

Audacity: Oral History Audio Editing Guide

There are a few different kinds of audio editing you might need to do for oral history interviews: Making a “radio edit,” creating highlight audio clips and file merging.

There’s a lot of audio editing software out there. We recommend Audacity, a free open-source audio editing software linked [HERE](#). Please download it and follow the steps below.

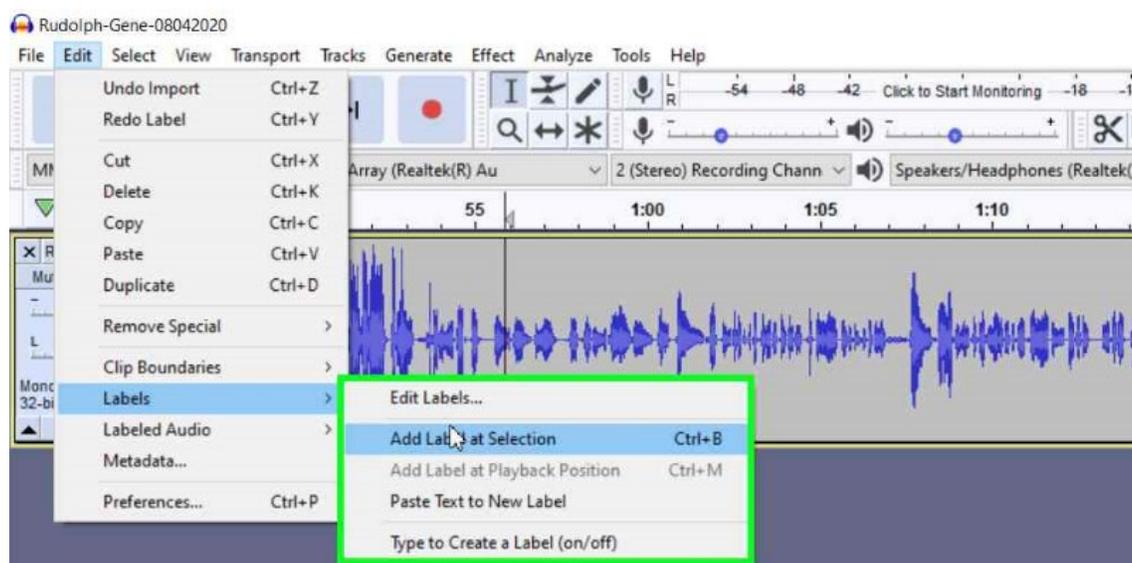
Making a Radio Edit

A “radio edit” is a very lightly edited version of a full interview. When creating a radio edit, you will cut out any dead air or non-interview related discussion. This might include and introductory discussion at the beginning of the interview were the interviewer and interviewee discuss contact information or consent approval. any weird transitions, or breaks that occur in the middle. When making a radio edit you are not making any content selections, just a cleaned up full interview.

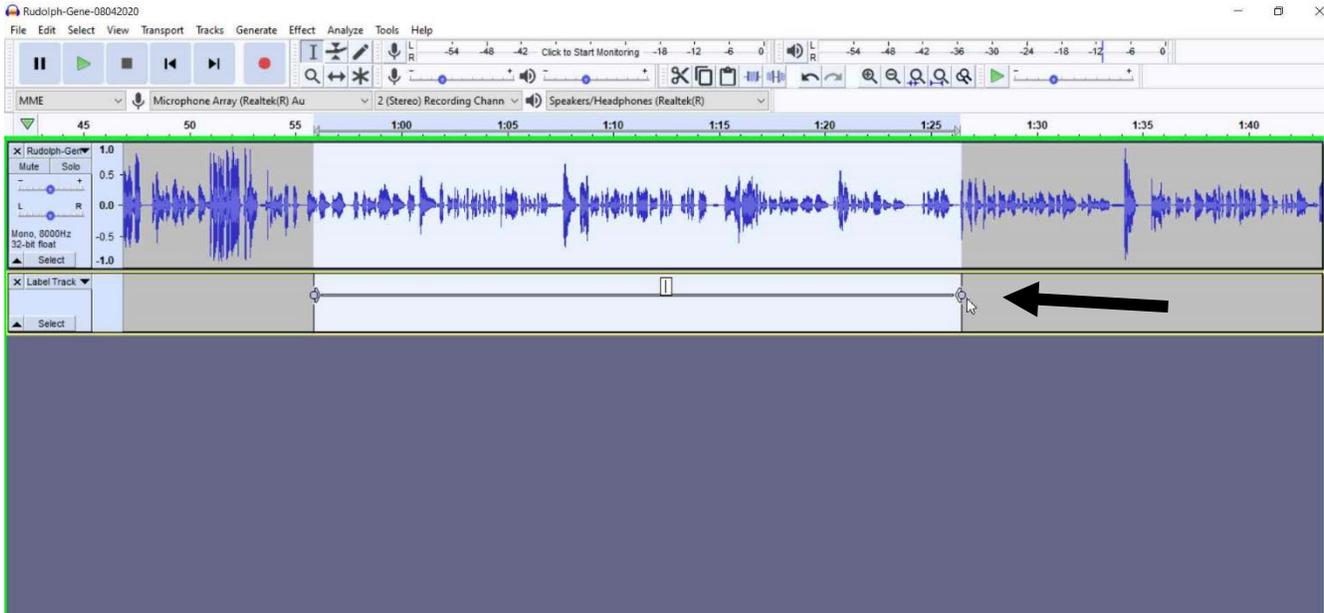
Step 1: Make a backup copy of the original file. That way if there are any problems, you won’t lose the original. Open audio file in Audacity.

Step 2: Listen to the full interview and make note of inpoints and outpoints of material that should be removed. You can use Ctrl+1 and Ctrl+3 to zoom in and out to make it a little easier.

Step 3: Place cursor at the specific moment in the audio file that marks the beginning of the segment you want to remove. Select edit – labels – “place label at selection”. Labels are like post-its that will help you identify the beginning and end of a segment.

