

Audiobook Narration Business — Workbook

This workbook turns the Audiobook Narration Business course into action with hands-on exercises, fill-in worksheets, and ready-to-use checklists for each module. Work through each section as you finish the matching lessons. By the end you will have a measured home booth, a repeatable recording and mastering routine, a character and pronunciation bible, an audition system on ACX and Findaway Voices, and a deal-by-deal income model you can actually price.

The Home Booth and Retail-Ready Sound

Treat your space, choose a recording chain, and prove your audio hits the peak, RMS, and noise-floor targets distributors enforce.

Exercise: Measure Your Room Tone

Record 30 seconds of complete silence in your treated space, sitting still at your normal microphone distance. Open the file in Audacity and run the ACX Check plugin, or read the noise floor directly. Note whether it passes the minus 60 dB RMS target, then change one thing at a time (turn off the AC, unplug a device, add a blanket) and re-measure to learn what actually moves the number.

- What noise floor did your room measure on the first silent recording, in dB RMS?

- Which single change lowered the floor the most, and by how many dB?

- What noise sources did you find that you had not noticed by ear (fridge, fan, traffic, electronics)?

- Did the space pass the minus 60 dB target, and if not, what is your next fix?

Worksheet: Booth and Signal Chain Plan

Complete this plan before buying or moving any gear so your setup is intentional and repeatable. Fill in every field with the actual gear and treatment you are using.

Recording space (closet / treated corner / portable booth)

Floor treatment (rug / carpet / bare)

Treatment behind microphone

Treatment on wall microphone faces

Microphone model

Microphone type (condenser / dynamic)

Interface or USB connection

Inline booster used (Cloudlifter / FetHead / none)

Pop filter distance (finger-widths)

Mouth-to-microphone distance (cm)

Recording software (Audacity / Reaper / other)

Project format (44.1 kHz / 16-bit confirmed yes-no)

Checklist: Retail Spec Pass Checklist

- Room tone measured at or below minus 60 dB RMS on a silent recording
- Peak level confirmed under 0 dB on the loudest sentence
- RMS confirmed between minus 23 dB and minus 18 dB across a full passage
- Noise floor checked on the quiet gaps, not just while speaking
- Monitoring on closed-back headphones so playback never leaks into the microphone
- Pop filter placed two to four finger-widths from the microphone
- Project set to record at 44.1 kHz, 16-bit
- ACX Check or an equivalent analyzer run and all three measurements passing

Recording, Editing, and Mastering a Chapter

Run an efficient session, edit invisibly, and apply a saved mastering chain so every chapter passes quality control the first time.

Exercise: Punch-and-Roll a Test Page

Record one page of any book using punch-and-roll in Reaper, or the clap-and-continue method in Audacity. Deliberately fumble a few lines and fix each one without stopping the session. Then listen back and check whether the joins are seamless or whether the level, distance, or energy jumps at any repair.

- Could you hear any of the repairs, and where did the join sound least natural?

- Did your microphone distance or energy change between the original line and the fix?

- How much faster did this feel than stopping and restarting each take?

- What one habit (distance mark, warm-up, water) would make your repairs match better?

Worksheet: Mastering Chain Settings Sheet

Record the settings you land on for each step of the mastering chain so you can save them as a preset and reproduce identical sound on every chapter.

Noise reduction tool and strength (light)

High-pass filter frequency (target around 80 Hz)

EQ cuts applied (frequency and amount)

Compression ratio (target around 2.5:1 to 3:1)

Compression threshold

Gain or normalize setting to reach RMS

Final RMS measured (target minus 23 to minus 18 dB)

Limiter ceiling (target around minus 3 dB)

Export format (mono MP3 / 44.1 kHz / 16-bit / 192 kbps+)

Head and tail room tone length (1 to 5 sec)

Checklist: Chapter Delivery Checklist

- All flubbed takes, false starts, and repeated words removed
- Loud breaths reduced but natural breathing left in
- Mouth clicks and lip smacks removed or patched with room tone
- Over-long pauses tightened while deliberate beats kept
- Saved mastering chain applied identically to the chapter
- Noise floor still at or below minus 60 dB after processing, with no underwater artifacts
- Exported as mono MP3, 44.1 kHz, 16-bit, 192 kbps or higher constant bitrate
- Room tone added to head and tail, and a final spec check passed on the exported file

Worksheet: Production Time Log

Time yourself on one finished hour of audio and record how long each phase actually took. Use these numbers to price future books in finished hours.

Finished audio length measured (hours)

Prep time for this material (hours)

Recording time (hours)

Editing time (hours)

Mastering time (hours)

Pickups and corrections time (hours)

Total working hours for one finished hour

Notes on the biggest time sink to improve next time

Performance, Character, and Pacing

Find a natural pace, give characters distinct repeatable voices, and prep every script so recording becomes performance, not problem-solving.

