How to record sound from your PC

How to Record the Sound Coming From Your PC (Even Without Stereo Mix)

You don’t have to hold up a microphone to your computer’s speakers to record its audio. Even if you don’t have a Stereo Mix option on your PC, you can easily record the sound coming from any Windows PC.

This can all be done with software. No, you don’t even need to connect your computer’s audio output to its audio input with an audio cable to do this — although that is an option.

Option 1: Stereo Mix

Stereo Mix is sometimes called “What U Hear.” It’s a special recording option that may be provided by your sound drivers. If it is, you can select it (instead of a microphone or audio line-in input) and force any application to record the same sound that your computer is outputting from its speakers or headphones.

On modern versions of Windows, Stereo Mix is generally disabled by default — even if your sound drivers support it. Follow our instructions to enable the Stereo Mix audio source on Windows. Use any audio-recording program and select “Stereo Mix” as the input device instead of the usual “line-in” or “microphone” option.

On some devices, you may not have this option at all. There
may be a way to enable it with different audio drivers, but not every piece of sound hardware supports Stereo Mix. It’s become less and less common.

**Option 2: Audacity’s WASAPI Loopback**

Don’t have a Stereo Mix option? No problem. Audacity has a useful feature that will can record the audio coming out of your computer even without Stereo Mix. In fact, Audacity’s feature may be even better than Stereo Mix – assuming you’re willing to use Audacity to record the audio, of course. This takes advantage of something Microsoft added in Windows Vista, and it’ll also function in Windows 7, 8, 8.1, and 10. It helps make up for the lack of a Stereo Mix option on modern Windows PCs.

In Audacity, choose the “Windows WASAPI” audio host and then an appropriate loopback device – for example, “Speakers (loopback)” or “Headphones (loopback).”
Click the Record button to start recording the audio in Audacity, and click Stop when you’re done. Because you’re using Audacity, you can easily trim and edit the sound file when you’re done.

Audacity’s tutorial website explains why this feature is actually better than Stereo Mix:

“WASAPI loopback has an advantage over stereo mix or similar inputs provided by the soundcard that the capture is entirely digital (rather than converting to analog for playback, then back to digital when Audacity receives it). System sounds playing through the device selected for WASAPI loopback are still captured, however.”

In other words, your recorded sound file will have be higher-quality when using Audacity’s WASAPI loopback option.

Option 3: An Audio Cable

There’s always the low-tech solution, although it’s a bit of a
dirty hack. Just get an audio cable with a male 3.5mm connector on both ends. Plug one end into the line-out (or headphone) jack on your PC and the other one into the line-in (or microphone) jack on your PC. You’ll stop hearing the sound your computer produces, but you can use any audio-recording program to record the “line in” or “microphone” input. To actually hear the sound, you could get a splitter and output the audio to headphones or speakers at the same time you direct it back into your computer.

Sure, this is inconvenient and silly compared to the above options. But, if you desperately need to capture the audio coming out of your computer in an application that isn’t Audacity and you don’t have Stereo Mix, the cable will allow you to do this.

![Image of an audio cable with a male 3.5mm connector on both ends.]

Obviously, copyright laws may prevent you from distributing whatever recordings you make in this way. Don’t use these tricks for piracy! After all, even if you were going to pirate some audio, there’d be much easier ways to do it than this.