

RECORDING VOICEOVERS WITH THE MARANTZ PMD661

1. Setup & Workflow

The setup you'll use to record your voiceovers is shown in Fig. 1.

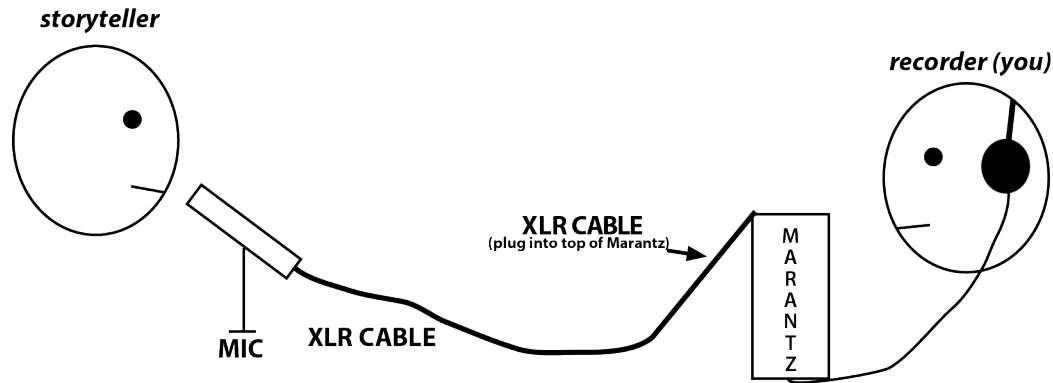


Fig. 1. Our audio recording setup.

Audio Recording & Editing Workflow

Two audio workflows are feasible:

1. Record voiceover in .wav format > Import .wav into WeVideo and edit in the timeline
2. Record audio in .wav format > Import wav into Audacity (audio editing software), edit, and export as a new .wav > Import edited .wav into WeVideo

In both cases, music and sound effects are typically added as a separate track, after the voiceover is edited.

2. Overview of Marantz Audio Setup

The Equipment We're Using

We are recording voiceovers using the following equipment:

1. A Marantz PMD-661 digital recorder (\$600; Fig. 2, Item 1)
2. An AKG D5 dynamic microphone (\$100; Fig. 2, Item 2).
3. The recorder and microphone are connected with a Mogami Gold 5' or 10' male-to-female XLR cable (\$35; Fig. 2, Item 3).
4. We monitor the sound with good headphones – Sennheiser HD 280 Pro (\$100, Fig. 2, Item 4).
5. We always remember to bring our mini-plug to 1/4" plug adapter for these headphones, otherwise they won't fit with the Marantz recorder (Fig. 2, Item 5).



Figure 2. Recording equipment. 1) Marantz PMD-661; 2) AKG D5 mic; 3) XLR cable; 4) Sennheiser headphones; 5) 1/8"-to-1/4" headphone plug adapter.

We could get more pristine sound with a condenser microphone, but condensers are more expensive than dynamic microphones (they cost \$200 at the very minimum), and they tolerate less abuse.

We also have the following accessories:

- A small mic stand
- A foam windscreen for the mic.
- A battery charger for the Marantz's batteries.

3. Connecting the Audio Equipment

Step 1. Turn Off the Phantom Power (**VERY IMPORTANT!**)

Be sure that the phantom power selector on the Marantz (Fig. 3, Item 1) is in the middle position (OFF). If you were using a condenser microphone, you'd turn this ON. You can damage a dynamic mic if you give it phantom power, so be sure it's off.



Figure 3. Top view of the Marantz PMD-661. 1) Phantom power selector; 2) XLR input jack for the microphone.

Step 2. Connect the XLR Cable to the Recorder

Connect one end of the XLR cable (Fig. 1, Item 3) to the end of the microphone; connect the other end to the input jack labeled “MONO” on the Marantz (Fig. 3, Item 2). Be sure you have the right jack, otherwise, you’ll get no sound.

Step 3. Connect the Headphones

With the adapter on the headphones’ mini-plug, connect the headphones to the headphone jack on the bottom of the Marantz (Fig. 4, Item 1).



