Recording Auditions with Audacity

Download Audacity by going to https://www.audacityteam.org/ and click "Download." From the download page, it should start downloading the file for you, but if not, click the first download link.

Double-click the downloaded file to begin installing. Just click "Next" through the installation wizard until you get to "Finish." On a Mac, it may prompt you to drag it into the Applications folder.

If it didn't open automatically, open Audacity by double-clicking the icon on your desktop, or by going to Start   All Programs   Audacity on windows, or on a mac look for it in your *Applications* folder.
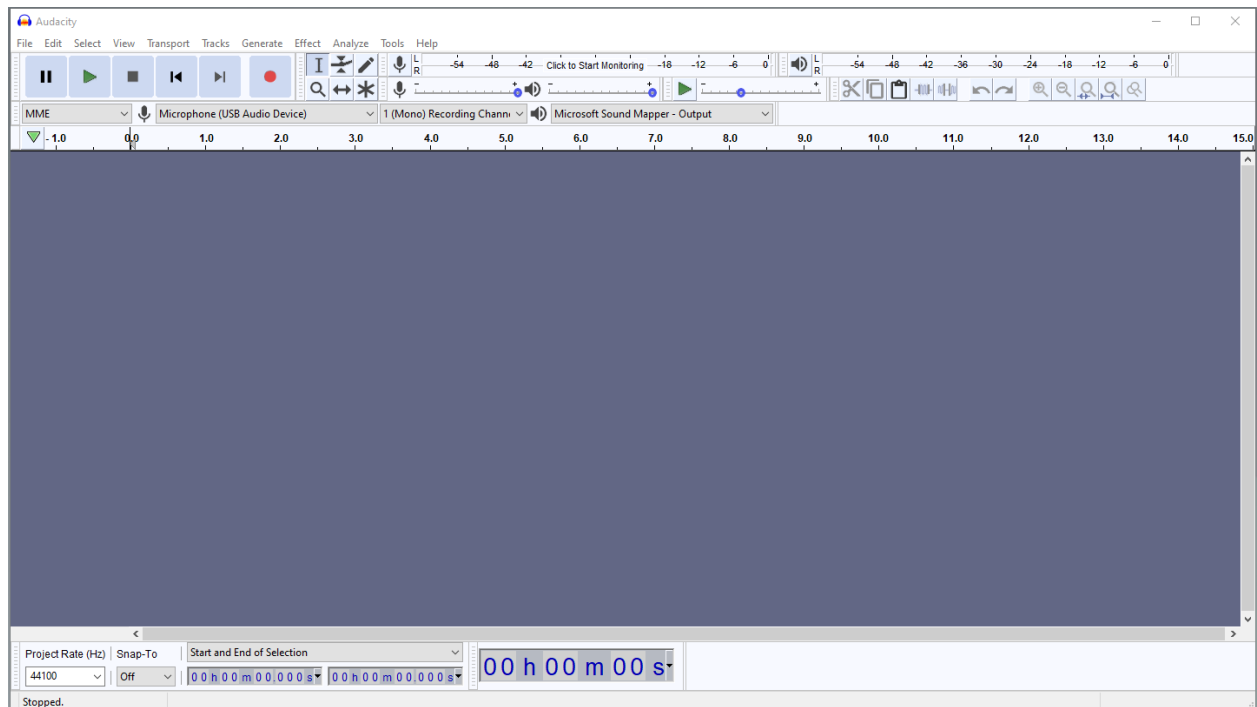

Using the drop-down next to the microphone icon select **your external USB microphone or audio interface** as the Device. The name will vary depending on what type of audio interface or USB microphone you are using, but will probably have either "USB" or the brand-name of your interface or microphone in the name of it.
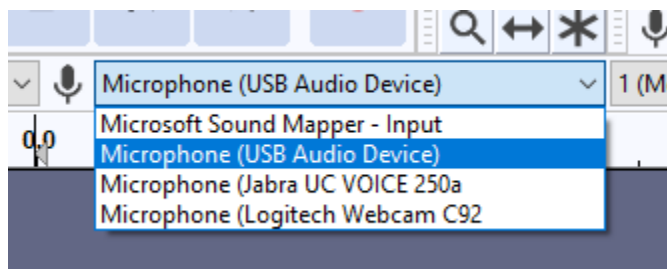

This step is very important to make sure you select the correct microphone. If you record from the internal microphone by accident, the judge may not be able to hear everything they need to hear.

