

Turning a raw recording into a clean, broadcast-ready piece – the simple workflow, the software worth using, and where to learn it.

Editing is where a recording becomes a *programme*. For most of what we do – voicetracked links, news bulletins, pre-recorded shows and interviews – editing means five everyday jobs: **trimming the ends, cutting mistakes, cleaning up noise, levelling the volume, and exporting a tidy file**. You don't need to be a sound engineer, and you don't need to spend a penny to do it well.

THE EDITING WORKFLOW (ANY SOFTWARE)

Whatever program you use, the process is the same. Work through it in order.

1 Import & save a working copy

Bring your recording in and immediately save the project under a new name. Never edit your only copy – keep the original raw file untouched in case you need to start again.

2 Top & tail

Trim the dead air, throat-clears and "is it recording?" moments off the start and end. The piece should begin and end cleanly.

3 Cut the mistakes

Remove fluffed lines, long pauses, big "ums" and anything that drags. Cut and close the gap so the audio flows naturally – read it back to check it doesn't sound clipped or rushed.

4 Clean up the sound

Use noise reduction to lift out steady background hiss or hum – most tools learn the noise from a moment of "room tone" (that silence you recorded at the start). Go gently: too much makes voices sound underwater. Remove obvious clicks and bumps.

5

Level it out

Make the volume consistent so the listener never reaches for the volume knob. **Normalise** (or use light **compression**) to even out loud and quiet patches, then match the overall loudness to our other content. This is the single biggest "pro vs amateur" giveaway.

6

Add music & beds (if needed)

Drop in jingles, a music bed or stings on separate tracks. **Music should always sit clearly lower than the voice** – duck it right down underneath so the words are always on top. As a reference, music is imported into our playout system at around -18 dB, well below voice level, so beds should feel similarly tucked under.

7

Final listen – twice

Listen all the way through on headphones, then again on speakers or earbuds if you can. Things you miss on one you'll catch on the other.

8

Export

WAV gives the best quality – it's uncompressed, so the files are just larger to store. **MP3** at around **128–192 kbps** is perfectly fine too and much smaller. Give it a clear, consistent filename (e.g. *news-bulletin-2026-06-14*), and keep the editable project file too in case of changes.

Music & lyrics – check before you use it: be very careful about using any track that isn't in our approved library. We have strict rules from Ofcom to follow, which mean we **can't broadcast anything with offensive language**. You **MUST** listen right through and check the lyrics of anything you've dropped in yourself before it goes anywhere near air. The surest way is to **pull the lyrics up on a website and play the track at the same time, reading along** – on their own, your ears or your eyes can each miss a stray inappropriate word, but together they won't. Our specialist shows do play music from outside the database – that's fine – but the same rule always applies: know exactly what's in every track, and if you're ever unsure, check with the team.

News clips & interviews need cues. Whenever you prepare a news cut, interview or package, it should come with a written cue – even a very basic one – so the presenter can introduce it properly and knows exactly how it ends. See the companion guide *Writing Cues* for how.

FREE SOFTWARE – START HERE

You can produce everything WVR needs without spending anything. These are the tools to learn first.

Audacity

RECOMMENDED

Free

The standard free audio editor, and the right place to start. It does every job above – record, cut, noise-reduce, normalise, add tracks, export MP3 – and there are thousands of tutorials for it. The interface looks a little dated, but it's stable, powerful and runs on anything.

Windows · Mac · Linux · 100% free, open-source

Ocenaudio

Free

A simpler, more modern alternative to Audacity for quick single-file jobs – trimming a bulletin, cleaning one interview. Friendlier if Audacity feels overwhelming, though less suited to bigger multi-track productions.

Windows · Mac · Linux

GarageBand

Free

If you're on a Mac, it's already installed. Clean, easy multitrack editing – a lovely option for Apple users putting together pre-recorded shows.

