

SOUNDBITES ACTIVITY #2

AUDIO STORYTELLING

AUDIO RECORDING WITH A SMARTPHONE

SET-UP:

GUIDING QUESTION: How do you make a high-quality recording on a smartphone?

TOOLS:

- A digital audio recording device, like a smartphone or a computer with a microphone

VOCABULARY:

- **Plosives:** A blast of air caused by the way the mouth forms the letter “p” (and sometimes “b”, “t” and “k”). The air hits the mic, causing a “thump” sound in an audio recording. Plosives can be avoided by holding the mic slightly off to the side of the speaker’s mouth.
- **Mic handling noise:** The noise of your hands moving around on a microphone when you’re holding it, which is picked up by the microphone. Mic handling noise can be avoided by using a mic stand, which can be as simple as a stack of books.
- **Decibel (dB):** A unit of measurement used to measure the intensity of a sound.

INTRODUCTION:

Many people across the country are working from home right now, [including radio producers](#).

In this activity, you’ll learn how to record broadcast-quality audio at home on your smartphone. Then, we hope you’ll record yourself responding to one of our prompts about the ways the coronavirus pandemic has affected you. If you record your response and send it to us, we may post it on kuow.org, or use it in an upcoming episode of the [RadioActive Podcast](#).

**If you don’t have access to a smartphone or computer, but you still want to respond to the prompts, you can call us from any phone and leave us your responses as a voicemail at (206) 945-4346.*

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The following at-home recording tips are adapted from [Project Audio: Teaching Students How to Produce Their Own Podcasts](#) by Justin Hicks, Laura Winnick and Michael Gonchar at The New York Times and [How To Keep Making Your Podcast... Even If You're Stuck At Home](#) by Sequoia Carrillo at NPR.

SET UP YOUR SMARTPHONE

1. Choose your app. To record on your smartphone, you'll need a [mobile recording app](#). On Android, we like the free apps [Virtual Recorder](#) and [Tape-a-Talk Voice Recorder](#). For iPhones, you can use the Voice Memos app.
2. Find the location of your phone's microphone. For most smartphones, the microphone is located on the bottom of the phone.
3. Check your storage capacity. Do you have enough space on your phone to save a recording?
4. Turn your phone on airplane mode. You don't want notifications to disrupt your recording.

SET UP YOUR HOME RECORDING STUDIO

1. Find a quiet space to record. Record inside, in a small room with lots of soft surfaces (like a bedroom rather than a garage). Closets make great recording studios. You can even build a [pillow fort](#) or throw a [coat or blanket over your head](#) for added soundproofing.
2. Once you've chosen your space, sit quietly for 30 seconds. What sounds do you hear? Is there a TV or radio on in the background? Is a fan buzzing or a clock ticking? If you can, adjust your space to make it even quieter.
3. Now that your space is ready, hold your smartphone about six inches (or the length of your fist) away from your mouth, with the phone's mic pointing toward your mouth. Position your mic slightly off to the side of your mouth to help avoid **plosives**.
4. To avoid **mic handling noise**, you can build yourself a mic stand using a stack of books or boxes, like the interviewee in [this video from Aspen Public Radio](#) does. (This video is also a good example of how to use the Voice Memos app on an iPhone.)

START RECORDING

1. To begin recording, start by pressing the "Record" button or a red square. To finish, press the same button again.
2. Test your recording setup by recording a 10-second response to a silly question. Many audio producers like to ask the question, "What did you eat for breakfast?" to test their recording setup before the interview begins.

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START RECORDING (CONTINUED)

3. Listen back to your audio test, preferably with a pair of headphones. It should be free of background sound and loud enough to hear, but not so loud that it crackles. Adjust your microphone position based on volume (for example, if your recording was too quiet, move your smartphone closer to your mouth). If you have a recording app that displays your recording level in **decibels**, shoot for about -12 decibels (dB).
4. Now you're ready! Record your response to the following prompts. Aim for about 15-60 seconds per prompt.

AUDIO RECORDING PROMPTS:

1. Introduce yourself: What is your first and last name, what city do you live in, what school do you go to, and what grade are you in?
2. How has the coronavirus pandemic affected your life?
3. How has your schooling changed since schools have closed?
4. What do you wish people knew about the way coronavirus school closures have affected you?

5. After you finish, enter a title for the recording and save it to your phone.

SHARE YOUR RECORDING WITH US

We would love to hear your responses! If you share your audio recording with us, we may feature it on kuow.org or in an episode of the [RadioActive Podcast](#).

To share your audio recording, you can email it to us at radioactive@kuow.org with the subject line "**SoundBites Activity #2**." You can also upload your file to SoundCloud or Google Drive or a similar file sharing site, and share the link to the file with us over email.

MORE ABOUT AUDIO RECORDING AT HOME WITH A SMARTPHONE

- [DIY Resource: How to record high-quality sound with your phone](#) (YR Media)
- [How A Pillow Fort Can Make Your Podcast Sound Better](#) (NPR Student Podcast Challenge)
- ['Butt cut what?' A glossary of audio production terms and definitions](#) (NPR Training)
- [iPhone PCM Recorder](#) (Transom)