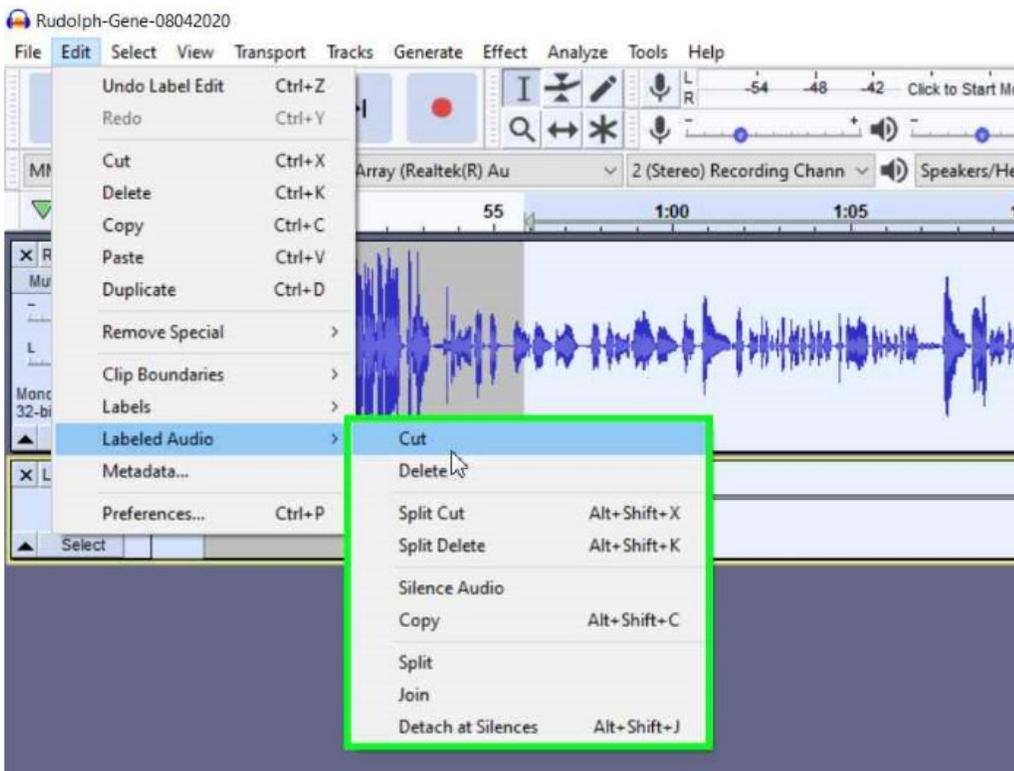


Step 4: A label track will pop up along with another cursor. Like an elastic band, you'll be able to grab sides of the cursor button to cover the entirety of the segment you want to remove.

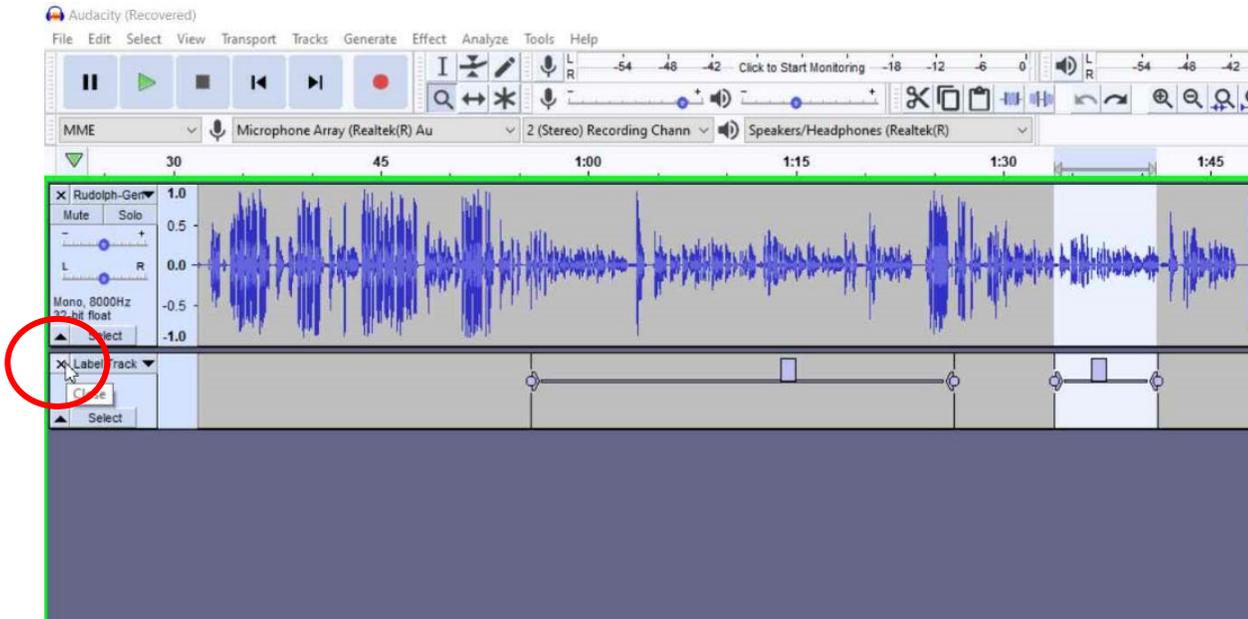


Step 5: Once you've captured the entire segment in the label track, listen through once more to make sure of the placement.

Step 6: Once placement is finalized, click on Edit – Labeled Audio – Cut. This will remove the segment.



Step 7: Delete the label track by clicking on the X in the Label Track box.



Step 8: To save, click File - Export as an mp3. Please use the following naming format: "Lastname-Firstname-radioedit" for Example [Dromm-Daniel-radioedit]. Just press save, you don't have to change any of the settings. You can use [WeTransfer](#) (totally free and safe file transfer service) to send it back to the Queens Memory staff person who sent you the audio file to edit.

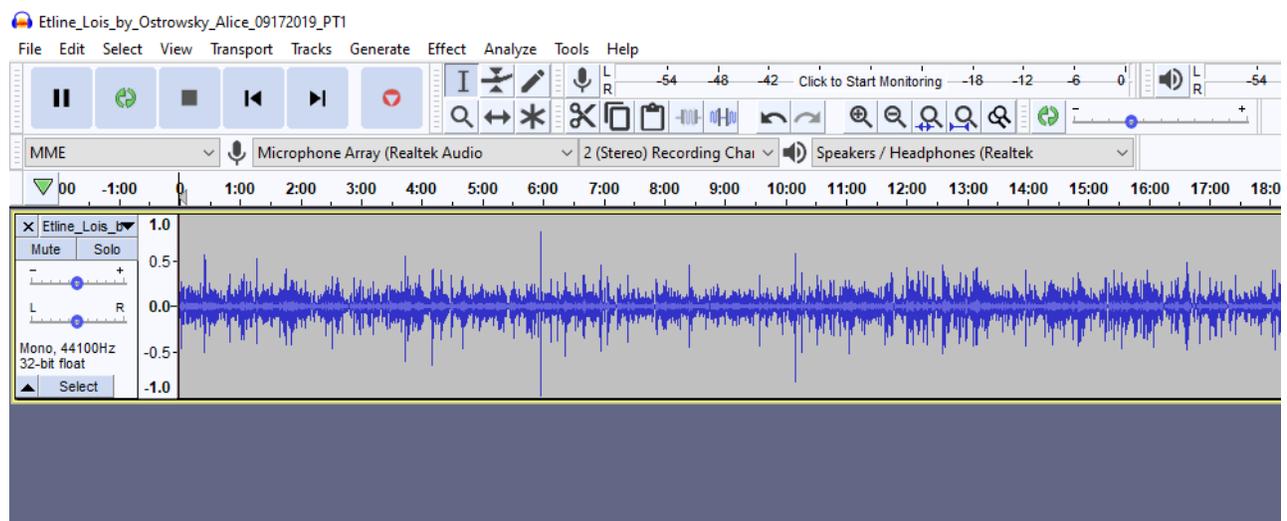
Creating Highlight Audio Clips

For some of our interviews, we will want to create a shorter clip, around 2-10 minutes, to highlight a specific story that we feel would be of interest. Most of our older interviews have these clips, rather than radio edits. One edited clip can contain audio from different moments in the interview. If you're using multiple segments, make note of the "in" and "out" timestamps of every excerpt you copied and pasted from the full interview. This is so researchers listening to your clip can go back and find these sections within the context of the original interview. You can drop as many marker points into an audio file as you need. When your clip contains excerpts from different points in the interview, you can rearrange their order, edit out parts that aren't important and generally make the clip tell as clear and complete a story as possible.

