



Home Studio Set-Up Guide

The information presented here will give you directions, suggestions, and resources for getting your home studio set up and put into action!

**Please review this entire document in its entirety right away!
There are important instructions at the bottom.**

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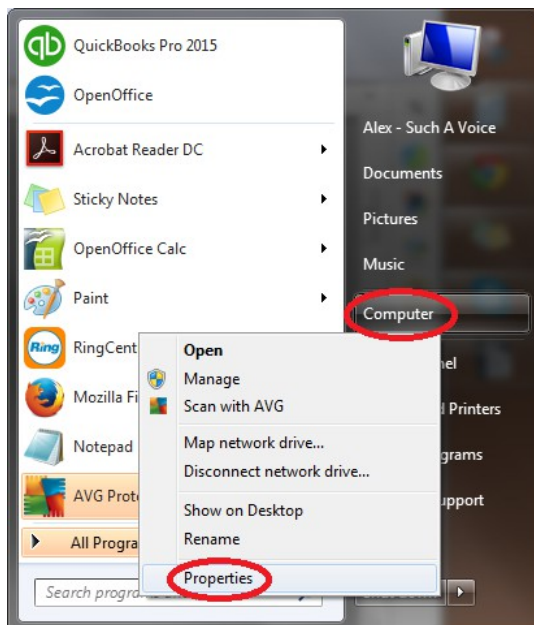
Computer Requirements

The Such A Voice training program depends on using a computer to record your audio and manage the files. It is recommended that you have your own computer that is not widely used by the family for playing computer games, or downloading unknown software from the web. Once your computer is set-up for recording and working well, you'll want to make sure other people don't install software or make other changes that could adversely affect your ability to produce quality recordings.

You'll need a Mac or PC. Generally, if your computer was new within the last ten years, you should be fine, but here are the minimum requirements:

PC

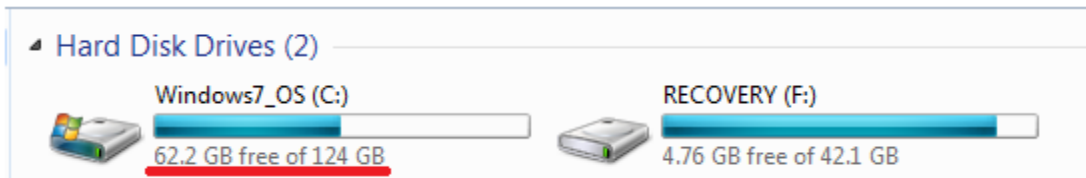
- At least 1 gigahertz (GHZ) processor speed and 1 gigabyte (GB) of RAM.
 - Processor speed and RAM can be found by clicking the start button in the lower left corner of the desktop, and then right-clicking the “Computer” menu item in the left pane of the start dialogue box and selecting “Properties”. A new dialogue box will pop-up with information about your computer, including processor speed and RAM size.



System	
Rating:	System rating is not available
Processor:	Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-3320M CPU @ 2.60GHz 2.60 GHz
Installed memory (RAM):	8.00 GB (7.70 GB usable)
System type:	64-bit Operating System
Pen and Touch:	No Pen or Touch Input is available for this Display

PC Continued...

- At least 500 megabytes (MB) of available space on your hard drive.
 - Disk Space can be checked by simply left-clicking where we right-clicked to find our RAM and processor speed.
 - At least one 1.1 USB Port



Mac

- OS X 10.4, or any updated OS since X 10.4 was released.
- At least 500 megabytes of storage on your hard drive.
- At least one 1.1 USB port.



NOTE: If you are running an alternative operating system, such as Linux, you should research if Audacity and your home studio equipment are supported.

Selecting Your Studio Space

The largest challenge to getting quality audio from a voice-over recording studio is getting a good “signal-to-noise ratio”. The signal is your voice, and the noise is any other sound that is not your voice (traffic, precipitation, pets, housemates/family, mouth noises, vocal echoes, etc...). We want to be sure we get more voice and less noise. We've compiled a few tips on how to eliminate these sounds.

Location

The simple answer is: “the quietest place in your home.” Don't set your studio up in a room with high ceilings or wooden floors because these spaces encourage echoes. Rooms with carpeting (the thicker the better), and upholstered furniture (armchairs, couches, love-seats, footstools, etc...), can help absorb noise. Upstairs is usually better than downstairs, as you can avoid the sounds of footsteps and traffic if you aren't on the ground-level. There are exceptions to this rule, of course: if you have a quiet, in-ground basement with nobody walking above you, that may be a better option because the soil surrounding you will absorb outside sounds.

If possible, you should also choose a room with no external walls, and one that is further from main roads. Some people choose to set their studios up in a large closet space, because it usually sits closer to the inside of the house, and doesn't have much need for windows or multiple entrances.

