VoC interviews – how to record

Prices are approximate and taken from amazon.de

Voice recording alternative 1 (recommended):

- ZOOM H1n Handy Recorder (98 EUR)
- 32 GB microSD card (7 EUR)
- 2 x RØDE Lavalier Go Professional-grade Wearable Microphone (2x94 EUR)
- 3.5mm TRS to Dual 3.5mm TSF Stereo Breakout Cable (Hosa YMM-261 or equivalent 11 EUR).

The Stereo Breakout Cable enables two lavalier microphones as input. The interviewee/interviewer will be recorded in L/R channels respectively, thus facilitating the transcript process.

The RØDE Lavalier Go microphone has a very low noise level and records the interviewee's voice crystal clear. The ZOOM recorder does a good job of keeping the recording levels.

Settings on ZOOM recorder:

- LO CUT – OFF
- AUTO LEVEL – ON
- REC FORMAT – MP3 256 kbps

Transfer of MP3 files to a PC can be done either by using the microSD to SD adapter or by direct USB connection thru the Mini USB port on the recorder.

Note: the ZOOM recorder can be used independently – without the lavalier microphones.

Voice recording alternative 2 (as a backup to alternative 1):

- iPhone with RØDE Rec recording app for iOS, or
- Android with Hi-Q MP3 Recorder app or the free RØDE Reporter App
- RØDE SmartLav+ Lavalier Microphone for Smartphone (70 EUR)

Use the RØDE SC4 - 3.5mm TRS to TRRS adaptor (11 EUR) with a RØDE Lavalier Go microphone (93 EUR) to connect to a smartphone.

Android phones can also record with the standard recording app in AAC (M4A) format.

Note: put the smartphone in Airplane mode before recording.

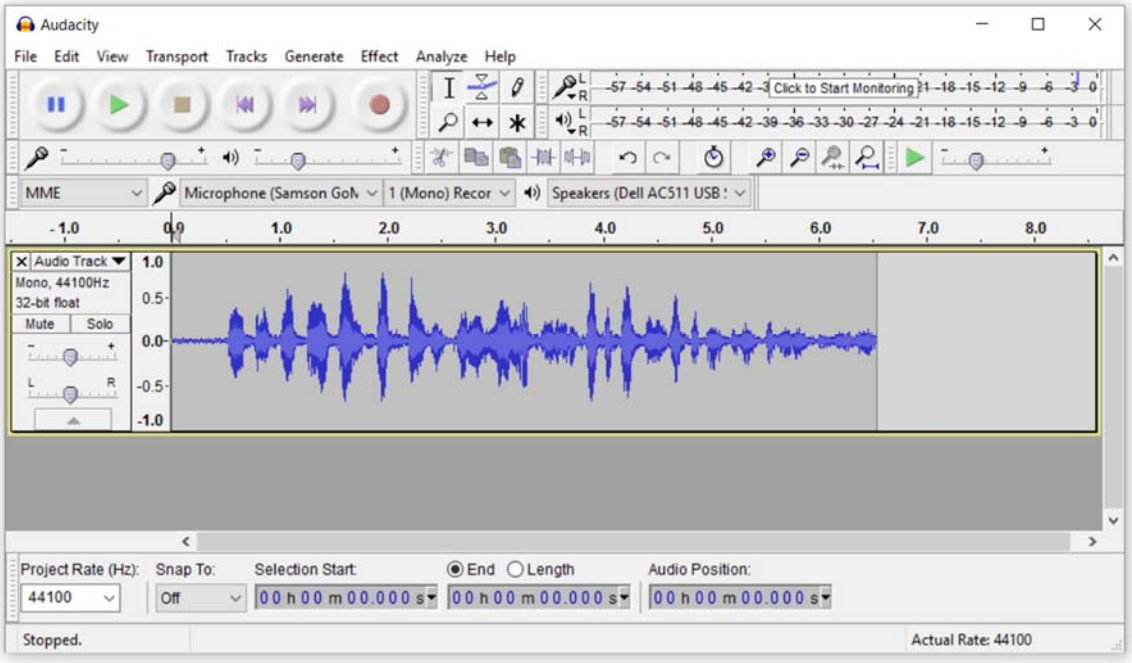
Recording with two lavalier microphones:

- Another RØDE SmartLav+ Lavalier Microphone for Smartphone
- RØDE SC6 Dual TRRS breakout box (14 EUR)

The RØDE SC6 breakout box will mix the input from the two microphones to a mono channel (note: mobile phones cannot record analog input audio in stereo).

Note: The smartphone must be equipped with a headphone jack. For USB-C smartphones without a headphone jack, a 3.5mm to USB-C adapter is needed.

Voice recording alternative 3 (recording with a PC):



- SAMSON Go Mic (49 EUR)
- Audacity (free) recording software for Windows, Mac, or Linux

The SAMSON USB microphone is small and can be clipped to the PC screen frame with the front (white) side of the microphone facing the interviewee.

https://www.audacityteam.org/download/

Plug-in for saving in different compressed formats (ffmpeg module):

https://manual.audacityteam.org/man/installing_ffmpeg_for_windows.html

Voice recording alternative 4 (recording with wireless microphones):

- RØDE Wireless Go II (288 EUR)

The RØDE Wireless Go II consists of two wireless transmitters with built-in microphones and a wireless transceiver. It is also possible to connect RØDE Lavalier Go microphones to the transmitters.