Mac / iPad only

Adobe Podcast – Enhance

AI CLEANUP

Free

Not an editor – a one-click web tool. Upload a rough recording and its AI strips out background noise and echo and makes a voice sound studio-clean. Brilliant for rescuing home and field recordings *before* you edit them. Run the recording through Enhance, download the cleaned file, then edit as normal.

Browser-based · free tier at podcast.adobe.com

The realistic recommendation for WVR: learn **Audacity** as your main tool, and keep **Adobe Podcast Enhance** bookmarked for cleaning up anything recorded at home or out at an event. That combination covers almost everything, for free.

PAID OPTIONS – WHEN YOU OUTGROW FREE

There's no need to pay until a specific need appears. But for the curious, here's what the paid tools offer and roughly what they cost (always check current prices – subscriptions and exchange rates change).

Hindenburg PRO

BUILT FOR RADIO

~£12–25/mo or ~£280 one-off

The one designed *specifically* for radio, journalism and spoken-word. It auto-levels voices, handles interviews and multiple speakers beautifully, and is built around storytelling rather than music. If WVR ever invests in editing software, this is the most natural fit for a news-and-speech station — and the gentlest learning curve for non-engineers.

Windows · Mac · 30-day free trial · perpetual or subscription licences

Reaper

BEST VALUE

~£50 one-off

A full professional studio for the price of a paid app, with a 60-day free trial and lifetime updates within a version. Hugely capable and customisable. Steeper to learn than Audacity, but excellent value if someone wants serious power without a subscription.

Windows · Mac · Linux · discounted personal licence

Adobe Audition

INDUSTRY STANDARD

~£20+/mo subscription

The professional broadcast/podcast editor, with superb noise repair and a polished interface. Powerful, but it's a monthly subscription and overkill for most volunteer work. Worth knowing because much of the best tutorial content (including Mike Russell's) is built around it.

Windows · Mac · subscription only (standalone or Creative Cloud) · 7-day trial

A note for a volunteer station: start free and stay free until something genuinely needs more. If a case *does* come for paid software, **Hindenburg** is the most radio-appropriate, and is also the kind of tool that may become cheaper once the planned charity registration unlocks nonprofit pricing.

WATCH & LEARN – YOUTUBE TUTORIALS

Channel names rather than fixed links, since individual videos move. Search the channel plus the suggested phrase.



Mike Russell / Music Radio Creative

Our top pick again — a UK radio producer who teaches Audacity, Audition and the actual craft of making a voice sound broadcast-ready. Start with his Audacity tutorials. He's also one of ours: Mike started his radio career at Wey Valley Radio in the 1990s, spending about a year here before going on to national radio.

Try searching: [Mike Russell Audacity tutorial](#) · [Music Radio Creative clean up voice](#)



"Audacity for Beginners" – many creators

A full beginners' walkthrough is the fastest way in. There are excellent, recent ones from several channels; pick one that looks current and follow along with your own file.

Try searching: [Audacity podcast editing tutorial for beginners](#) · [Audacity noise reduction tutorial](#)



The Podcast Host / Alitu

Friendly, plain-English guides to the editing *process* – what to cut, how to level, how to think about a piece – not just which buttons to press.

Try searching: [The Podcast Host how to edit a podcast](#)



Hindenburg / Reaper official channels

If you trial either paid tool, their own YouTube channels have clear getting-started series that'll have you editing within an hour.

Try searching: [Hindenburg getting started](#) · [Reaper podcast editing beginner](#)

★ Golden rules of editing

- ★ **Keep the original.** Always edit a copy, never your only recording.
- ★ **Less is more.** Light noise reduction and gentle levelling beat heavy processing every time.
- ★ **Match our sound.** Aim for the same loudness and feel as the station's other content.
- ★ **Listen all the way through** before you call it done – on more than one set of speakers.
- ★ **Name your files clearly** and consistently so anyone can find them later.
- ★ **Check every track.** Anything outside the approved library must be listened through and lyric-checked for offensive language before air.