

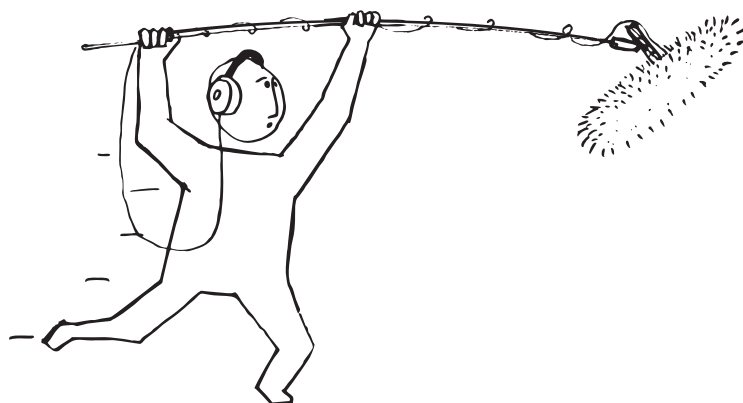
MAKE IT SOUND SWEET

SOUND

Seen a silent film recently? Probably not. And even if you did, there was probably some wacky piano music playing. You can get all the beautiful visuals you like, but if you don't get the sound right, you'll struggle to engage your audience. Sound has some pretty useful superpowers, read on to find out how to put them to use in your film.

IN THIS GUIDE

- * **ON LOCATION**
What do you need to worry about while you're shooting your film?
- * **PUTTING IT TOGETHER**
You've edited together your film and it looks good, how do you make it sound good?
- * **MUSIC**
Your film already talks, now make it sing.



ON LOCATION

While there's a lot of sound tricks you can do later, you need to make sure you get the best sound possible while you're shooting. The most important thing is dialogue. You can find ways of recreating everything else later, but it's very difficult to get dialogue recorded later to match your visuals.

If you read MAKE IT YOUR TEAM, you'll know it's a good idea to have someone acting as sound recordist. It's their job to make sure good sound is recorded. They should be listening through headphones during takes, and at the end of each take alerting the director if there was any problems.

MICROPHONES

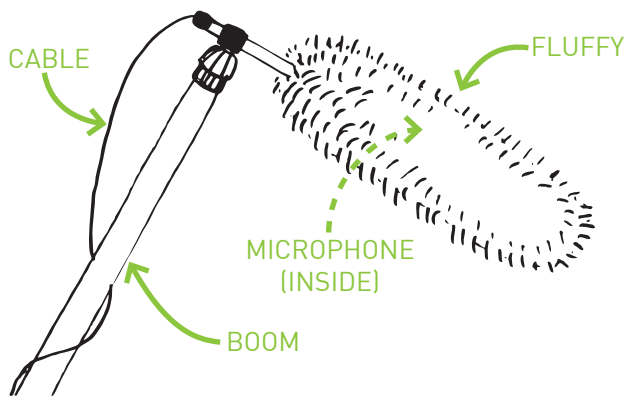
The simplest way to record audio is to rely on the microphone built in to your camera. But you won't end up with an ideal result. On-board microphones are designed to capture as much sound as possible, which means what you want to record will be permanently mixed in with a whole bunch of things you want to avoid.

If you can, find an external microphone to use. If you don't have any video equipment at your school, see what the music department can loan you. You can also hire microphones

from places like **Wide Angle Tasmania**.

www.wideangle.org.au

The best kind of microphone to use is a **shotgun** - these are designed to pinpoint a particular source of sound in a room, like a talking actor. Sound recordists usually use these on set, on the end of a long pole called a **boom**. If you can access a boom microphone kit and plug it into your camera, you're all set.



If you can't get hold of a shotgun microphone, get inventive with any microphones you can find. Experiment to see how well you can record dialogue without the microphone getting in shot. You might even be able to build your own boom.

If you're shooting outside, you might find that wind is a problem. When it hits the microphone, it overpowers the sound of anyone talking. A boom microphone kit usually comes with a **fluffy**, which minimises the amount of wind getting through. If you don't have one of those, try using other things to block the wind from blowing across the microphone, like a pillow case, or a small box with the bottom cut out.

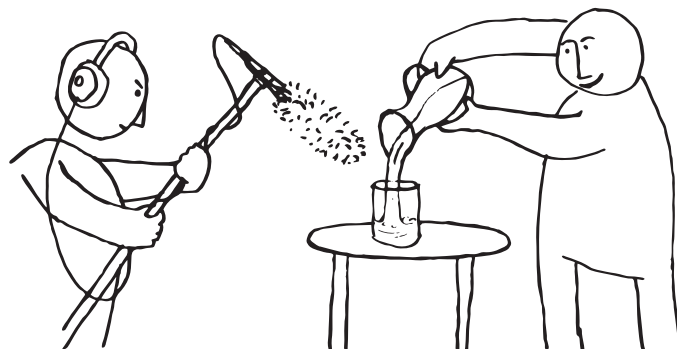
GET AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

You should also grab important pieces of audio separately to the video. The easiest way to do this is to get the camera operator to record while you point the microphone at whatever you need.

