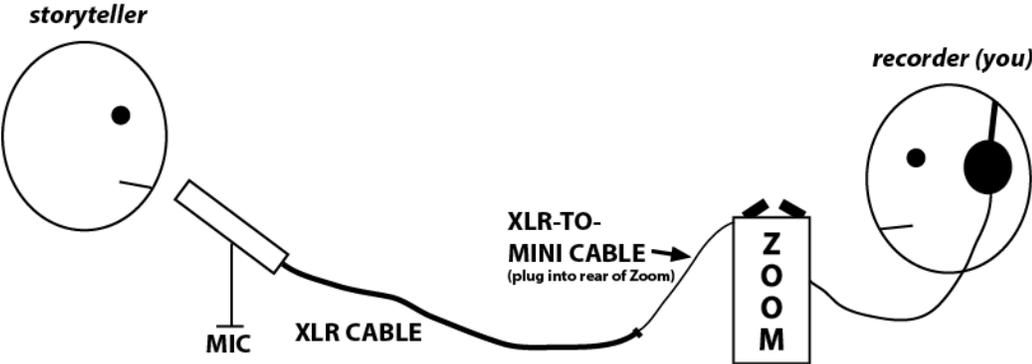# RECORDING A VOICEOVER WITH THE ZOOM H4N

Setup

Record your voiceovers using the setup shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Schematic of recording setup. Mic is connected to an XLR cable, XLR cable is connected to XLR-to-mini cable, mini plug is inserted into port in rear of Zoom H4N. The person recording the speaker holds the Zoom (being careful not to fiddle with it, as handling noise will be recorded), and monitors sound both by listening through headphones connected to Zoom and by watching the levels on the Zoom.*

STEP 1. PLUG THE MIC INTO THE BACK OF THE ZOOM

1. Use the cables shown in Fig. 1 to connect the microphone to the Zoom. Note: Be sure the Mic light on the front of the Zoom (Fig. 3, **1**) is lit in red.

STEP 2. TURN ON THE ZOOM AND IF NECESSARY, SET THE UNIT'S PREFERENCES

Turn the Zoom on by toggling and holding the power/HOLD button on the unit's left side toward the power icon. If this is the first time you use the Zoom, hit the **MENU** button (Fig. 2, **1**) and set the preferences in Table 1 using the Dial (Fig. 2, **2**). You won't have to do this after the first use.

Table 1. *Zoom H4N Preferences*

FOLDER: [ignore]	**REC:**
FILE: [ignore]	***REC FORMAT:** 48/24 (WAV48kHz/24bit)
INPUT:	**AUTO REC:** [ignore]
LO CUT: OFF	**SYSTEM:**
COMP/LIMIT: OFF	**DATE/TIME:** [set this]
MONITOR: ON	**BACK LIGHT:** ON
1/2 LINK: ON	***BATTERY:** Ni-MH
***LEVEL AUTO:** OFF	***MODE:** STEREO
***MONO MIX:** ON	
MS MATRIX: [ignore]	
***PHANTOM:** OFF	* = key settings
***PLUG-IN:** OFF	

Figure 2. Right side of the Zoom recorder. **(1)** MENU; **(2)** Dial; **(3)** Record Level buttons.

Figure 3. Front of the Zoom recorder. **(1)** Mic input indicator (should glow red); **(2)** Level meter will appear on screen; **(3)** Record button – hit twice to record – in standby mode (which is good for taking levels) when it's flashing.

STEP 3. POSITION THE SPEAKER & SET RECORDING LEVEL

2. Using the volume control buttons on the left side of the Zoom, set the output volume to approximately 65 DB.

3. Good positioning of your speaker is key to getting good sound. Ideally, their mouth will be 3-5" away from the microphone, speaking a bit over the head of the microphone, rather than directly into it. It's not the end of the world if they speak into the microphone, but this can make the plosives (loud P's and B's) a bit worse.

4. Be sure also that the speaker is comfy in her chair, and ideally that the chair does not swivel or rock. Finally, be sure that she has an unobstructed view of her script.

5. Tell the speaker that you're going to have her read a paragraph or two to get her levels.

6. Hit **REC** on the Zoom and have the speaker read a paragraph or so, using the recording level buttons (Fig. 2, **3**) to set the appropriate gain. This will likely be high – greater than 80 db. You can monitor the levels using the Zoom's meter, which should read somewhere between -12 and -6. **If you have the levels set too high and the audio is distorting, the MIC button that's illuminated on the front of the Zoom will flicker.** Adjust until the levels read correctly and the light stops flickering. If the speaker is reading very quickly or with a strange manner, this is a good time to point that out.

STEP 4. RECORD

1. Once the level is set, tell the speaker to stop reading and to start again at the beginning. Be sure to hit the **Rec** button a second time so that the red light around that button is solid, not blinking. If it's blinking, hit **Rec** again to engage recording.

<u>IMPORTANT</u>: Do not adjust the recording levels as the speaker is reading. Once your level is set, go with it. If the levels are badly off, stop and start over.

2. Press **Stop** when you're done.

3. Listen to the file through the headphones to be sure it sounds okay. It helps to have a pen and the script in hand as you listen, so that you can write down sections where the reading was off.

4. You can now choose to 1) record a second take (this is often the best approach, even if you think you already have a good recording) or 2) re-record paragraphs with errors. The danger of the second option is that sometimes, the levels or the tone will be funny when the storyteller re-reads a section out of context.

STEP 6. TRANSFER TO LAPTOP & UPLOAD TO WEVIDEO

1. Take note of the file number on the Zoom, then either pop the memory card out of the Zoom and insert it into your computer's card reader, or, use connect a USB cord to the left side of the unit and to your computer's USB port. If you connect by USB, you must hit MENU > USB > STORAGE. The file will be at the following location: **STEREO > FOLDER01**. Drag the file onto your computer's desktop.

2. It's smart, especially if it will be difficult to reschedule a recording session with the storyteller, to import the recorded file into WeVideo, drag it into the timeline of a video project, and look at the waveform. Figure 4 shows how you can see if your recording levels were set properly by looking at the waveform in your editing software. It's also advised that you plug your headphones into the computer and listen to the track in WeVideo.

3. When you're done, disconnect the Zoom by hitting the MENU button and turning the unit off before unplugging the USB cable.

Figure 4. *Waveforms of recorded audio.* **(1)** *Levels were set correctly;* **(2)** *Levels were set too low.*

Zoom Documentation

The official manual for the Zoom H4N can be found in the "Downloads" section of this page: https://www.zoom-na.com/products/field-video-recording/field-recording/zoom-h4nsp-handy-recorder#downloads