Do **NOT** select "Line In" or "Mic" or "Internal" or "Stereo Mix" or anything like that. Look for "USB" or the brand name of your external interface that is connected between your computer and the microphone(s).
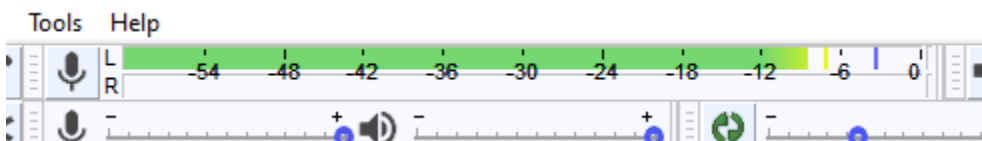
The drop-down that lets you select Mono or Stereo should be set to MONO
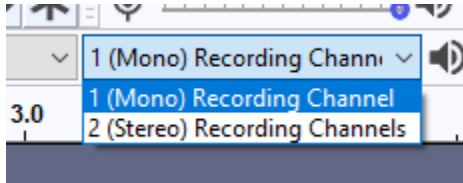
To start monitoring, click where it says "Click to Start Monitoring."
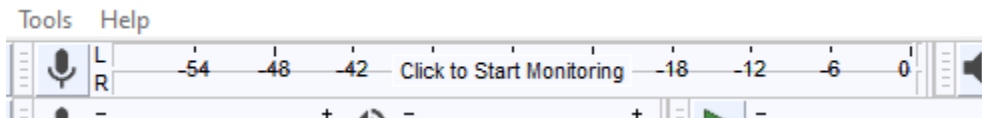
Talk or play into the microphone, and you should see the audio meter moving above the microphone icon. Adjust your levels using the controls on your audio interface or using the slider next to the microphone icon


The meter should be *peaking* between -12 and -6 while the student is playing their loudest, and generally moving between -30 and -6 while the student is playing normally.

Generating the Temporary mp3 files (FBA FOA FVA District Officers Only)

