Queens Memory Project

Intro to Sound Editing

First, download and install Audacity, if that is your chosen sound editing program here:
http://audacity.sourceforge.net/

Either the first version, or beta version is fine, the online tutorials are for the beta version, but are applicable to the first version as well. For additional help see the tutorials in the Audacity Manual online here:
http://audacity.sourceforge.net/manual-1.2/tutorials.html

Before you begin, just remember to take your time, and if you want to **Undo** any step always use Edit > Undo or **Cmd+Z**, Redo any step by Edit > Redo or **Cmd+Y** and it is good to frequently save your project as you work on it by selecting File > Save, or **Cmd+S**.

* If you are using a Mac OS you use the Command key for shortcuts, if you use Windows use the Control key for all shortcuts. Below, I have used the Mac shortcuts as examples.

1. Create new project

Launch Audacity, select File > Save As Project and choose a location and filename for the project. The project is saved as an Audacity file, but when you export your audio clips at the end, it will be in WAV format.

2. Set the Preferences

Go to File > Preferences. This step is very important.
-   In the **Quality tab**, make sure the default sample rate is **44.1 kHz**
-   In the **File Format tab**, choose whether you want to work with the original file, or if you want audacity to make a copy of the file to edit.

When importing uncompressed audio, there are two ways to do it. "Make a copy of the original before editing" means that Audacity actually copies the entire audio file that you imported in to its project data directory and in the process sets up the little overview graphics, whose descriptions get stored in the project data directory too.

The second way is to use the original imported audio. You may think we're actually editing this file, but no we aren't. In fact, Audacity will now read the imported file once and simply create the graphics overviews for them in the data directory, and subsequently write to disk all the audio data that you change. The original file is only used for playback. All audio that remains unchanged will be played from the original file.

The advantage of choosing to make a copy of the original is that you avoid trouble, should anything in the original file change.
-   The Uncompressed Export Format should be set to **WAV**, this is the file type you made your recordings in.

3. Import Audio File

There are several ways to do this: Simply drag and drop the audio file in to the Audacity window, OR select **Import Audio** in the Project menu. The imported file should now be displayed in an audio track. You should see the blue audio **waveforms** displayed on a new track. Audacity usually imports files in stereo, which will mean you will see the same audio file on two tracks. You want the audio to be in mono, so select all **Cmd+A**, then go to Tracks > Stereo Track to Mono.

5. Listen to audio

When creating your **finding aid**, you may have already made note of important parts of the interview you would like to make into **clips**. Noting the in and out points of these clips is helpful to the editing process.

If you have not done so already or have not done any summary of the interview for your finding aid, press play to listen to the audio, as the curser moves along the timeline you will be able to see the **timecode**. In your finding aid, write down the **in and out points** of the audio clips you want to use and **summarize** what each clip is about. For example:

> "Lee notes the changes to the neighborhood in her lifetime, there are different people, and has become more crowded (00:05:54-00:06:35)"

A good minimum for a clip is 30 seconds, and 3 minutes in is a good maximum length.

Important issues to consider: You are creating clips to provide examples of the full interview, not to make changes that compromise the integrity of the original. You should not think of the editing process as a means for creating a new piece, like you would if you were doing a documentary. You do not have to edit out the interviewer's voice, since this is part of the context of the interview. Also, even if you have selected clips as you recorded the interview, it is a good idea to listen to the interview once more in its entirety to be sure that there is not something you missed that is interesting or important.

6. Create clips

For this process, you will be select parts of the master file and leaving it in tact. You will duplicate areas from the master file to be your clips.

- To select the part you wish to copy, use the selection tool, which looks like a cursor. Go to the timeline and press the mouse button while you drag the curser over the area you wish to select. The area will darken so you know it had been selected.

- If you press the space bar, you will be able to listen to the audio you selected in a loop.

- If your selection is not as precise as you want it to be, you can **extend** or **contract** your selection by holding down the **shift key** and clicking on a different point in your selection. To be precise, you can change your **view**, by **zooming in** to see the actual point in the sound wave where you want to start. For example if there is a long pause before someone starts talking, the wave form will appear flat, and once the person starts talking you will begin to see peaks. You can move right up to where the dialogue begins instead of at the silence.

- When your clip is selected, copy it by Edit > Duplicate or **Cmd+D**. The selected area gets **copied**, a new track is created and the copied material is pasted in to that new track at the same point in the timeline, preserving your time code.

7. Silencing unwanted microphone sounds

If there are any unwanted noises in your clip like a pop from the microphone (which happens when the audio levels were recorded too high) you can remove those sounds from the clip. This takes a little finessing but is really useful if microphone pops occur throughout your recording.

- Zoom in on your clip, you will see the microphone pop because it will look like a straight vertical line, unlike the peaks you see when someone is speaking.

- Select ONLY the pop, and then **Cmd+L** to silence it. The waveform should now appear to be a **flat line** where the pop used to be.

8. Export clips

If you are satisfied with your clips it is time to export them. You are going to export each clip individually.

- First select the clip, then go to File > Export Selection.

- Name your file the last name of your interviewee, underscore, and number them consecutively starting from one. For example your first clip of an interview with Susie Lee should be Lee_1, the second clip will be Lee_2, etc.

- Make sure you are exporting each clip as an uncompressed WAV file, you will see this automatically selected in the format options, since you set it up in the beginning preferences.

Those are the basic editing steps that you need to know to create clips for your interview!