



# Welcome!

We're making an audiobook. Wow.

## **This is very exciting.**

You've taken the leap! We're going to breathe life into your words and produce an amazing audiobook. I'm thrilled to be your storyteller. Here's what to expect from the process.

## **What's in this packet (click to jump)**

<a href="#">The process</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Preparation</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">The First 15</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Recording, mastering, reviewing</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Marketing</a>	<a href="#">5</a>

## **Oh, and this is me, by the way.**

Well, you know, a slightly younger, slimmer, more done-up, kind of actorly version of me. In my booth I look nowhere near as sophisticated or put together. My pronouns are she/her.



## The process

These are the basic steps to producing an audiobook. We'll walk through the details in the pages that follow.

1. Preparation
2. The First 15
3. 25% deposit
4. Recording, proofing, editing, mastering
5. Audio review
6. Payment in full
7. Distributor QA
8. Release and marketing

# Preparation

## Getting ready to record

### The manuscript

The version of the book we use to record must be the final one, free of errors. Making changes to the text after recording begins is complicated, time-consuming, and may incur extra costs, so only hand over the manuscript to me when you're darn sure it's ready. I may still find errors on my close reading, and will certainly ask you about anything that might change the audio, but the manuscript should be clean.

- **Final copy, mostly error-free**
- **PDF preferred**

### Questions and pronunciations

After my initial read I will ask you about anything that is unclear to me and will also confirm any unusual pronunciations (character names, scientific terms, foreign words, and places). If you know you have tricky words in your text, feel free to tell me before I ask! Either way, we want to make sure we're agreed before recording starts.

## What actually gets read aloud?

### Is it in?

Opening Credits: **Always**

Acknowledgements: **Never**

Author Reviews: **Never**

Dedication/Epigraph: **Sometimes**

Author's Note: **Rarely**

Table of Contents/Index/Glossary:  
**Never**

Preface/Introduction/Foreward:  
**Sometimes**

Closing Credits: **Always**

Prologue: **Always**

Full, Unabridged Text: **Hell, yes.**

Charts, Graphs: **Sometimes**

Epilogue: **Always**

Footnotes/Endnotes: **Rarely**

Bibliography: **Never**

Author Bio: **Never**

Preview of Next Book: **Never**

### How does it work?

**Abbreviations** are read aloud — so “e.g.” is “for example”

**Acronyms** are read in long form the first time, and shortened thereafter — so “When the **SSS (Stacey's Snickerdoodle Society)** was formed they wrote **SSS** on their baking sheets in marker.”

## Character questionnaire

Answering as many of these prompts as you can stand about your major characters gives me a great baseline to begin designing their voices. It also allows me to understand what may not be explicit on the page (or in this particular book if it's part of a series).

1. What is the character's age?
2. How would you describe the character's voice? (For example husky, warm, harsh, timid, silky, like Emma Thompson, like Harvey Fierstein, etc.)
3. What is the character's level of education and social status?
4. Where are they from? Where have they spent the most time as an adult? Do they speak with a regional dialect or is their first language a language other than English? If so, how strong is their accent?
5. What should I know about them that is not mentioned?
6. What three adjectives would you use to describe them? What three adjectives would they use to describe themselves?
7. What is their patronus or animal essence?
8. Does the character recur in the series? How does the significance of their role change?

# The First 15

The first (and last!) chance to provide creative input.

## What is the First 15?

The First 15 is your chance to influence the character of the audiobook. It is 15-ish minutes of recorded material that I create for you to review the most important character voices, unusual pronunciation, and listen to a bit of my performance. It's often the first fifteen minutes of the book, but it doesn't have to be. We should be sure to include any characters or specific scenarios you especially want creative input on as part of this checkpoint. This early stage is the time to finesse voice design. The next time you hear the book it will ALL have been recorded, and going back to make major changes will be difficult (and may incur costs). Now is the time to shape ideas before the bulk of recording begins.

## How should the author prepare?

- Send me your character questionnaire
- Be sure I know which voices we need to include in the First 15
- Point out any unusual pronunciations in advance

## How will the narrator prepare?

I'll take the character questionnaire and combine it with my close reading of the manuscript to design a unique voice for each major character and select sample scenes to record so you can hear them come to life.

## How does payment work?

When I deliver the First 15 I'll also invoice you for 25% of the estimated total cost. As soon as I receive payment and your approval of the First 15 I can begin recording the bulk of the audiobook.