Before you start editing, listen to the full interview and find a good anecdote or story that you feel would be interesting to researchers. It should contain solid information about a specific time, place, and or person. If you're working from a highlighted transcript, focus on the highlighted sections and make sure the segments all fit together as a theme. Make note of the inpoints and outpoints of material you want to use. When sending in you finished clips, you will need to include some metadata, including Location and Time period discussed, Name(s) of interviewee(s) and interviewer(s). You can use [this form](#) to submit the audio files and metadata:

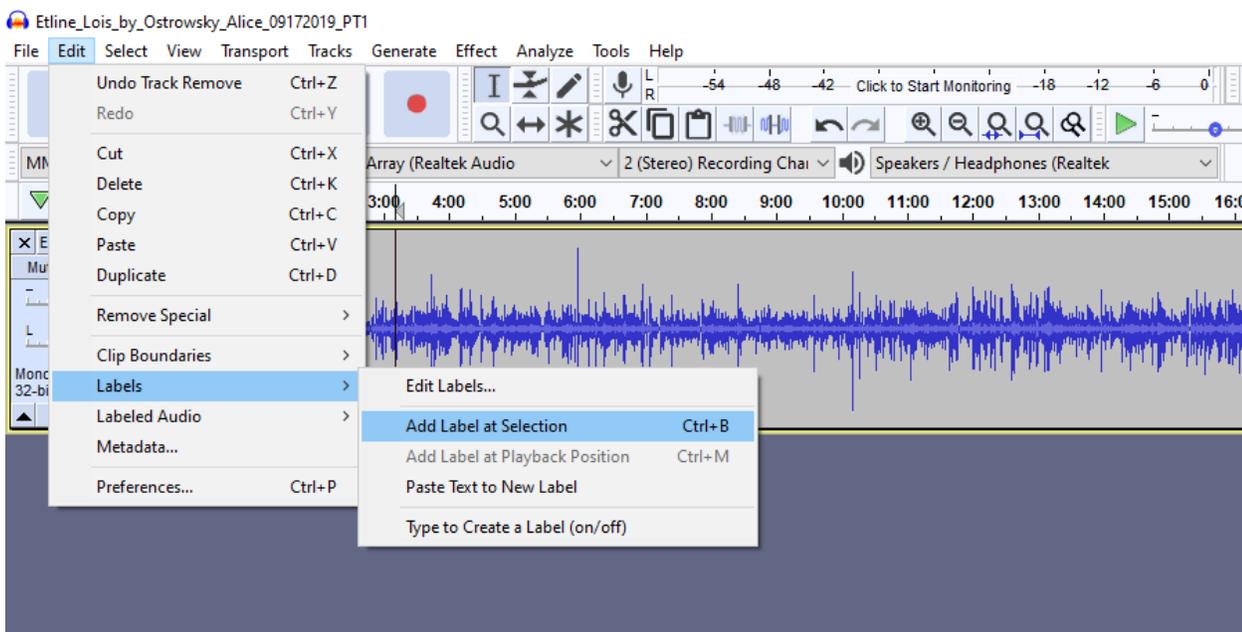
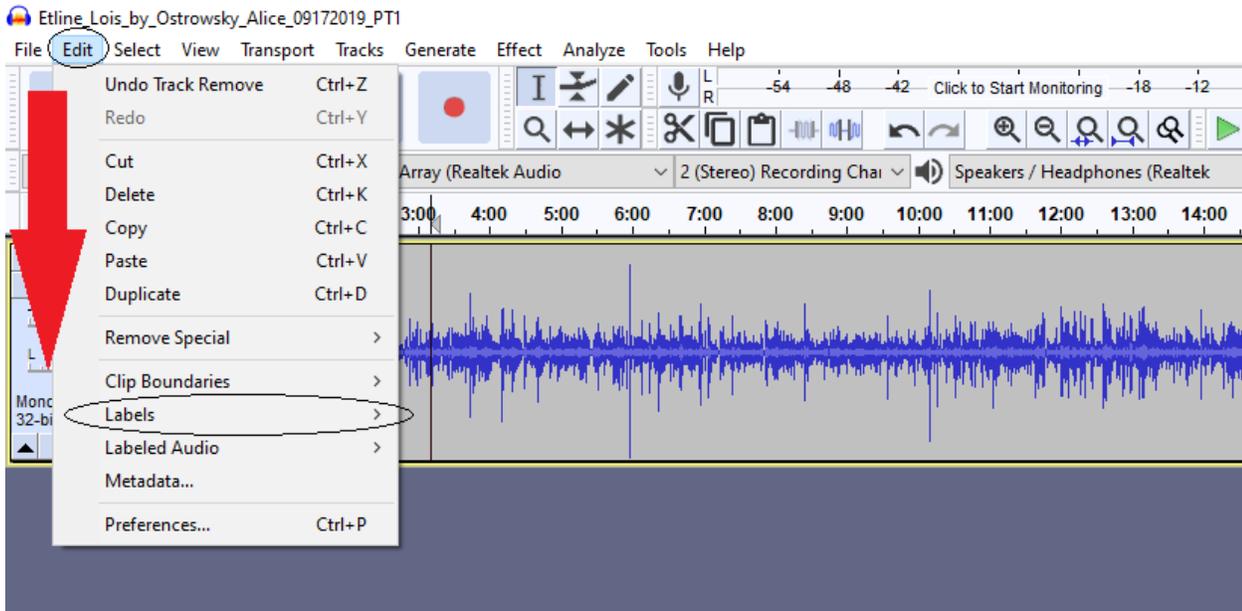
Step 1: Open Audacity.

Step 2: Click File - Open and select the oral history interview you want to edit. Wait for audio to load. It might take a few minutes. Get accustomed with the different buttons by hovering over them.