Exercise: Pace and Words-Per-Minute Check

Record yourself reading a 300-word passage at what feels like a natural narration pace. Time it, then divide 300 by the minutes taken to find your words per minute. Compare against the 150 to 160 words-per-minute target and re-read it slower, performing the punctuation as timing, to feel the difference.

- What was your words-per-minute on the first read, and were you above or below the target?

- Where were you rushing through commas, periods, or scene breaks?

- How did performing the pauses change the feel of the passage?

- What pace will you aim for, and how will you remind yourself during long sessions?

Worksheet: Character Bible Entry

Fill in one entry per recurring character. Build a sheet of these for any book before you record so you can reset every voice instantly, even after a week away.

Character name

One-line voice description

Pitch note (relative to narrator voice)

Pace and rhythm note

Placement and energy or attitude

Accent (only if you can sustain it accurately)

Sample signature line

Reference clip recorded (yes / no)

Checklist: Script Prep Checklist

- [] Whole book or at least each chapter read in advance, never sight-read on mic
- [] Each character's dialogue highlighted in a consistent color
- [] Long pauses, scene breaks, and emotional shifts marked
- [] Stumble-prone words underlined to slow down in advance
- [] Emotional context noted in the margin where tone changes
- [] Every proper noun, foreign word, and technical term flagged
- [] Pronunciations resolved using Forvo, YouGlish, or the author for invented names
- [] Character sheet and pronunciation list combined into one character bible for the book

Auditions, Deals, and the Income Stream

Win well-matched titles on ACX and Findaway Voices, choose the deal structure that pays, and grow a backlist that compounds.

Exercise: Record a Targeted Audition

Pick a posted ACX audition script in a genre that fits your voice, or a Findaway sample text. Prep it, perform it fully with at least one character moment, and master it to retail spec. Run a spec check on the finished audition before submitting, since the audition is your first proof of clean delivery.

- Which genre and title did you choose, and why does it fit your voice?

- Did your audition perform the script with intent and character, or read it cautiously?

- Did the audition audio itself pass peak, RMS, and noise-floor targets?

- What would make the next audition stronger — pacing, character, or technical polish?

Worksheet: Deal Comparison Worksheet

Fill this in for a real or hypothetical title before accepting any offer. Use roughly 9,300 words per finished hour to estimate length, then compare guaranteed income against the royalty bet. Leave the calculated cells for you to work out yourself.

Manuscript word count

Estimated finished hours (word count divided by ~9,300)

Per-finished-hour rate offered

Guaranteed fee (finished hours times rate)

Your realistic working hours for the book

Effective hourly wage (guaranteed fee divided by working hours)

Royalty share offered (narrator percentage)

Author track record, audience, and marketing plan

Decision (per-finished-hour / royalty share / hybrid) and why

Checklist: Audition and Profile Checklist

- Demo reel recorded at 1 to 3 minutes with narrator voice and a couple of character samples
- Demo audio itself passes retail spec
- Profile names the two or three genres your voice suits rather than claiming everything
- Turnaround time and availability stated honestly
- Findaway profile fields fully completed so authors can find you
- Auditions targeted to well-matched titles, not every listing
- Each audition performed fully and delivered on spec

[] A consistent weekly audition routine set rather than occasional bursts

Exercise: Build Your Backlist Plan

Map your first ten target titles into a pipeline. For each, note the genre fit, whether you would take per-finished-hour or royalty share, and the expected finished hours. Then set a rate-raise trigger — for example, after a set number of completed books or a set number of strong reviews.

- Which genres should dominate your backlist based on your voice and what sells in audio?

- Which titles are worth a royalty bet, and which should be guaranteed-fee only?

- What is your current per-finished-hour rate, and what milestone will trigger a raise?

- How will you keep auditioning for new work while finishing current projects?

Your Action Plan

1. Treat your recording space this week and measure room tone until it sits at or below minus 60 dB RMS

2. Lock in your microphone, interface, and software chain, and mark your exact microphone distance with tape

3. Record a short passage and confirm peak, RMS, and noise floor all pass using ACX Check or an equivalent

4. Learn punch-and-roll in Reaper or clap-and-continue in Audacity by recording and repairing one full page

5. Dial in a mastering chain, save it as a preset, and export a chapter as a compliant mono MP3

6. Time one finished hour across prep, recording, editing, mastering, and pickups, and record the totals

7. Read and mark up a book, resolve every pronunciation, and build a character and pronunciation bible

8. Record a 1 to 3 minute demo reel that passes retail spec and set up ACX and Findaway Voices profiles

9. Audition for ten well-matched titles, performing each fully and delivering on spec

10. Run the deal comparison worksheet on every offer and prefer guaranteed income while building your backlist