Testing Your Acoustics

Before you start setting-up your equipment, you'll need to do some testing in your selected studio space. Grab a chair and sit near the space where you'll be recording. Close your eyes and listen quietly and carefully. Listen for clocks, central air, fans, the hum of appliances, squeaky furniture, computer noise, anything that can (and will) be picked up by your microphone. Test multiple spots in the same room, and at different times of the day (during heavy traffic, when housemates/family is home, when

someone is using the bathroom or bathroom, etc...). If your test reveals a number of noises, you should test your other studio space options in the same manner.

Sound-Proofing

Once you've identified any noises, and where they're coming from, do what you can to eliminate their presence in your studio space: move clocks, put your computer under your desk, bring your equipment away from external walls or ones that connect to noisier rooms, unplug unnecessary appliances, and, if you have housemates/family, come up with a plan as to how you can work with or around others' schedules to minimize noise.

The thing you'll most want to avoid is “bounce”, or, echoes of your voice that occur when your studio contains hard, flat, reflective surfaces. Carpets and throw-rugs, heavy drapes, thick blankets/afghans/quilts, old mattresses, and egg-crate foam can be good for dampening sound that comes through the floor, walls, ceiling, windows, and under doors. Further acoustic treatments can be creative and inexpensive, so work with what you have, and find creative solutions for reducing outside noise, and bounce, in your home studio. Check out our Sound-Proofing Solutions guide for a range of suggested supplies [here](#).

After you've sound-proofed your space, and completed the next section on setting-up your home studio, do the same acoustic testing that we discussed in this section to be sure that your space is optimized for voice-over recording. You should also conduct a few test recordings and listen for any noise that might still be coming through. Your mic is a powerful piece of equipment, and is designed to record sounds as accurately as possible, so it's your job as a voice-over professional to cut out any unwanted sounds, so your mic is focused entirely on your voice.

A Quick Note on Mouth Noise

Mouth noise can be frustrating for any voice talent when getting behind the mic. Even the slightest sound that you don't necessarily hear in everyday speech can be picked up by the microphone. The more you can be aware of it yourself, the easier it'll

be to eliminate it while recording. Please refer back to this list before you record. For additional information on avoiding mouth noise, check out our article on it [here](#).

Studio Equipment Assembly

Selecting the right home studio equipment for your space and your budget takes time. We at Such A Voice recommend the Scarlett Solo studio from Focusrite, and pair it with a Gator pop-filter and Gator Frameworks mic stand. Ask your Such A Voice contact about our home studio equipment bundle to learn more about our special deal on this equipment. Of course, there are other options for building your own home studio as well. Our set-up guide refers to the Focusrite and Gator equipment, but is transferable to other brands as well. If you feel that you require additional assistance at any time, reach out to us at info@suchavoiced.com and inquire about home studio support options.

We recommend that our students use the following equipment for a full home studio set-up, all of which is included in the bundle that we offer:

- Preamp and Cables
- Microphone and Cable
- Headphones (on/over-ear instead of in-ear if possible)
- Microphone Stand
- Pop Filter

Proper set-up and maintenance of your home studio equipment is important primarily because your tools are as important as your talent when it comes to being a professional voice-over artist. Please read the instructions thoroughly. If you have purchased alternative home studio equipment, the set-up should be somewhat similar, but we recommend that you seek guidance from manufacturer sites to be sure.

Microphone Stand

Your microphone stand should have legs, a base, an adjustable vertical pole, an adjustable horizontal pole, and a microphone fastener. The legs of your mic stand should rest firmly and evenly on the ground. The Gator brand mic stand that we use in our package has three legs (as most do) in order to maintain balance. The vertical pole should stand tall enough so that you are not bending over or straining to speak directly into your microphone. The horizontal pole is adjusted and held in-place using a fastener located where it meets the horizontal pole; use this to position the microphone at face-level. Ensure that your stand is fastened securely.

Preamp, Microphone, and Headphones

Your preamp will need to sit on your desk, and plugs directly into your computer. Ensure that the preamp's cables are able to reach your computer comfortably, with some slack, so that an accidental bump does not yank the cable out from either device. Your headphones and microphone cable will plug into the front of the preamp in their respective jacks. The headphone jack will require an adapter if you are not already using professional studio headphones with a ¼-inch plug. You can plug-in your headphones and set them on your desk.

The microphone included in your studio package will need to be attached to the microphone clip, and then to the microphone stand. Make sure that your microphone is set-up so that the heart on the black band directly below the wire cage is facing you. Your mic is directional, so the input will be critical. Some microphone clips come with adapters already installed in the clip, but these can be easily detached using a pair of pliers. Take care to keep track of the adapter, as you may want to use it someday if you change any of your equipment. After the microphone has been fastened to the stand, plug one end of the microphone cable into the bottom of the mic, and the other end into the front of the preamp. If your cable is long enough, you may choose to wrap it around your mic stand, like a vine, in order to keep it contained.