The most important thing you should get is a **wild track**, also known as **air**. Everywhere you shoot will sound slightly different, even when nothing is happening. A long wild track recording of the background of each location is one of the most important tools you'll use when you're finishing the film. It helps you cover up problems you'll inevitably find in your audio, and smooth out a scene so it sounds like it was all recorded at once.

To get a good air recording, just set up your microphone and tell everyone to be completely silent. Record for at least a full minute. If a large unexpected sound happens, like someone coughing, stop and start again.

You should also grab as many other individual sound effects as you can. For example, does a character pour a glass of water? While you're on set with the needed props, quickly grab a recording.



WATCH A SCENE IN A MOVIE. MAKE A LIST OF ALL THE SOUND EFFECTS THEY COULD HAVE RECORDED ON SET.

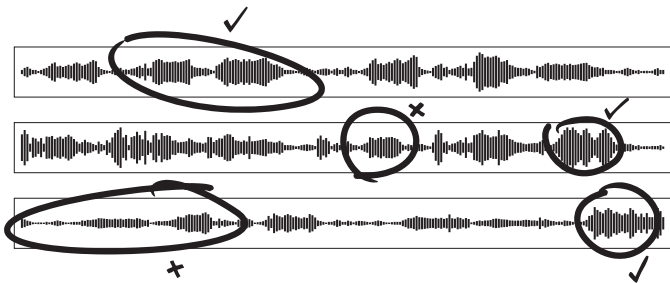
PUTTING IT TOGETHER

If you've read MAKE IT COME TOGETHER, you'll know that once your visual edit is finished, it's time to get the sound right, and add the music.

How you go about editing your sound will depend on what software you're using. Refer to your software's help files for how to do any specifics.

SOUND EDIT

The first thing you should do is remove any audio that shouldn't be there. That might include crew talking at the beginning and end of shots, or unexpected noises in the background, like a car horn. Note that you can't remove problems that happen during dialogue - if it overlaps someone talking, you're stuck with it. But if it happens between people talking, you should be able to cut it out quite easily.



Next, cover up any problems with your wild track recording. Don't just put it over gaps - loop it over the whole scene. This will make your scene feel smoother - your audience won't be distracted by the background sound changing suddenly all the time.

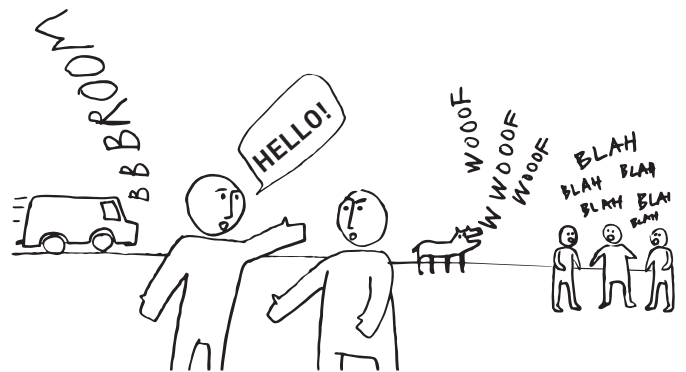
Now it's time for sound effects. Start with **justified** sound. That means things that the audience sees, and expects to be able to hear. It might be the squeaky hinges on a door a character opens, or the hero's sword clanging with the villain's. What happens in your scene that feels strange because you don't hear it? Add just those things.

If you like, you can experiment with **unjustified** sound. These are background sounds that don't need to be there, but can help with the atmosphere. That might be distant traffic noise, or the sound of people talking nearby. You should keep that to a minimum - the justified sounds are more important, and if you crowd them with too many other sound effects your audience will get confused and distracted.

If you couldn't get all the sound effects you need recorded on set, you can find them online. Try a website like **freesound.org**. Video editing software often comes with some basic sounds too, see if yours includes any.



WATCH A SCENE IN A MOVIE THAT DOESN'T HAVE ANY MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND. MAKE LISTS OF ALL THE JUSTIFIED AND UNJUSTIFIED SOUND EFFECTS.



MUSIC

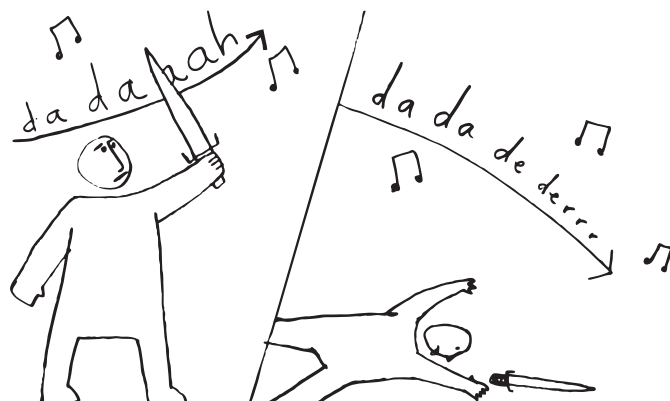
Films have always had great music to help engage the audience. It turbo-powers your story - making a scary scene creepier, an action scene more energetic, or a sad scene more heart-wrenching.

