



RECORDING FROM HOME

Here are a few basic tips on getting started with home recordings.

THE SPACE

By far the most important consideration is the **recording space**. If you get this right then everything else becomes much easier.

Isolation:

You'll need to eliminate as much external noise as possible. That means air conditioning, humming fridges, the boiler, downstairs radios, tweety birds-the lot! Basically find your quietest room and make sure everything is turned off, curtains closed and everyone else is quiet- easy....or maybe not!!!!

Room Acoustic:

The advantage of a studio for recording voices is that they are built to eliminate reflective surfaces. Our houses are full of reflective surfaces so our job is to temporarily eliminate these. I know that some of you have various forms of commercial sound absorber that you use such as the Isovox or Isocube. The Isovox is expensive so you'd need to be doing a great deal of work from home to justify it. Personally I find that you can do a great deal with the things you have at home. The general problem even with quiet rooms is that too much room acoustic is picked up. There are lots of ways to negate this. **Hard** surfaces are **bad**, **soft** furnishing **good**.

So, choose your plushiest room-it tends to be a bedroom-and then cover the close surfaces with **soft material**. If floors are hard then put **rugs** or **bath mats** down. Some people hang a **duvet** or two behind themselves to get rid of hard wall reflections. **Fluffy blankets** do the job just as well.

Don't set the mic close to a wall and also avoid having the mic facing perpendicular to a wall as that avoids the vocal honk you can sometimes get. Try and make the space you are working in an irregular shape it will help. We can discuss with you before recording how to check your **room acoustic** or **sound floor** and where this should fall on the sound scale.

Finally:

The closer you can get to the mic without popping it the better. This may make the recordings sound too bassy but this is relatively easy to correct in post-production. Pops are another matter and must be avoided. Most of you know the tricks for avoiding popping. I do strongly recommend getting a popper stopper windshield-it should be dual layer cloth rather than the metal grill type. You can get them for £5-6 on Amazon and they're perfectly adequate.



Technical Equipment:

Once you've got the space sorted you can think about the technical equipment. You'll need:

- A decent microphone
- A sound card capable of powering the microphone
- Computer software capable of recording at high quality

Microphones:

There are some really good microphones available at a decent price so it's worth shopping around. You need to be aware that sometimes the really expensive high quality mics are designed to be used in studios with a dead acoustic rather than the less ideal spaces you'll have at home. So sometimes less really is more!

Basically you should be looking at a **large diaphragm condenser mic**. My personal favourites without breaking the bank are the **Rode NT1A** or if money's really tight the **Audio Technica AT2020**. Better and far more expensive mics are very much available but these will do the job. The Rode mic is particularly good at eliminating the room acoustic from recordings.

Accessories:

Pop Shield: You'll also need a good pop shield so you can work close up to the mic, a **decent length mic cable** and a **proper mic stand**. I'd suggest avoiding table stands or the type that attach via a boom to your table as they tend to pick up a lot of "rumble" from the table. A better idea is something like the **Millennium MS 2003** - proper **floor stand** with a boom arm. You can get all of these via Amazon but I would suggest you look first at **andertons.co.uk** or **thomann.de/gb** as these can be cheaper and are definitely speedier with deliveries at the moment. **Thomann** do a very good deal at the moment on bundling all this for **£159**.

https://www.thomann.de/gb/rode_nt1a_complete_vocal_bundle.htm



Rode NT1a



AT2020



Sound Card:

The sound card does two things. Initially it **amplifies the mic signal** up to an acceptable level and then it **digitises the signal** so that the computer programme can record it. At a home recording level this will probably be a simple USB connecting device that can sit next to a computer. For simple voice recordings all you need is one powered mic input (look for the words "phantom powered" or "48V") and of course an output to speakers and/or headphones.

You'll also need to be sure that you can choose to monitor both the input and output of the device. The computer software will probably add a delay (latency) when you record and this makes recording difficult. Monitoring the input ("direct monitoring") eliminates this problem.

Some good devices for single voice recordings are:



Behringer UMC 22



Focusrite Scarlett Solo

Both of these have more complex versions if you feel you might want to do multiple voice recordings at home!!

Other Options:

You can avoid the need for a sound card by buying a **USB mic** which can then be plugged direct to the computer. Both the **Rode NT1** and **AT2020** are available in this form. We've recently tested out the Rode NT micro USB and it has given really excellent results when used with a stand. At £99 it's a really good economic solution.

Recording:

You'll be expected to make a **local recording** of yourself which can then be sent to us for editing and mixing. I'll assume you'll be recording direct to a computer. You'll need some form of **audio software** to do this and I would imagine that most of you might already use something already such as Logic or Cubase.

If you do-great- carry on doing what you're doing! Otherwise-if you have a **Mac** computer this comes with simple software you can use to record such as **Quicktime** or **Garageband**. They're rubbish for editing but perfectly adequate for recording. Also consider downloading **Protools First**-it's free and does all you need.



Most other software possibilities are available for **Mac** and **PC**. The best of the **free** software is **Audacity**. It's quick to learn but still extremely powerful. **Reaper** is cheap rather than free but many people find it more intuitive. It's also free to use for the first 60 days before purchase so definitely worth a tryout.

Communication:

We will probably need to direct you as you record. **Source Connect Now** can be good for this and is free or we can send you a link to **Zoom** or even use **Whatsapp** or **Skype**.

Finally a few tech specs:

Recordings should be in wav format, ideally **24 bit** and **48KHz** sample rate.

Lowest acceptable specs are **16 bit** and **44.1KHz** sample rate.

PLEASE AVOID RECORDING STRAIGHT TO MP3 FORMAT

Please send recordings **unedited** and **without** extra **processing** (eq, noise reduction or compression) as this can complicate post-production.

Single voice recordings can be sent as **mono tracks** but **2 track** (stereo) is perfectly acceptable.

Finally, do feel free to get in touch with Andy at agarratt@footstep-productions.com to discuss any issues with this.

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

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