Figure 4. Bottom view of the Marantz PMD-661. 1) Headphone jack; 2) Headphone volume adjuster; 3) Recording level control knob.

Step 4. Turn On the Power

Slide the Power slide switch (Fig. 5, Item 1): the unit’s screen should light up.



Figure 5. Right side view of the Marantz PMD-661. 1) Power slide switch.

Step 5. Check the Battery Level

If the battery indicator light on the Marantz (to the right of the word MENU on the unit’s display) indicates that the battery level is very low, plug in the unit by connecting the power adapter to the DC-in jack (Figure 6, Item 1).

4. Recording With the Marantz PMD-661

Step 1. Be Sure the Right Preset is Selected

The Marantz PMD-661 allows you to set commonly used configurations as “presets.” The recorder can be programmed with three presets, configured for different recording scenarios (e.g., for use with different microphones, for recording tracks as .mp3s or as .wavs).

Our units have the presets already set, and unless someone plays around with the settings (which is nearly impossible to do unless you’re trying to do it), the Marantz should default to the correct preset.

However, if you want to double-check to be sure you're set for the correct preset, do the following:

1. Press the F1 button (Fig. 6, Item 1).
2. Select "1 Presets" with the ENTER button (Fig. 6, Item 2).



Figure 6. The Marantz PMD-661. 1) The F1 button; 2) Enter button; 3) Record button; 4) LED levels meter.

Be sure the preset in the list labeled "AKG-D5" is highlighted. If this preset is already selected, hit the STOP button to escape from the menu. If not, navigate to the correct preset using the PITCH+ and PITCH- buttons (above and below the ENTER button), hit ENTER, and choose "1 Select."

Step 2. Position the Speaker

- Good positioning of your speaker is key to getting good sound. Ideally, their mouth will be 3-5" away from the microphone, speaking 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.
- 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.
- Tell the speaker that you're going to have her read a paragraph or two to get her levels, and that after that you'll ask her to begin again from the top of the script. It's important that she doesn't radically change her position after you get her levels and before she begins reading again.

Step 3. Have the Speaker Begin Reading and Adjust the Recording Level

1. Hit RECORD (Fig. 6, Item 3) and have the speaker read a paragraph or so, using the Recording level control knob (Fig. 6, Item 3) to turn the input level up or down.
2. If the speaker is reading very quickly or with a strange manner, this is a good time to point that out.
3. As you monitor the levels, you'll want to adjust the knob so that the LED levels meter (Fig. 6, Item 4) is reading somewhere between 10 and 0, rarely, if ever, lighting up the red lights to the far right of the meter, signaling OVER. Orange lights are fine.

Step 4. Record

1. Once the level is set, tell the speaker to stop reading and to start again at the beginning. You can keep the recorder rolling (no need to stop and then begin recording again).

IMPORTANT: Do not adjust the Recording level control knob as the speaker is reading. Once your level is set, go with it.

2. As you record, note (either in your head or on a sheet of paper) sections where the reader stumbled or sped up – after she's made it through the script, you can have her reread those parts.
3. Press STOP when you're done.

It's best to try and get the story recorded in one or two takes. More than that and the speaker tends to get fatigued.

Step 5. Upload the Recording to the Computer

There is a USB cord included with the Marantz. Connect the small end to the USB port on the Marantz (Fig. 7, Item 2) and the big end to a USB port on your computer.

The Marantz should register as an external drive on your computer. Open it, and double-click on the folder labeled MPGLANG1. Find the most recently recorded file, and drag it off of the Marantz and onto your computer.

Eject the Marantz from your computer and pull out the USB cord.



Figure 7. Left side view of the Marantz PMD-661. 1) DC-in power jack (for plugging the unit into a wall plug); 2) USB port; 3) SD card compartment.

Step 6. Bring the Recording into WeVideo or Audacity to Verify its Levels are Not Too High or Too Low

- Open WeVideo, upload your audio file, and drag it into the timeline of a video project. Look at the waveform. Figure 8 shows what correct and too-soft recordings will look like. It's also

advised that you plug your headphones into the computer and listen to the track in WeVideo.



Figure 8. Waveforms of recorded audio. 1) Levels were set correctly; 2) Levels were set too low