

Praat handout #4**Recording a sound file in Praat**

For some phonetics work, you will need to record your own sound files using Praat. This handout gives a basic overview of how to do this, and what settings to use.

The Praat software is frequently updated by its authors. The changes are usually small, but if you are using this handout along with a different version of Praat than the one listed below, you may find that some of the functions and features look or act slightly differently from the way they are described here.

These instructions were updated for Praat version 5.1.43 on October 21, 2010.

4.1 Recording a sound file with the Praat "SoundRecorder"

- (1) In the top menu bar of the Objects window, choose `New > Record mono Sound`.

Be careful here: **USE MONO. DO NOT USE STEREO.** We have no need for stereo recordings, and they take up twice as much disk space because there are two tracks.

This will open up a window called "SoundRecorder".

- Notice the settings for **sampling rate** ("sampling frequency" — why is this a synonym?) shown at the right. Use the default setting of **44,100 Hz** unless you have a storage/memory problem, in which any setting down to 22,050 Hz is acceptable.
 - The SoundRecorder may or may not allow you to choose settings for **quantization** (this depends on your operating system/sound card). We want **16-bit quantization**. If you are not given a choice, the program is always using 16-bit quantization (assuming you have a 16-bit sound card in your computer).
- (2) The white rectangle in the center of the SoundRecorder labeled "Meter" shows the **input level**. This may only work when recording is turned on. Remember to *stay out of the red zone* when you make your actual sound files. For a low signal-to-noise ratio, try to get the amplitude as high as possible without going into the red zone. (This means the amplitude of your speech data will be as high as possible compared to the amplitude of any background noise.)
- (3) It is a good idea to **practice** a little before making the recordings you plan to keep. Click on the `Record` button and have your speaker start talking. Watch the input level and adjust your microphone until you get an input level that you like. Every time you click `Stop` and then click `Record` again, the previously recorded sound is erased, so you can practice repeatedly until things are working well. You can listen to what you have recorded by using the `Play` button.

4.2 Saving your recording to disk

- (4) When you make a recording that you want to keep, you need to save it to disk. There are two ways to do this.

(a) *Put sound file into Objects window*

- At the bottom of the SoundRecorder window, there is a button labeled `Save to list`. Enter a name for your sound file in the small box (the default name is “untitled”) and click on the button. Your sound file is now one of the Sound objects listed in the Objects window, so it is safe to make another recording in the Sound Recorder.
- However, **before you exit Praat, you must save your sound file from the list of objects to your hard drive or USB drive!** Do this by highlighting the sound object in the Objects window, clicking on `Write` in the top menu bar, and choosing one of the audio file types in the menu that appears (see (b) below or Praat handout #2 for more information about audio file types).

(b) *Save directly to file*

- Click on `File` at the top of the SoundRecorder window. You will get a menu of options. Choose `Write to...` for whatever file format you like. If you are on a Windows system, you may want to use `.wav`; if you are on a Macintosh, you may want to use `.aifc`. But it doesn't really matter unless you plan to use these sound files with some other software on your computer. Praat can handle any of the file types listed.
- Once you make a selection, you will get a dialogue box in which you can specify a file name (tip: use a name that will remind you what the sound file is) and where to save the file.
- Your sound file is now saved to disk, although it does not appear in the list of objects in the Objects window. See Praat handout #2 on how to read a file from disk into the list of objects.