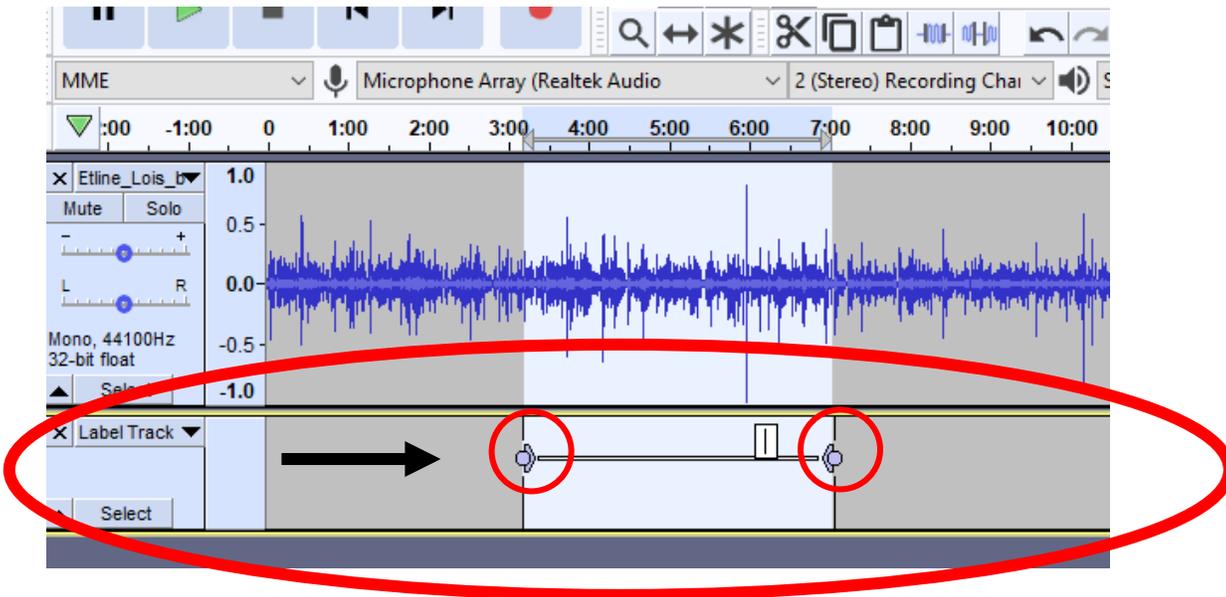


Step 3: Look at your notes or the highlighted section in the transcript find the segments you want to use.

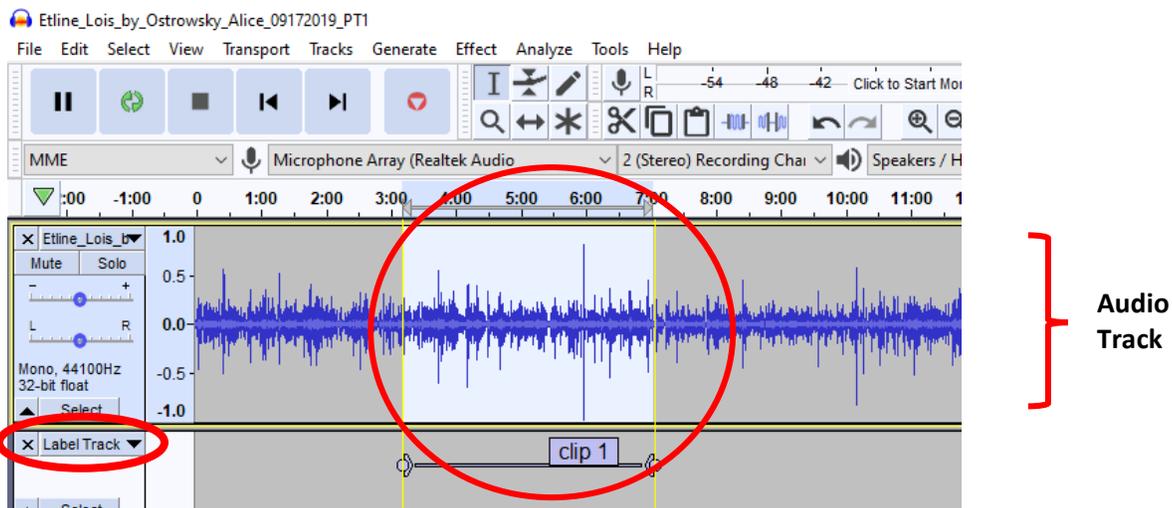
Step 4: Place cursor at the specific moment in the audio file that marks the beginning of your clip. Select edit – labels – “place label at selection”. Labels are like post-its that will help you identify the beginning and end of a clip.

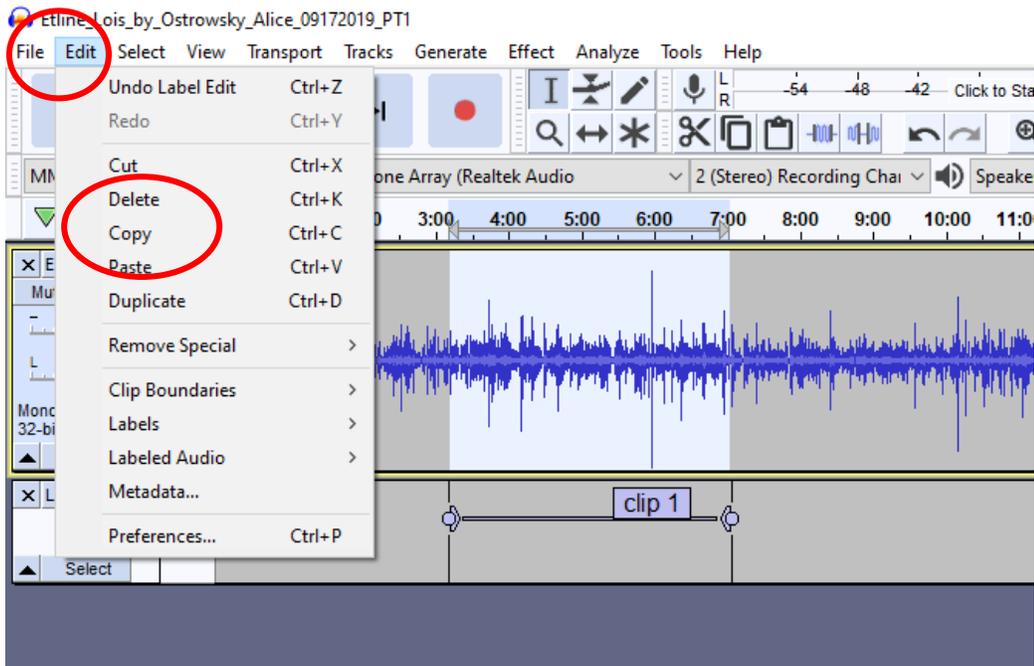


Step 5: A label track will pop up along with another cursor. Like an elastic band you'll be able to grab sides of the cursor button to cover the entirety of the desired clip. Name the selections as a reminder of what you've highlighted. Remember that working on the "label track" does not change anything on the audio file, you're just placing markers and notes for yourself so that you can then cut and copy that piece of the audio file and make it its own clip and standalone audio file.



