



Production and Field Audio Tips

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Audio levels

- Watch them! Avoid levels over -6 dB (digital).
- Test audio levels before recording by asking questions like “What did you eat for breakfast?” and adjusting volume accordingly
- Understand the camera you are using. Are you feeding it line or mic levels? Make sure your mixer and your camera are set up the same.
- Use headphones to ensure audio quality sounds good.

Cabling/Other Technical Stuff

- Keep audio cables away from power cables, or at least cross them at right angles. This minimizes the amount of contact between the cables. It also decreases the chance of hum.
- Don't assume that just because an output has the same jack as an input that you can connect them without a second thought.

Mic Techniques

- Your first priority is to pick up clean and consistent dialogue.
- If you only have one person on camera, try putting a lav on channel one of the camera and a boom or shotgun on channel two.
- If recording two people, separate the two tracks - one on the left and one on the right.
- Boom Mic: Keep pointed at speaker and follow them if they turn their head or move around.
- Lavalier Mic: Clip under speakers' shirt if possible to minimize distractions. You may also tape it to their clothing if you cannot find an ideal placement. Be sure the mic isn't rubbing on clothing,
- Double check sound by listening with headphones.

Room Tone, Ambience and Sound Effects

- Get room tone. If you can't get everyone to be quiet at the end of the day, it may be best to wait until everyone has left the set.
- Record room tone with talent in their positions. This way the microphone placement is the same.
- Moving around a microphone in a location can change amplitude and tone in a matter of just a few feet.
- Always roll sound when the camera is rolling, even if there is no dialogue during the shot.



- If you have time, try and record sounds specific to the location and any critical props. This includes clothing, old squeaky doors, vehicles, guns, light sabers, and anything that dispenses photons. Spending an hour gathering SFX might save ten hours in post trying to recreate the sounds.

Controlling Ambient Noise

- If possible, turn off all background noise such as fans and refrigerators. If it's not possible to turn them off, try to make them as constant as you can.
- Wait for that plane or bus to pass by before rolling.
- Don't allow people to talk during a shot.
- Advise the director to yell "QUIET ON SET" before a take and make sure the people on the sidelines aren't chatting or making sounds.

Other Noise Problems

- If you know that something is going to make a loud noise in a scene, try to dampen it by closing doors, shutting windows, or moving objects around.
- Avoid noisy, squeaky shoes.
- If you're shooting outside, make sure to use a windscreen.