In MPA-Online, go to the details section for your auditions and click "Download empty MP3 files." Then click the link(s) to download a zip file containing the mp3 files for each room.
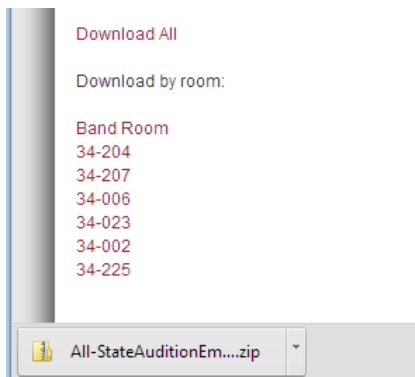
For each zip file, open it and drag the mp3 files into the USB drive that you will give to that room:
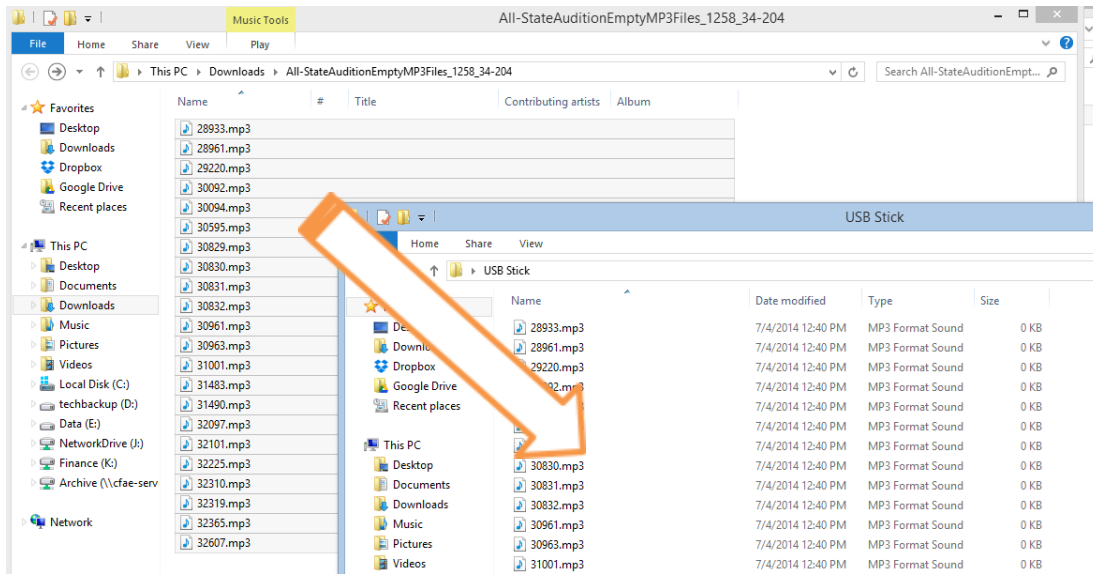
The person running the computers in each room should then create a folder on the computer they are using, and copy all those mp3 files from the USB drive onto that computer.
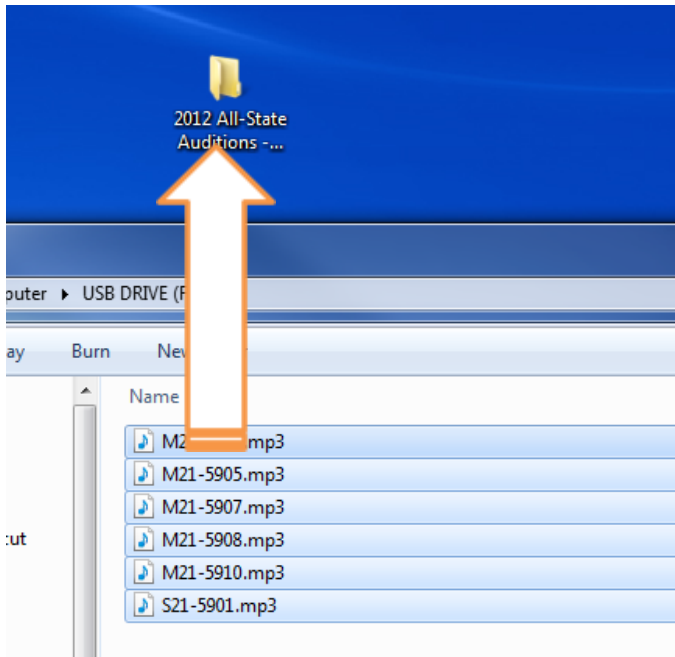
Recording the Audition

The buttons work very similarly to a CD or Tape Recorder. Here is what you should use each button for:

**Record Button:** Use this to start recording.

Pause Button: Use this to temporarily pause recording while you read the instructions to the student, or when your script says "Recording Pause" or "Recording Off." Click it again before the student starts playing or when the script says "Recording On."

Stop Button: Only use this at the very end of a student's audition when you are finished with all the recording for that student. However, if you accidentally click this Stop button instead of the Pause button between sections of the audition, you can click the Record button to start recording again.

While Recording, you can use the meter at the top and the waveform in the track to confirm that the student is being recorded and that the levels aren't too high:
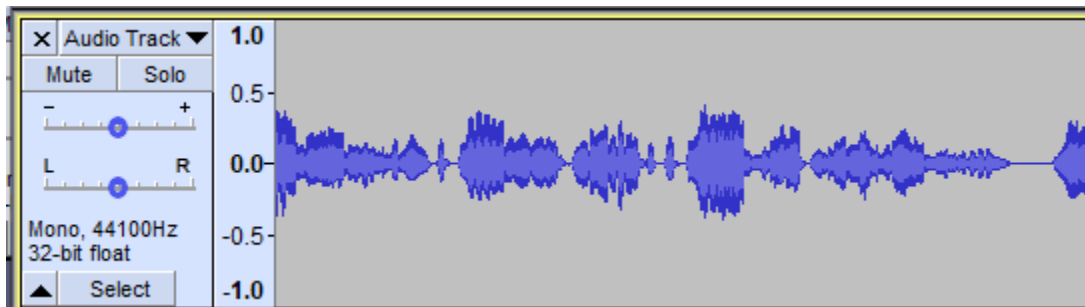
After Recording, press the "Home" key on the keyboard to return to the beginning (or click with the selection tool anywhere on the waveform), and then click this *Play* button to listen and confirm the quality of the recording. You can also use your **Spacebar** instead, to play and pause the playback.

