

Field Recordings with the Zoom H1

Dom Smith



Field recordings with the Zoom H1

- Avoid similar-looking, cheaper, dictation recorders. Devices for clerical use are unlikely to give broadcast-quality audio.
- Always wear headphones when in use so you can hear the result.
- Add a pop shield but ensure you can still see the peak light.
- Hold the Zoom firmly. Remember: if your hands move on the casing, the mic will pick it up as a thump.
- Recommend a bit rate of 320k MP3. Remember: MP3 degrades each time it is saved, so keep source material as high quality as possible.
- When transferring material over USB, the Zoom doesn't get USB power, so remember you're still using up your batteries.

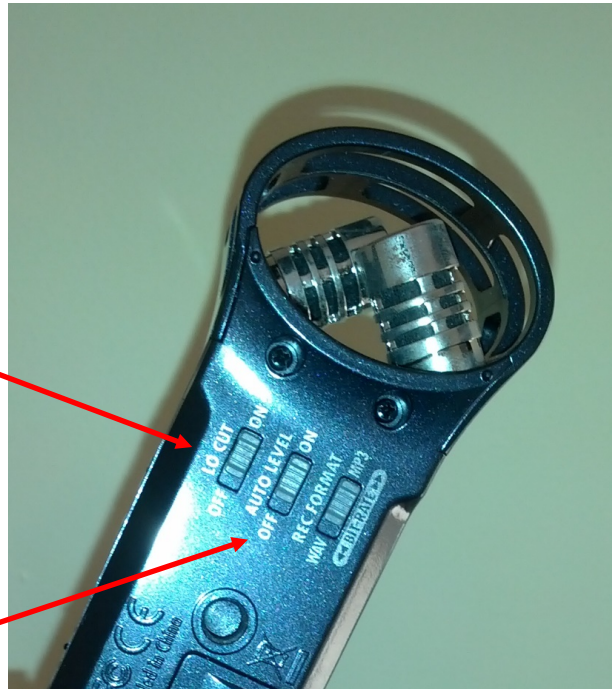


Settings

The 'Lo cut filter' reduces wind noise (but still use a pop shield) and other low-pitch hums. Keep it on unless you're recording music under studio conditions, where it could affect kick drums or bass guitars.

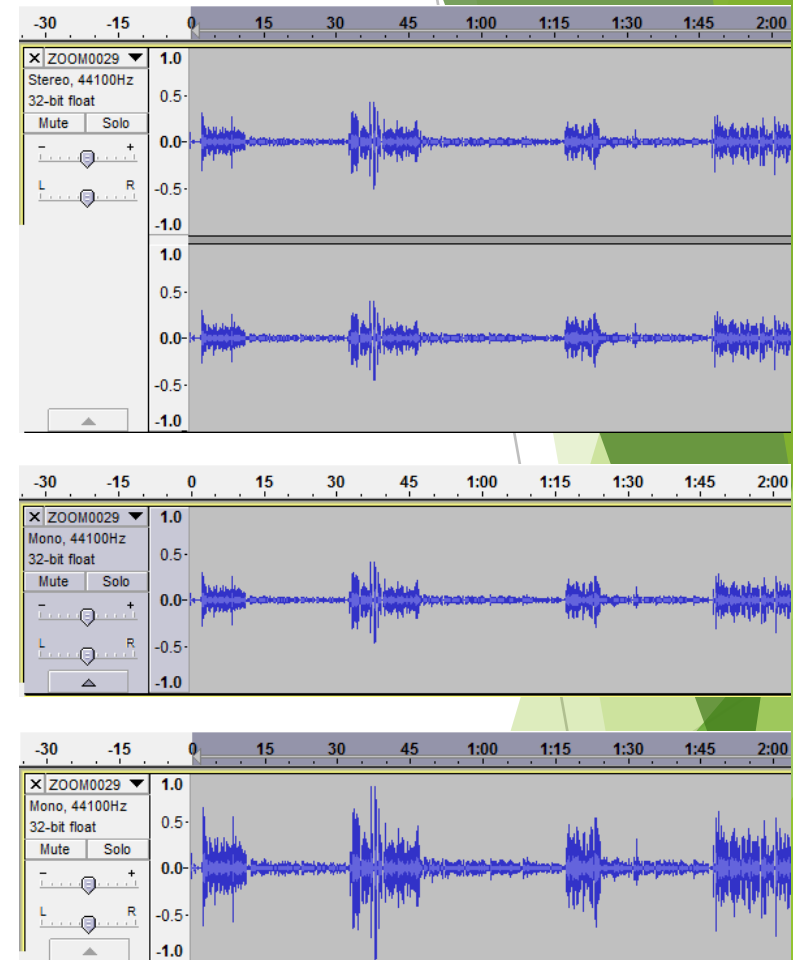
Turn on the Auto Level unless you have a lot of background noise. It works like the studio compressor, so background noise will become loud during any gaps.

If you turn Auto Level off, remember to watch the meters on the front (you want audio peaks between -12dB and -6dB without making the peak light flicker). Use the Input Level switches if you need to change the levels.



Importing to Audacity

1. Import
2. Mix to Mono (Tracks -> Stereo Track to Mono)
The Zoom H1 can only record stereo. If you move the mic around between yourself and the interviewees, it will sound like it's panning unless you make the file mono first.
3. Normalise
This ensures that the loudest part of the file is as loud as possible without clipping



Importing to Audacity (2)

4. Level

This makes any sudden loud noises quieter so the file sounds a consistent volume

In many cases that's all you need to do, but for this interview the interviewee had a really quiet voice and so she's still much quieter than me. So I added some compression over the top to enhance the quieter passages. (You don't need to add much as the studio compressor will also assist.)

5. Save

Remember to use a high bitrate when saving

