TO: And while you're at it, double check that the Audio Options are correct before you export. They should be set as you see below.

EDITING SHORTCUTS.
There are a handful of shortcuts that helped a great deal in recording and editing. I used them all the time.

CTRL I – split the track
CTRL J – join separated tracks
CTRL A – highlight entire track
CTRL 1 – Zoom in on the track – helpful to see down to the second or part of a second where you need to edit.
SHIFT D – when you want to record something at a starting point – It will start back earlier (the default lead-in time is 8 seconds) and then begin recording where you had your cursor. This is so you can get a lead-in of the earlier dialogue or just time to begin recording.

GENERAL NOTES

1. SAY CHAPTER AND TITLE (If you have one)
Give a couple of seconds then begin recording.
2. 3 SECONDS OF SILENCE - If you have a major change of scene or day within a chapter
3. 1.5 to 2 SECONDS OF SILENCE – if you have an action scene and you're cutting back and forth between the places/characters
USE YOUR INSTINCT! If it doesn't feel right, like it's too long or not long enough, change it. This is not something the engineer will correct.

ONCE YOUR TRACKS ARE RECORDED.
Unless you are an engineer knowledgeable about ACX formatting and standards, it's a good idea to pay someone who is an expert in this area to finalize your tracks.

We had a terrific engineer we found on FIVVER. (See link below) To completely engineer/process the tracks to ACX specifications, he charged us around $300. This was for a book recording of 361 pages or 13. 5 hours.
**They accept tips and he did such a good job we tipped him $100.
This is far, far below what it would cost to go into a studio and have someone help record your book, which can run thousands of dollars.

When you upload the files to ACX each one is scanned to be sure it meets ACX technical standards. All of ours did.

FIVVER ENGINEER – Emir

[Professional edit, mix and master your audiobook to acx standards by Emir_khattak | Fiverr](#)

GOOD LUCK!