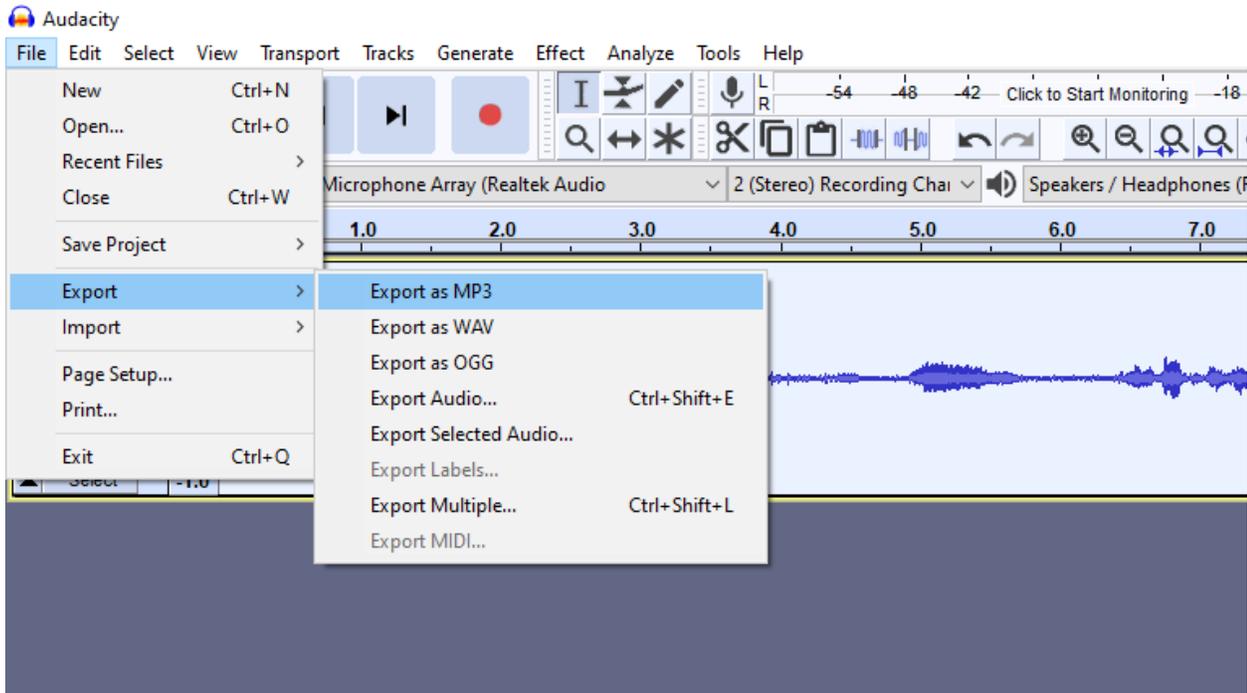
Step 6: Left click and hold your mouse button to highlight and select the section of audio track between your two labels. You'll see yellow lines pop up to signal alignment with your label markers. You'll now be creating a separate short audio clip. From the Edit dropdown menu, press copy, then file-new, then edit-paste. Similar to a Word Document, you can also use the following keyboard commands (also known as shortcuts): ctrl + c to copy then ctrl + n to create a new window and then ctrl + v to paste in the clip.



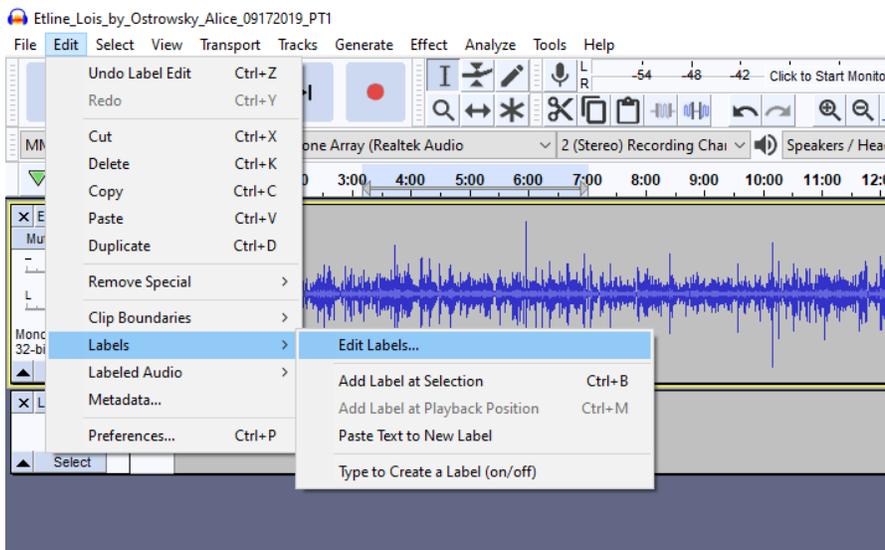


Step 7: You’ve pasted that clip into a new file. You now have an audio file that’s just the desired clip. We don’t require clips to be fine-tuned because we know that requires a lot more skill and time, and our volunteers are already doing so much for us. However! If you wanted to build your audio editing skills—go for it. Our expectation is simply that the clip run between 2 and 10 minutes, and that it captures an important moment of the interview.

Step 8: To save, you’ll be exporting this small audio clip file. Press File -> Export as an mp3. Once you’ve exported the audio clip, you’ll be saving it. Please use the following naming format: “Lastname-Firstname-Clip#” for Example [Dromm-Daniel-Clip1]. Just press save, you don’t have to change any of the settings.



Step 9: Before sending us the audio clips, you'll want to compile and enter the metadata into [the webform](#). You can go back to the original audio file in Audacity and press "edit – edit labels". You'll be able get the in and out times of all the audio clips within the original audio file.



The image shows a screenshot of an audio editing software interface. At the top, there is a blue waveform representing an audio signal. Below the waveform is a timeline with three clips labeled 'clip 1', 'clip 2', and 'clip 3'. In the foreground, an 'Edit Labels' dialog box is open, displaying a table of clip information. A red circle highlights the dialog box.

Edit Labels

Press F2 or double click to edit cell contents.

	Label	Start Time	End Time	Lo
1	clip 1	00 h 03 m 11.302 s	00 h 07 m 04.412 s	
2	clip 2	00 h 12 m 14.802 s	00 h 16 m 57.320 s	
3	clip 3	00 h 21 m 46.170 s	00 h 28 m 20.180 s	

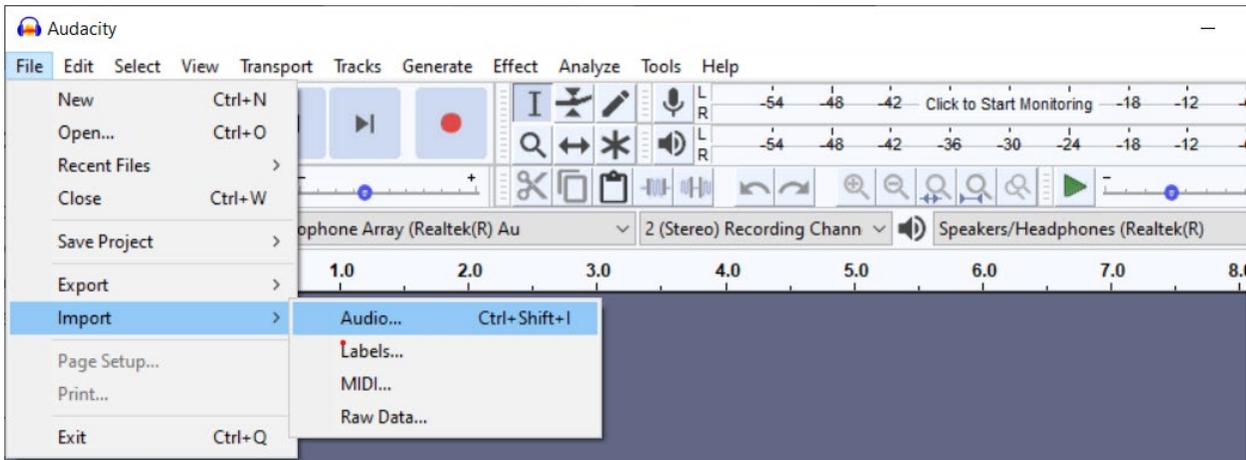
Buttons: Insert, Delete, Import..., Export..., OK, Cancel, ?

