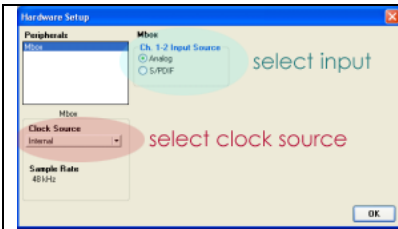# ProTools 1: Recording a Track

Launch ProTools. Before you do anything else, check your input settings. Under the "setups" menu, choose "hardware," then select channel 1-2 input source. Pick "Analog" if recording from the microphone inputs, or the analog line inputs. By default, the clock source should set itself to "internal" - if not, switch it to read that. If you are going to record from a digital input, select S/PDIF as both the input source and the clock source. If using a digital input: after recording your audio, come back to this dialog and switch the input back to "analog" and the clock to "internal" before editing or bouncing out.
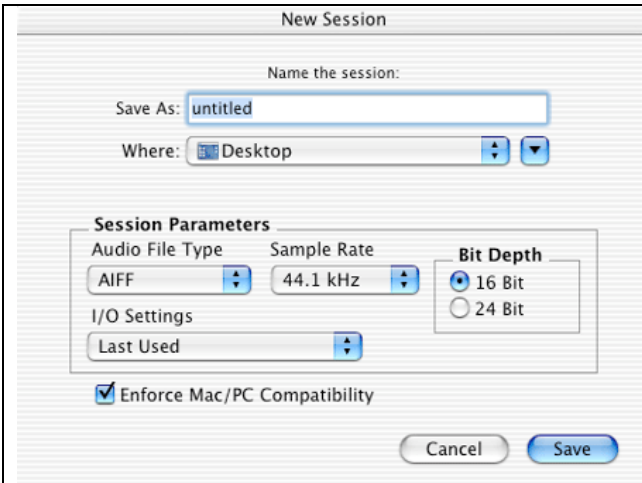
Next choose "File>>New Session." ProTools will ask you to name the session, and this step is fairly crucial for good housekeeping. The simplest way to proceed is to navigate to whatever disc you plan to record your soundfiles on, preferably not the same hard drive that contains the computer's system and applications. Create a new folder for the project, and name the session something descriptive (not just "session1".) In most circumstances, navigation and archiving will be simpler if you keep session files and soundfiles together.

In this new session dialog, there are several choices to make about file formats, etc. There's not really a "correct" answer about what to choose, but following a few rules might save trouble down the line.

Choose a **sample rate** and stick with it. If you are working primarily with audio, 44.1 khz is the most convenient choice, because it requires less sample-rate converting when importing audio from CD, or bouncing a session to burn to CDR. If you are working with video, 48 khz might make sense, because most digital video is encoded at that rate.

File format is is another choice that will vary based on your projects: Wav is the most compatible across platforms, and is the default settingnow on both mac and PC versions of ProTools. If you are importing from older ProTools sessions, SD2 might make sense. Aiff is good if you're working with files from other programs on the Macintosh. It's best to pick the type of file that's most common in your work, to avoid conversions wherever possible.

Bit depth is another tricky one: 24-bit audio does sound better, more open, airy and detailed. But it also takes up more disc space than 16-bit, and creates a bigger draw on your computer, so you might get fewer tracks or be able to use fewer plug-ins at 24-bit than you could at 16. And 16-bit is plenty good for many types of productions: if your session is ultimately going to end up as an FM radio program, or streamed on the internet, or as the soundtrack to a video, 16-bit is probably fine. If your session is the master of an original music recording, 24-bit might be better.

After creating your new session, choose "File>>New Track" (or command-shift-N) and select "1" and "Audio Track." We'll use this to record a narration. Find the white bar at the top left of the track in the edit window (or at the bottom of this new track of the mixer window) in most cases called "track1" by default, and double-click it to name the track. Labeling it now will cause all the soundfiles recorded into that track to start with that name. Let's call it "narration."

Make sure that channel's inputs are set correctly. Switch to the mixer window (**command =** will toggle between the mix and edit windows.) The top horizontal bar, about half-way up the mixer channel strip sets the input: click on it to see the available choices. If you're using an M-Box or ProToolsFree, you'll only have two choices, input L and input R. If you're using an 002, 002r or a TDM system with multiple inputs, you'll have many more inputs to choose from. For this example, set the input to "L" or "1" and make sure your microphone (or other sound source) is plugged into the first input of your interface (on the M-Box, that's the bottom jack.)

Click on the "rec" button on this track, which is located in the middle of the channel strip in the mix window, or at the left of the channel in the edit window. The "rec" turns red, which means it is record-enabled.

 You should be able to see input levels on the meter for this channel. (If not, check your interface's settings, or if using ProToolsFree, go to your computer's sound control panel and make sure your sound input is set to "built-in" or whatever input device you are using.) Adjust your interface's input knob (or set the output level of your source if using a mixer) so that the ProTools meters are registering as high as possible, pinging the yellow a bit, without hitting the red. Notice that the slider on the channel strip has NO effect on the input levels. The input levels are controlled by the hardware knobs on your interface,

These levels must be set by carefully regulating the volume of that input. Although the volume of the track can be adjusted later, it's important to record these tracks as well as possible, rather try to fix them later. If you can use a digital connection, do so, you reduce the degradation of the sound that results from additional analog-digital conversions.

Once you have set levels, start recording by using the transport panel, clicking the circle so that it turns red, and then the "play" triangle. Or, as you will surely start to do, use the keyboard shortcut: "command-spacebar." To stop the recording, hit the spacebar, or the square on the transport panel. Record the narration, as many takes as you like.
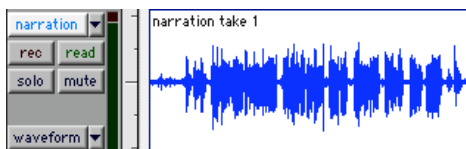
Switch to the edit window (shortcut: "command =") And you'll see a waveform drawn for the soundfile you just recorded. Click the "rec" button again, so it's no longer red, to get out of record-ready mode.

You can use this same technique to record a stereo file. Create a new stereo audio track (command-shift-N) or two mono tracks if using ProTools Free. Name the track(s), make sure the inputs are set for L-R, or 1-2, or whatever inputs on your interface you wish to use. Then click "rec" on the track(s) to make them record ready, press command-spacebar, then play your source. Hit the spacebar again when you've recorded enough.

Next, you can start cleaning-up and editing the tracks.

There are good tutorials about getting started with ProTools on the digidesign website:

http://www.digidesign.com/disk/diskflix/