But you can't just put any music in and expect it to work. Watch your film through and decide which parts would be better with music, and which parts work best without. Experiment with different pieces of music and see how it affects the scenes in your film.

When you've found the style of music you think works, you'll need to get some that you are legally allowed to use. You can't just take your favourite music and put it in, you need written permission from the owner.

One option is stock music, which is music made to work in a variety of films. It's the easiest option, there are a lot of free and cheap places on the internet you can find it. But always make sure the music you've found is legally okay to use.

The other option is to write and record your own music. You might have access to software like Garage Band or Fruity Loops which make it quite easy, and they include instrument loops you can piece together if you can't record instruments yourself. Experiment and see what you can come up with.



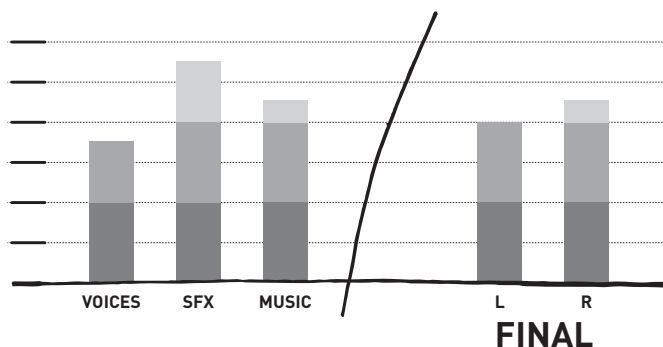
SOUND MIX

Once you've got everything in place, the final phase is the sound mix. This is where you play through your film and adjust the volumes of individual elements so it all works together in perfect harmony.

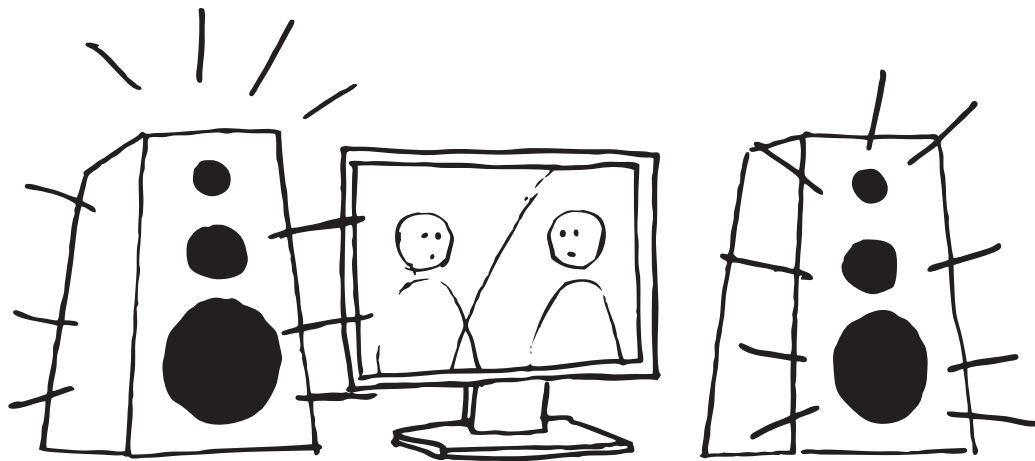
As you've probably guessed by this point, the most important element is the dialogue. Make sure the audience can clearly hear everything your characters are saying. Turn the volume down on other elements if you can't hear them well enough.

If some elements feel too jarring, try adding **crossfades** to make changes more subtle. A crossfade smoothly fades out the ending element and fades in the starting element at the same time.

Try to make your final mix as even as possible in volume throughout the film. Your software should have **meters** that show how loud the audio is at any point while your film is playing, with green, yellow and red colouring at different volume levels. Keep an eye on them, and adjust your dialogue to be as loud as possible without the meters going red.



SUMMARY



You'll be amazed at how much good sound can improve your film. Get the right sound on set, edit it all together smoothly later, and you'll keep your audience engaged.

WHEN ON SET

- 1. USE AN EXTERNAL MICROPHONE IF YOU CAN.**
- 2. FOCUS ON GETTING CLEAN DIALOGUE.**
- 3. GET AN AIR RECORDING.**
- 4. RECORD ANY OTHER SOUND EFFECTS.**

WHEN YOU'RE EDITING

- 1. REMOVE ANY PROBLEMS.**
- 2. COVER YOUR SCENE WITH AIR TO HIDE GAPS.**
- 3. ADD JUSTIFIED AND UNJUSTIFIED SOUND EFFECTS.**
- 4. FIND OR CREATE MUSIC.**
- 5. MAKE IT ALL WORK TOGETHER WITH A SOUND MIX.**

MAKE IT

This is just one of five MAKE IT guides available on the MyState Student Film Festival website. All of the MAKE IT resources are completely free for you to download and share.

www.mystatefilmfestival.com.au



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If you have any questions about filmmaking, head over to our Facebook page to get them answered by the same filmmakers that wrote this guide.

www.facebook.com/mystatefilmfestival

This is a guide only. Care and adult supervision should be exercised at all times when using film making equipment.