Merging Audio Files

If a single interview is recorded on more than one audio file, you will need to combine the files into one combined file. For example, if you stopped recording mid interview to get a drink, take a rest etc.

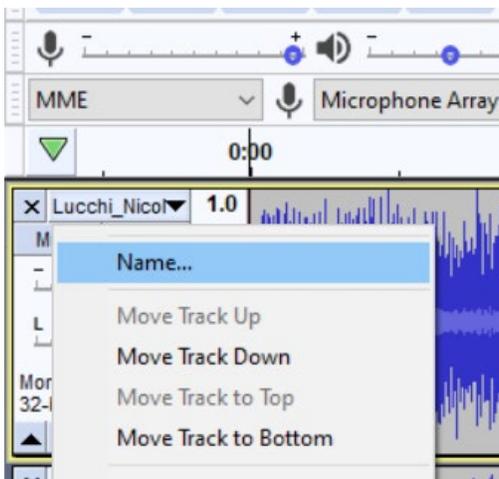
Step 1: Open Audacity

Step 2: Click on File – Import – Audio



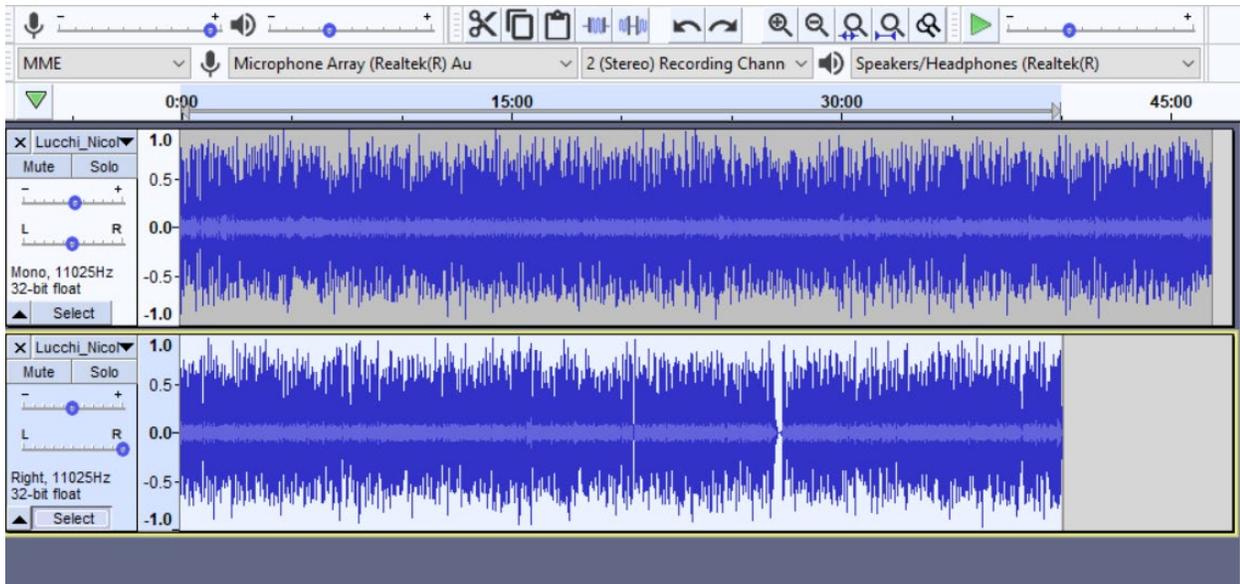
Step 3: Select all audio files to be merged and click Open.

Step 4: Check to make sure the files are in the correct order, with part 1 on the top. You can check file names by clicking on the down arrow and selecting Name.

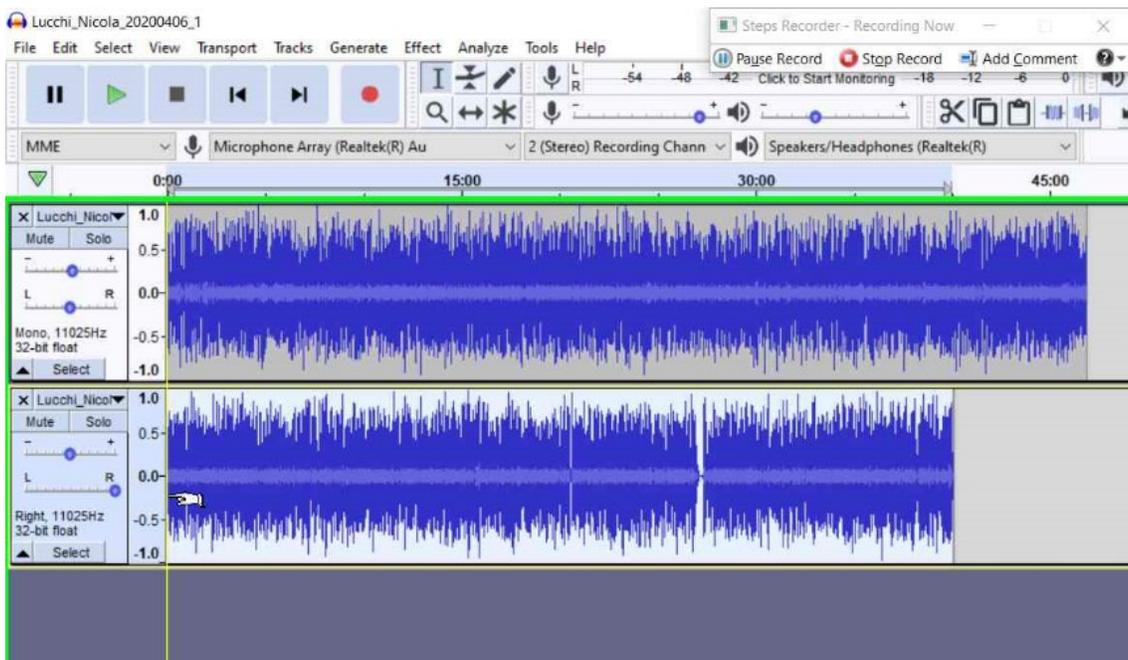


Step 5: Make note of the timestamp of the very end of each file. You will need to record the timestamps of each point at which the file was merged.