Pop Filter

The pop filter should be fastened to the mic stand near the microphone. Position the mesh screens as close to the microphone as possible without having them touch. The pop filter will catch and eliminate unwanted mouth noise, so be sure that it is positioned directly between you and the mic.

Preamp Configuration

Install Software Drivers for Your Preamp

In order to use your preamp, you may need to install associated drivers. Unplug your preamp before installing drivers.** You can usually find the most up-to-date drivers at the manufacturer's website. You can also run a Google search for your preamp's brand and model, as well as the words, “download drivers”.

**** WARNING ****

Unplug your preamp from your computer before installing the drivers. While installing, follow the instructions and reconnect the preamp at the appropriate time. Depending on the model of your preamp, you may need to reboot the computer.

Interface Anatomy

After you've installed the appropriate drivers, you can plug your preamp back into your computer. The following section teaches you about the preamp's interface. If you are using a different brand of preamp, some of the information is transferable, but you should still do research on the manufacturer's site to ensure total understanding of the interface.



- Directly to the left of the headphone jack, we find the “Main Volume Knob” (also referred to as the “Monitor Knob”), which controls the level coming out of the back of the preamp unit (line outputs). Typically, SAV students work with headphones. Having external speakers hooked-up to the preamp unit can cause problems with feedback and interaction, so we advise that you work solely with headphones at first. Listening at levels higher than the mid-point, or 12 o'clock, can be hazardous to your hearing, and may cause internal damage to your ears.
- Above the headphone jack, you will find the “Direct Monitoring Switch”. When this switch is “OFF”, the signal from the microphone is converted into data as it passes through your preamp unit, which is sent to your computer through the USB cable, stored on your computer's hard drive, and sent back to your headphones for playback. This process creates a delay, which can be somewhat disarming when attempting to speak, as you'll be hearing yourself a split-second later in your headphones. This switch should always be “ON”.
- On the left-hand side of the preamp unit, you will find the input. This can be used for a microphone, line input, or instruments (the latter two when using the ¼” jack nestled inside the XLR mic input jack). You'll be focusing on using a microphone. There is a secondary input in the middle of your preamp, which can be used for recording instruments, but you will not need to utilize it.

- The input has a “Gain Knob” associated with it. Around the knob is a signal/overload LED indicator. The indicator can flash green when speaking into the mic, or red, which indicates “clipping”. The gain knob should be adjusted so that it is just below the level that causes it to flash red. Red is bad in a digital system – it means that the level is more than your system can handle, which will result in poor-quality recordings.
- Underneath the gain knob, you'll find the “48V Phantom Power” button. If you have a condenser microphone (which is included in the Scarlett Studio package available through Such A Voice), this button provides a polarizing voltage to the capsule of the mic, which is necessary for it to operate. Make sure that this button is pressed-in, and lit with a red light. If you do not have the Scarlett Studio package, then check your mic to see if it is labeled as either a “condenser mic” or a “dynamic mic”. Dynamic microphones do not require phantom power.

Once you have configured your preamp, and set-up your home studio, you can run a simple test using Skype to ensure that your equipment is properly connected to your computer. Simply open Skype on your computer (if you have not yet downloaded Skype, you'll want to do so [here](#)) and click on “Tools” near the top of the window, then click on “Options”. After the Options window opens, click on “Audio settings”. Click on the drop-down menu in the “Microphone” section and select your external microphone.

If your equipment is set-up correctly, and is receiving a signal, you should be able to clap, snap your fingers, or speak into the mic, and see the volume level fill with green bars. If you get different results, please check your connections, ensure that your preamp is on, and try again.

Studio Software: Audacity

Installing the Software

Audacity is a professional software package for recording and editing audio. It has a lot more options than most students need when beginning, but it's a great tool that will get you started in your voice-over career. Content creators, voice-over talent, and even some NPR correspondents use it for creating and editing podcasts and radio broadcasts.

[CNET Free Audacity Download](#)

[Click here and follow the instructions in this Audacity Guide to Download, Install, and Set Up Your Recording Software.](#)

Testing 1, 2, 3...

Once you have successfully installed Audacity, record a test to ensure that your equipment, your computer, and your software are interacting properly. If you are able to record yourself speaking, and play it back through your headphones, then you have successfully set-up your home studio. Congratulations!

Studio Maintenance

When you're done using your home studio, it's a good idea to keep your area tidy and tucked away so that you or any other house-guests (including pets) damages your equipment in any way. Cables should be wrapped-up or bundled, your preamp should be off and unplugged, and your computer should be powered-down. It's important that you keep your equipment safe, like any other professional would, to ensure that your voice-over recordings are spot-on time and time again.

Additional Support

As mentioned earlier in this guide, you should feel free to reach out to us at info@suchavoice.com to inquire about additional support with your home studio. We have a wealth of resources, from one-on-one sessions and live group teleconferences with our home studio specialist, Ben Marney, to our comprehensive and ever-growing e-learning program. If you have any questions at all, please, do not hesitate to ask!