Use the magnifying glass icons to zoom in and out. It may be helpful to zoom out while checking the recordings so you can easily click and spot-check all the various parts of the recording without having to scroll the scrollbar at the bottom.
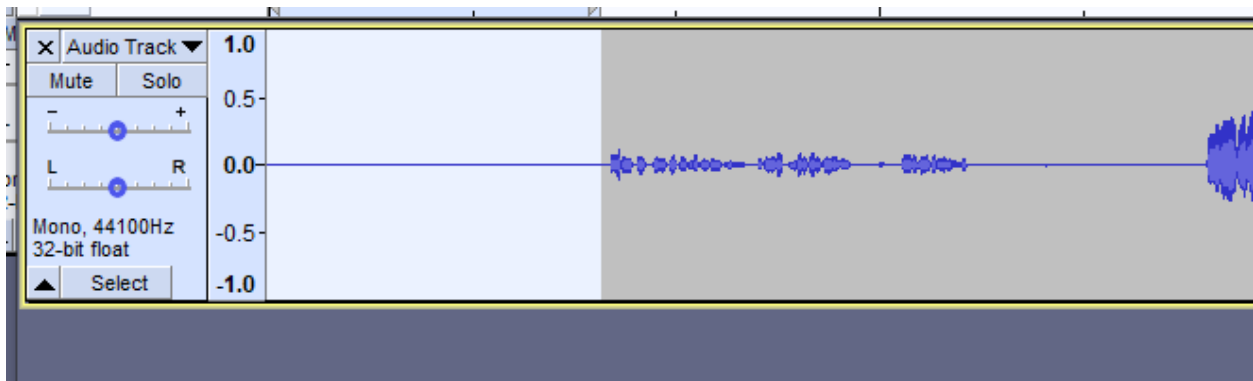
If there is a lot of silence at the beginning, you can click-and-drag the silent part and then press the "Delete" key on the keyboard to delete it. Be careful not to cut it too close… there should be a second or two of silence before you hear anything, and sometimes if an etude has a soft beginning it will look like silence on the waveform. Always press "home" and "Play" to listen to make sure you didn't cut too much off, and if you did, press Control-Z to undo and try it again.
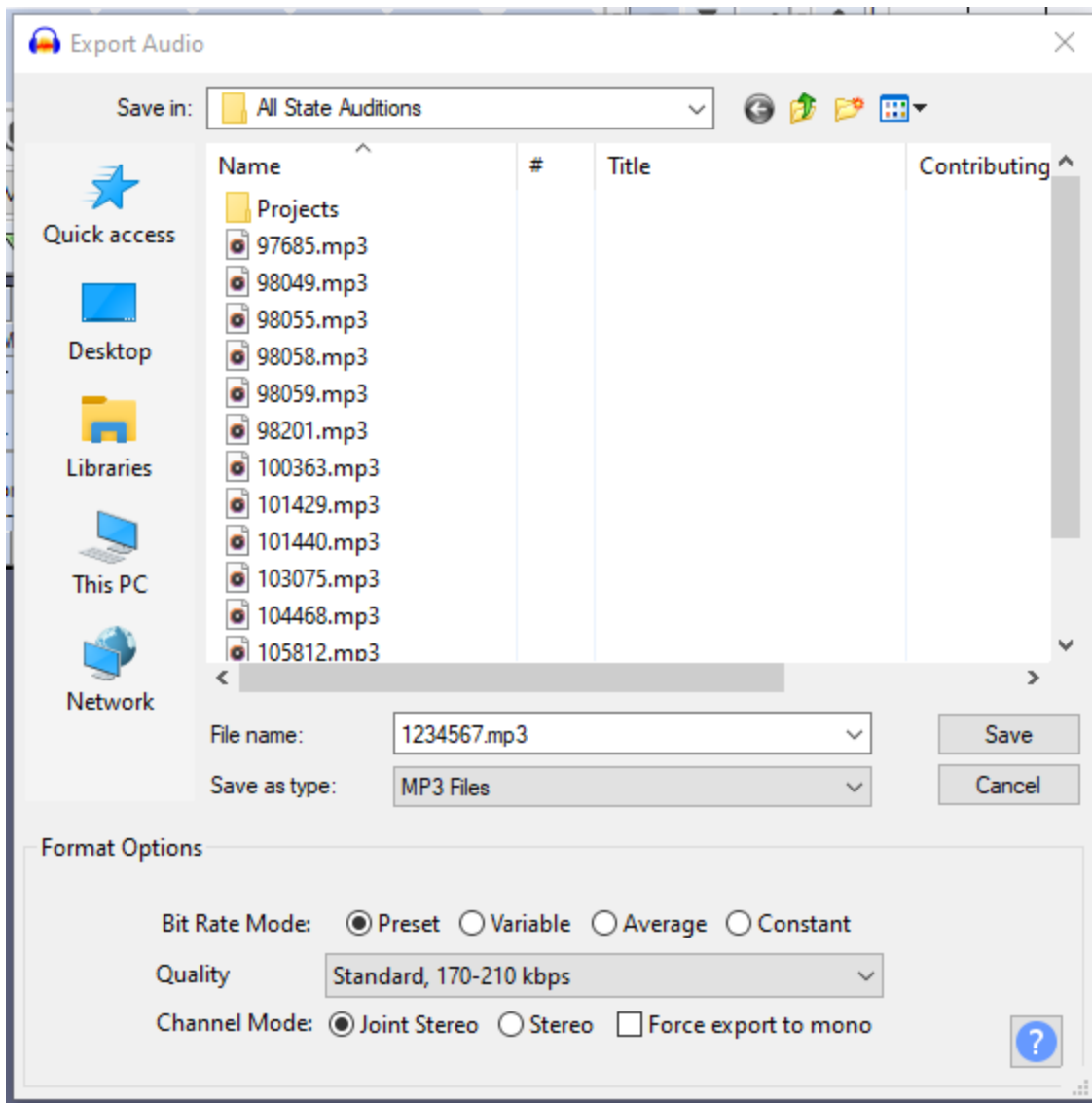
Saving the Recording

