



FROM PAGE TO EAR IN THE TIME OF REMOTE RECORDING NOTES FOR EDITORS

Remote working has become a necessity for all of us. Whilst some tasks can easily be transferred to working on a laptop at home, others are trickier. Producing high quality multi-voice recordings is one of these!

Here are a few questions that you may need answered and following that some things, which as an editor, you can do to help the process run as smoothly as possible.

Questions to ask:

Where

Are all recordings taking place with people working remotely at home?

Your company legal department may require confirmation this is the case.

Communication

How will the director or engineer work with the voices?

Various options include Zoom, Source Connect, Source Connect Now, Whatsapp, Skype or even messenger video. (There are more options)

Dialogues

How will these be recorded?

Voices will need to be recorded individually and edited together. For dialogues it may be possible to play in one side when the other actor is recording.

Local/Remote Recording

Will the recording be done by the actor, the engineer or both?

This will depend on the voice artists systems and broadband speed. Even when it is possible to record remotely the best quality will always be from the locally recorded material uploaded to the engineer.



Quality

How will the producer engineer ensure a good quality for the recording?

The engineer will check what equipment the artists have and how they are sound proofing. They will provide a technical brief and ensure no compression or sound fx.

Editorial

If you need/want to, will you be able to listen in to the recording?

This will be possible using whatever system the director and engineer are using for directing the actor. If you need to use a different system please check it is compatible with the system being used to record.

How you can help facilitate a successful recording:

Number of Voices

Fewer voices= fewer recording set ups= more chance of consistent quality.

Can you reduce the number of voices required?

Can the script be adapted to reduce the number of different people required?

Adult actors can do a variety of voices/accents.

Children's Voices

There are obviously far fewer children available.

Some adult actors have children that have experience in recording and can work from their parents' home studio.

If possible keep children's voices to a minimum.

Would adult actors performing as children be acceptable?



Pronunciation

Please ensure any difficult or unusual pronunciations are explained in the text. Not all artists/producers can read phonetics. Provide online examples if unusual names.

"Attending" the recording

Do you need to be online for the whole recording or could you be on call?

It is useful if you can "attend" at the start of each recording to ensure you are happy with speed etc. If you have other distractions or noise at home it may be easier to arrange points to check in and be on call.

Preparing the Script

If at all possible organize any single voice sections for each voice in a block. This will help ensure nothing gets lost.

For dialogues put the name of the character in the script and at the top of the page put i.e. James=M1

The audio producer will go through in advance to highlight sections for each individual actor if not immediately clear or there are a larger number of voices.

Be aware this mean the producer needs the scripts further in advance.

Labelling

It's vital that everything is clearly labelled with filenames. This will help ensure nothing gets lost.

Tech Spec

Ensure the producer/engineer has your company's latest tech spec before recording.

Future proof and request .wavs as well as any other deliverables.



Matching Up

If the new audio needs to tie in to an existing course provide samples to the producer/engineer to check. They will hear things like compression and processing that will impact on the recording.

Enjoy

Everyone is tackling this as best they can and creatives are perfectionists so they'll want to do the best job possible for you.

For further information and help with your remote audio recordings contact:

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THE FOOTSTEP TEAM

Audio Engineer – Andrew Garratt



Andrew has worked as a sound engineer since 1990 when he joined BBC Network Radio and has constantly developed his skills in voice recording on speech radio working for BBC Radios 4,5 and the World Service in a wide range of languages.. He also spent many years as a specialist radio drama-mixer so is accustomed to the various techniques used to bring a vocal recording to life and of course to directing actors. He has also built up a huge library of sound effects both from various commercial libraries and his own creations.

Since 2003 he's used these skills as a freelance sound engineer working predominantly with Footstep Productions on educational material although we do let him out regularly to work for BBC Radio.

Whether recordings take place in commercial studios or remotely Andrew will use his home studio for editing, mixing and all post-production work. He's always up to date with the varied (and changing!) technical standards used in the audio world and is happy to advise on this if needed.

As an added benefit Andrew is a musician and composer and frequently makes use of this skill to add a little bit of extra "spice" to recordings with jingles, backing tracks and songs.



Producer/Director – Colette Thomson

Colette is a multi-lingual audio producer, television and video producer. Having started working in BBC Local Radio and BBC School Radio where she trained in drama and documentary production for radio. Colette set up Footstep Productions in 1991 to produce learning materials. The company has produced hundreds of hours of audio materials for most of the major UK educational publishers and the BBC. The company specialises in language learning materials and they have produced audio in 10 different languages as well as for ELT.

Footstep work regularly with a large range of actors who are experienced in in voicing learning materials. Together with Andrew she has created tech guidance for the actors working from home studios or wanting to set up their own. Colette has also created a short guide for editors who need to take their project from page to ear whilst we all need to work remotely!