All devices (with up to 7 hours of battery life per unit) are chargeable via the USB-C ports from a computer or a USB charger.

The free software RØDE Connect enables firmware updates and download of onboard recording (from the transmitters).

The use of RØDE Wireless Go II is quite versatile. Here are some examples of use:

- Stand-alone operation - set the transmitters to record in “Backup” mode and set “Recoding” to “Standard Quality (Compressed)” using the RØDE Connect software. The recording starts when the receiver is switched on. Audio from both transmitters can be downloaded and assembled in Audacity (see alternative 3). The receivers can store over 40h of recordings.
- Connect the receiver directly to a PC/Mac by USB and record directly in Audacity. The receiver will be identified as a USB microphone.
- Connect the receiver to a Zoom H1n recorder with the 3.5 mm TRS cable.
- Connect the receiver directly (using a USB-C to USB-C or a USB-C to Lightning cable) to an Android/iPhone smartphone and record stereo audio in the free RØDE Reporter App.
- For smartphones with a 3.5 mm headphone jacket – connect the transmitter with the included 3.5 mm TRS cable. Use any recording app on your smartphone (see alternative 2). Note: set the RØDE receiver to “MERGED mode” (using the RØDE Connect software) since mobile phones only can record analog audio in mono.

Recording interviews over a mobile phone:

iPhone and Android phones don't offer a built-in way to record conversations due to legal reasons.

It is legal to record phone calls as long as you ask for permission from the other person(s) on the call.

You can always record your call in the old fashion way – putting the phone on speaker and using a voice recorder to record the call. This method will almost always result in low-quality and difficult-to-understand recordings not suited for transcriptions.

Mobile recording alternative 1:

- RECAP S2 phone recording adapter for iPhone or Android (99 USD) https://recapmycalls.com/

The RECAP audio adapter extracts the headset audio and outputs it to a second device to record it. It gets both the audio from the microphone as well as speakers in the headset.

For phones without a headset jack – use the USB-C to 3.5 mm headphone jack adapter that was delivered with the phone.

With the RECAP S2 connected to the phone, a headset connected to the HEADSET port, and a recording device (e.g. ZOOM H1n Handy Recorder) connected to the RECORD port you are ready to record a call. The callers' voice will be recorded in the right channel and the other party in the left channel making it well suited for transcriptions.

Mobile recording alternative 2:

- RecorderGear PR200 Bluetooth Cell Phone Call Recording Device (220 EUR)

The PR200 connects to any Bluetooth-enabled mobile phone and has a built-in speaker and microphone. The PR200 record the calls in MP3 format.

The device is hand-held with no ports for a headset which makes it uncomfortable during long phone calls. It's also pricey.

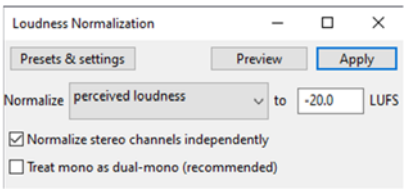
Mobile recording alternative 3:

- Elgato chat link cable (5 EUR)

The Elgato chat link cable is not intended for recording mobile calls but when used with the equipment listed in *“Voice recording alternative 1”*, it’s a price-worthy alternative to the RECAP S2 device. The Elgato chat link cable only taps off the audio from the incoming call and performs no amplification on the microphone signal (from the headset) – but the callers' voice can be recorded with a lapel microphone.

Connect the Elgato chat link cable similarly to the RECAP S2 device but connect the long cable to the Hosa breakout cable and a lapel microphone to the other input. With the HOSA breakout cable connected to the Zoom H1n recorder, the callers' voices will be recorded in one channel via the lapel microphone and the other party in the other channel.

It is recommended that the Zoom recorder is set to “Auto level OFF” and the “Input volume dial” set to 5. The two channels can be amplified independently in Audacity by: Effect->Loudness Normalization...



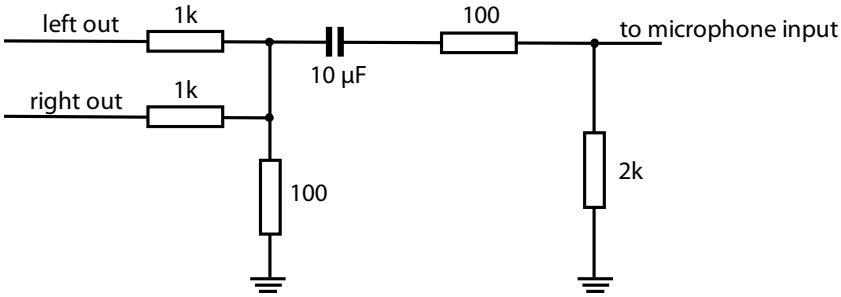
Albeit a bit troublesome with all the cables, this solution yields a high-quality result but the headphone signal is much stronger than the microphone level.

Mobile recording adapter – 8 Step design and manufactoring (recommended):

The device is similar to the RECAP S2 adapter with two important differences:

- Two headsets can be connected at the same time – handy when two researchers interview a customer
- The recipients voice is less attenuated – only 20 dB. For a recording device without separate recording levels for the left and right channels (as the H1n), this results in a recording with similar levels for the two channels.

The 20 dB attenuation circuit design:



This mobile recording adapter is not for sale, but customers to 8-Step-VoC can borrow adapters for free during the explorative phase.