You will need to "Export" the recording to an mp3 file on your computer, and then copy that mp3 file to the USB Thumb Drive that the runners will pick up and take to the district chair for uploading.

Click "File" and then "Export…"
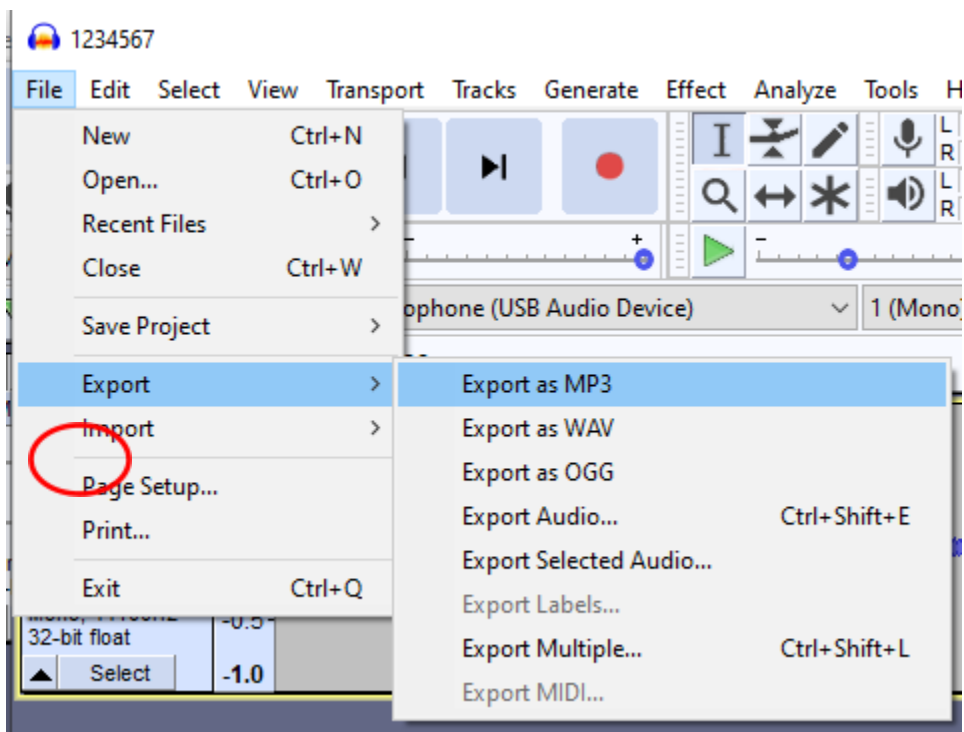
Select the folder that contains the empty mp3 files you copied to the computer earlier.