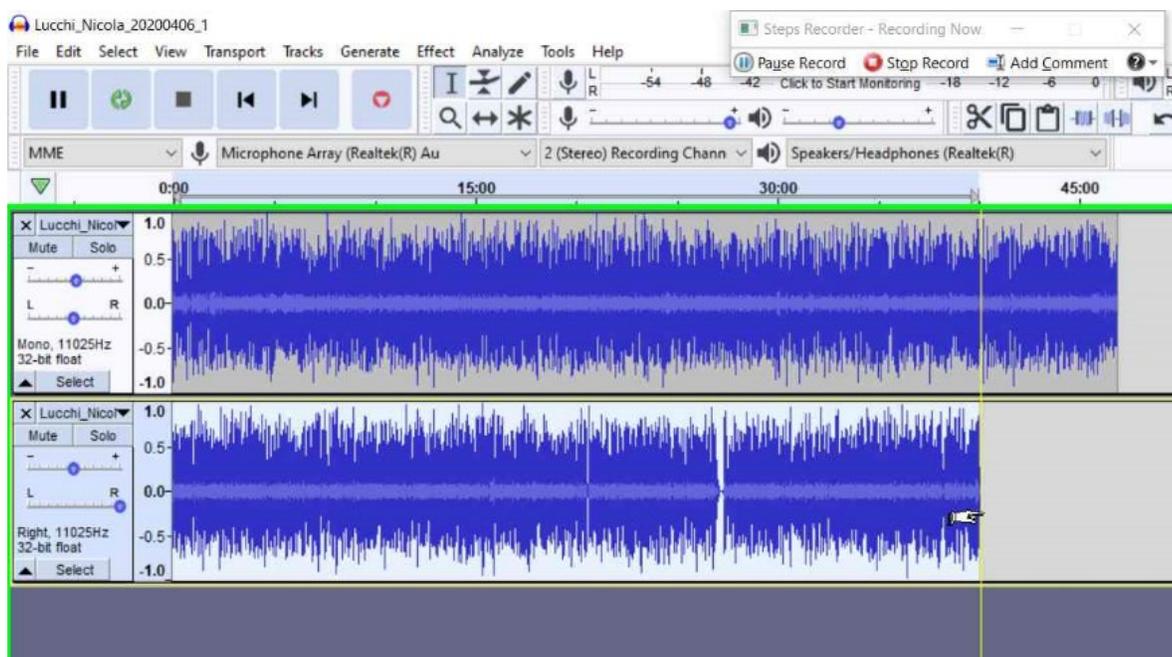
Step 6: Select the last audio file by clicking on Select.



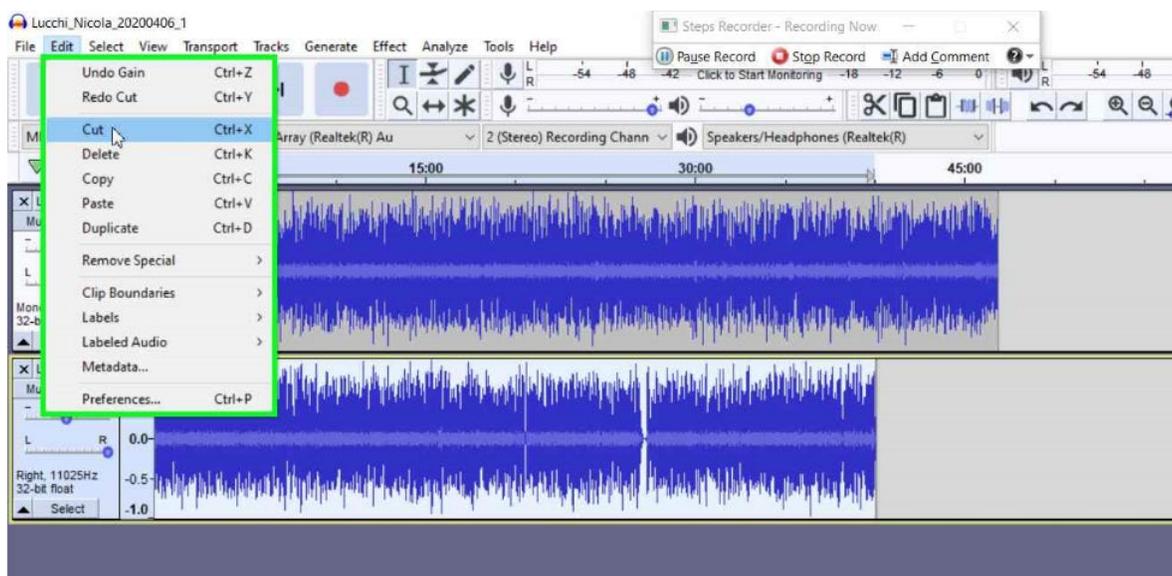
Step 7: Click on the very beginning of the audio.



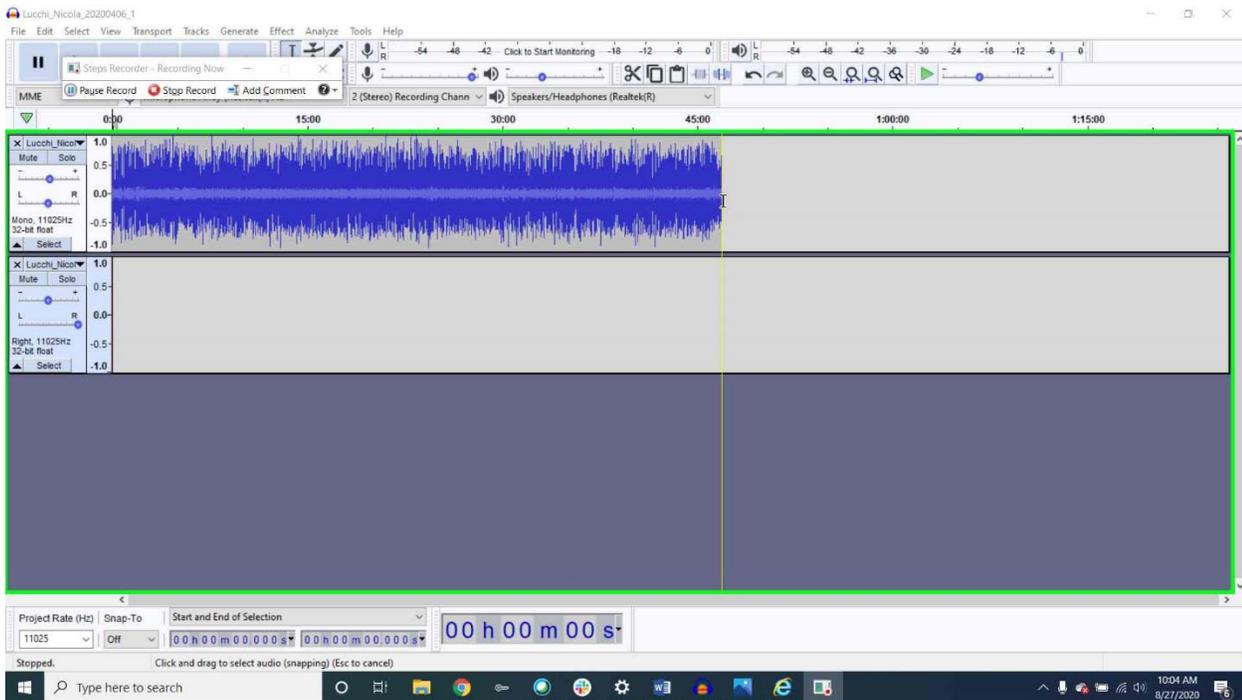
Step 8: Hold down shift, and click on the very end of the audio, to select all of the audio.