## Words, and work, and hours, oh my!

How does word count relate to finished hours and what does that mean for costs? Here's a breakdown.

**Words-to-time ratio** is an estimate of how long (in hours) a finished audiobook will be based on the number of words in the manuscript: *9,000 words = 1 finished hour*. It varies in practice, of course, due to pacing and the type of content, but it's a decent way to estimate (and is what I use to estimate the 25% deposit).

**PFH rate** stands for per-finished-hour and is how I am paid for my narration — based on the finished length of the audiobook. Behind the scenes it actually takes from 6-9 *person-hours of work to create one finished hour* of an audiobook when you factor in preparation, recording, proofing, editing, and mastering. For simplicity, your final invoice will be based on the total finished time of the audiobook.

## Shhh...Whispersync

**Whispersync** is an Amazon product that syncs a reader's Audible audiobook with their Kindle ebook so they can go back and forth between listening and reading without losing their place. For this to work, the narration has to be almost perfectly matched to the text — another reason to be sure and work from the *final* manuscript when creating the audiobook.

# Recording, mastering, reviewing

## What goes on behind the scenes?

You may not hear from me for a long time during this part of the process, but rest assured a lot is going on.

### Recording

This is where I sit in a soundproof room with lots of fancy equipment and pretend to be many different people all at once. It takes a week or two, depending on the length of your book, and you won't hear from me unless I run into something I have a question about. But I'm there talking to myself the whole time!

### Proofing, editing, mastering

After recording is complete, it is proofed (the audio is checked word for word to be sure it matches the text), edited (to remove mouth and other noises, and tidy up pacing), and mastered (audio sorcery that makes it sound amazing and conform to distributor specs).

### Audio review

Once the audio is ready for your review, it is important that you listen to the whole book carefully to make sure it is error-free and you love it. We should have handled artistic choices in the First 15, and technical glitches and mistakes in the proofing/mastering process, but we are all humans and things slip through. You are the final arbiter.

### Payment in full

Once we are both happy with the audio, and you pay my invoice, we will send the finished files through the distributor's QA process. On ACX this means after the RH approves the audio, the narrator also has to check a box that indicates they were paid before the book moves along to production.

### QA and distribution

The distributor's process allows them to sign off on the sound quality, the cover art, and other technical details that make e-commerce work. On ACX this process can take up to 10 business days. Be sure to respond quickly to any emails you receive from the distributor during this time so we can fix any errors quickly and move the process along.

## Who's who?

**RH** stands for Rights Holder — the person who has the legal right to create an audiobook from the manuscript. For indie books it is usually the author, but it can also be an audiobook or traditional publisher.

**Distributors** handle contracts, royalties, and releases and send audiobooks out in to the world to be purchased. Examples include ACX, Findaway, Spoken Realms, etc.

**Audio engineers** are sorcerers who handle proofing, editing, and mastering. Some narrators do their own engineering, some (like me) contract with other pros to save time and focus solely on performance.

## Oh, we judge.

Despite the adage, folks certainly do judge an audiobook by its cover! That wee thumbnail can really help you sell your product.

### Get your designer to customize your audiobook cover.

Audiobook covers are square and book covers ain't. You can't just crop or squish the old cover. Be sure you have your designer customize your audiobook cover to take into account the format and other specs provided by the distributor.

**Include your narrator in the new artwork.** Now that you've turned your book into an audiobook there are additional artists to credit. Consider adapting your audiobook cover design to include your narrator's name as well.

# Marketing

We made an audiobook! Now let's spread the word.

The audiobook can now be included in your marketing plan for your book or series. I am happy to participate in your marketing efforts. Here are some quick tips.

## It's...audio!

Remember that audiobooks are best showcased using sound. I'm happy to provide up to 3, 1-minute videos featuring audio samples from the finished recording against a graphic including the completed cover art for use on social media and your website. Remember that some distributor contracts prohibit samples of greater length (like a whole chapter) and besides, we want folks to buy our audiobook.

## Tag, you're it

Friend me on social media and tag me in your promotions. I'll do the same!

## BTS is cool

Readers love behind-the-scenes access, so I'm happy to provide a short in-booth making-of video of the audiobook recording process, answer interview questions for your website, or join you on a podcast.

Hit me up for my photo and bio if you can use it, too.

Be sure to also let me know if you *don't* want me to mention my work on your book until after it has launched.

The penoctopus  
loves you!

# You made it to the end!

You're awesome. Let's get cracking.