Select (click once) the audition code of the audition that you just recorded. **DOUBLE CHECK THAT YOU CLICKED THE CORRECT CODE.** A simple error here could cause this student's audition to be mixed up or lost. The correct code will appear in the "File name" box when you click it.

Make sure "Save as type:" is set to **MP3 Files**. All the "Format Options" at the bottom can stay set to their defaults.

After you have double-checked that the audition code is correct in the filename, click "Save." This will ask you to confirm you want to replace the existing file and then bring up the Edit Metadata window… you don't need to enter any metadata so just click "OK"

Go to your folder of mp3 files on the computer. To make sure your most recent mp3 file is always at the top of that window and easy to find, you can add a "Date Modified" column and then click the column header and then sort by that column.

Right-Click any column header, and then find "Date Modified." If there is not a check by it, click it to add that column. Do the same for the "Size" column.

Then scroll to find the Date Modified column and click it. You may need to click it twice, once sorts it Ascending, clicking it again sorts it Descending putting the most recent file on top.
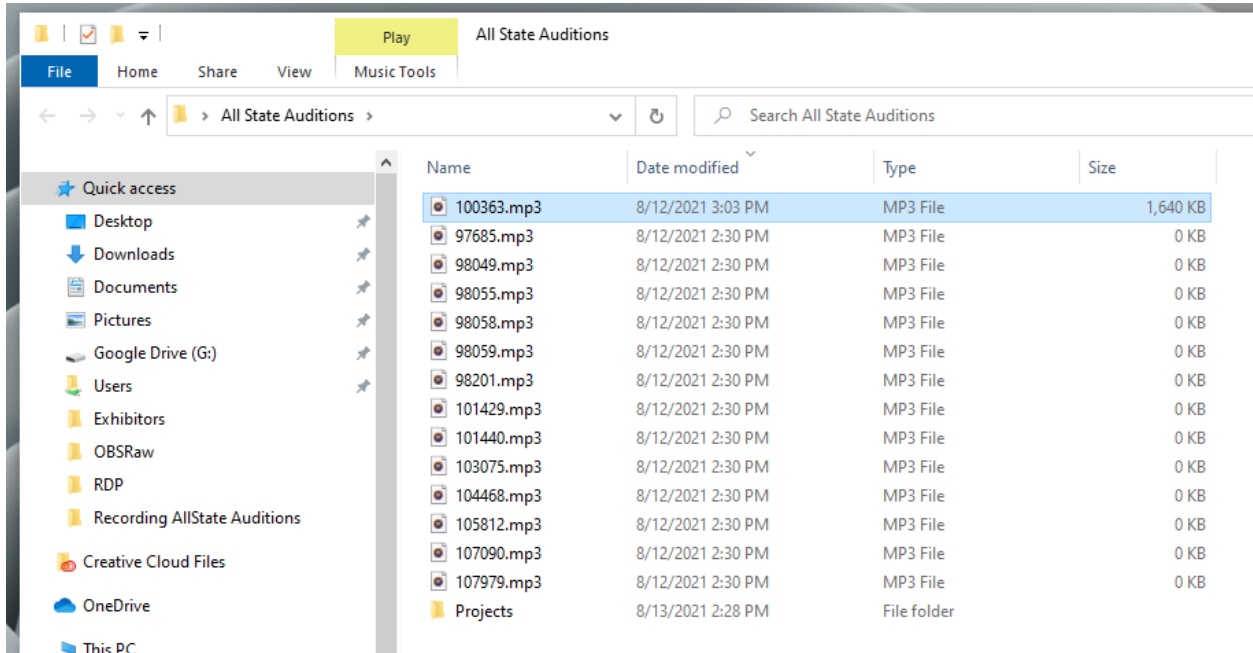
The recording we just exported is now at the top of the list, and it's size should be over 1,000 KB, whereas the blank empty mp3 files are still 0KB.