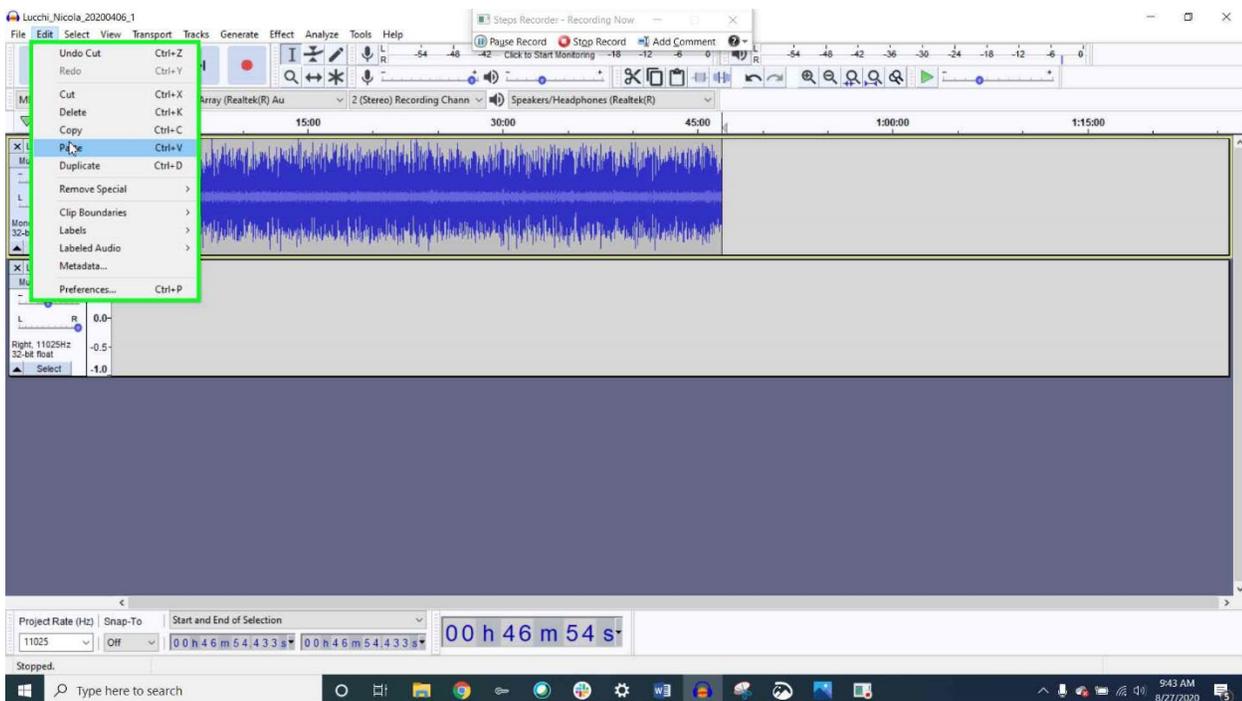
Step 9: Click on Edit – Cut.



Step 10: Click on the very end of the first audio file.

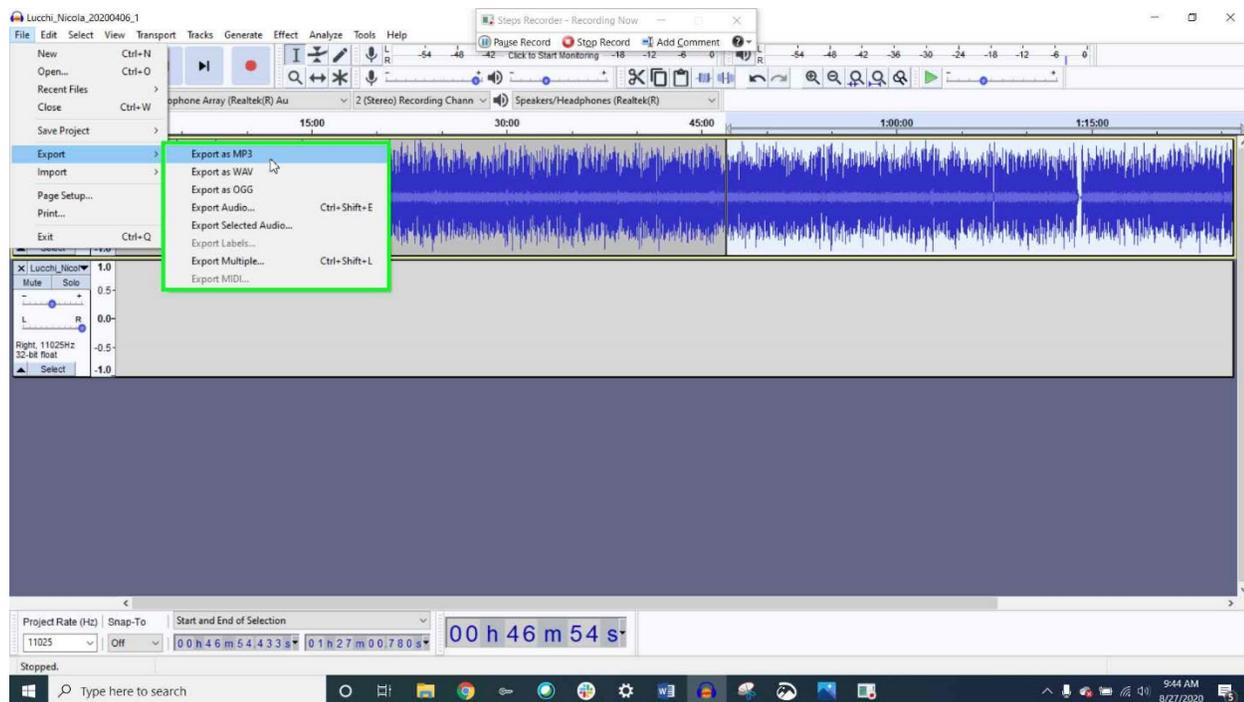


Step 11: Click on Edit – Paste.



Step 12: Listen to the merged section of audio to make sure it sounds right.

Step 13: When done, click on File – Export – Export as MP3.



Step 14: Change file name to originalfilename-combined and click save into the same folder as the original audio files.

If you get a pop up that states “Warning your tracks will be mixed down and exported as one stereo file.” Click Ok.

If you get a pop up to Edit Metadata Tags, click Ok.

You will see a box showing a timer for your export. Once the export is finished, Close Audacity. You do not need to Export the project.

Step 15: You can use [WeTransfer](#) (totally free and safe file transfer service) to send it back to the Queens Memory staff person who sent you the audio file to edit. Include the merge timestamps in the notes field. Ex. 3 audio files merged at 00:45:25 and 00:23:54.

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