Drag the file you just saved from the window to the USB Thumb Drive. (In the picture it is called "USB Drive," but it might be something else for you).
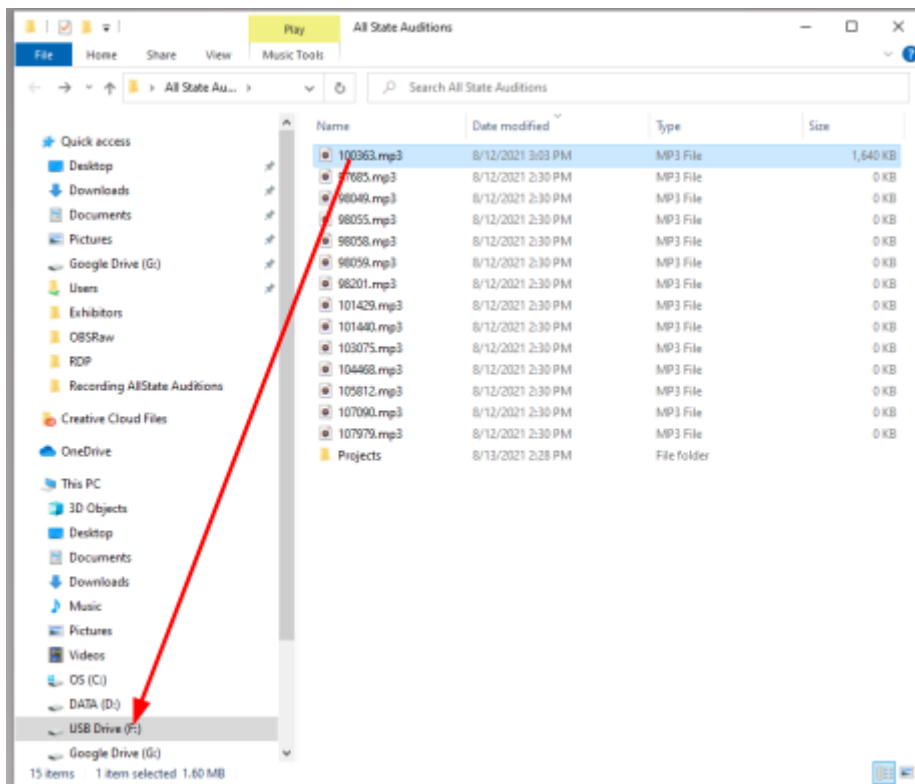
You should now have a copy of the file on the Thumb Drive. **Do not delete the file from the computer**, just in case something happens with the thumb drive version and they need to get it from you again.

Prepare for the Next Audition

Now that you are sure you recorded the audition and have two copies of the mp3, you can return to Audacity and prepare for the next audition.

You can save the "Project" if you want by going to *File*, *Save Project*, *Save Project*…
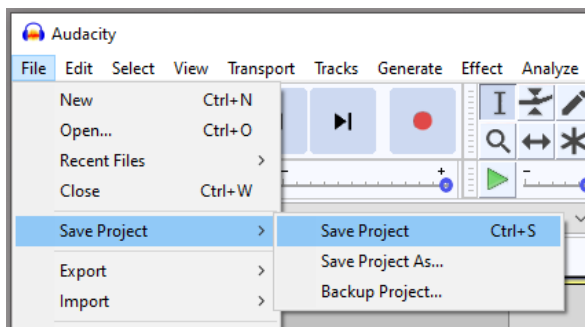
… but this will create a file that only Audacity can use. Don't send it to your district chair. Just keep it on the computer in case we later find out there was an issue with the exported mp3 file you gave your district chair.

Close Project:
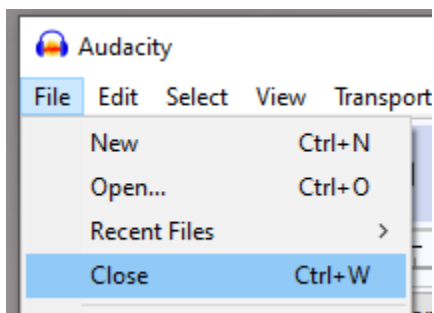
Click *File*, then *Close*, and audiacity will close the project for your previous student and open a new project for you to start recording your next student