STRETCHLEARN · WORKBOOK

ADR & Dialogue Replacement — Workbook

This workbook turns the ADR course into a working toolkit you can run on a real scene. Each section mirrors a course module, with exercises to build the spotting, cueing, recording, and blending skills, worksheets to capture your cues and decisions, and checklists to keep every replaced line invisible. Use the templates to build cue sheets, log your takes, and track each line from spotting through to the final mix so nothing slips through and no seam is left audible.

What ADR Is and When You Need It

Build the judgment to decide what truly needs replacing and produce a clean, time-coded cue sheet that drives the whole session.

Exercise: Spot a Scene for ADR

Take a two-to-three-minute scene from any film or your own footage and watch it twice. On the second pass, note every line you believe could not be used as recorded, and classify why. Then ask honestly which of those could be saved by restoration instead of replacement.

• Which lines did you flag, and for each, was the reason technical, performance, or content?

• Which flagged lines could realistically be rescued with dialogue restoration rather than ADR, and why?

• If you could only afford to loop three lines, which would you choose and what makes them non-negotiable?

Worksheet: ADR Cue Sheet Entry

Complete one entry per line you are sending to ADR, exactly as the performer and mixer will read it. Keep the line text as it will be performed, including any revision.

Cue number

Character

Scene and reel

Start timecode (hh:mm:ss:ff)

End timecode (hh:mm:ss:ff)

Line text as performed (note any change from the original)

Reason for replacement (noise / performance / content)

Shot type (close-up / medium / wide / off-camera)

Direction notes (breathless, overlapping, off-screen, etc.)

Checklist: Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

[ ] Locked picture obtained and watched with the director
[ ] Every line that cannot be used flagged with a reason
[ ] Each cue assigned a unique number and exact in/out timecode
[ ] Line text on the sheet matches what will be performed, including revisions
[ ] Cues grouped by performer and sorted into a sensible session order
[ ] Cue sheet distributed to the mixer, editor, and director before the session

Cueing and Running the Recording Session

Set up and operate the three-beep and streamer system, match the original microphone and perspective, and direct takes that have both energy and sync.

Exercise: Build a Three-Beep Cue and Record a Line

Using Pro Tools ADR mode or any cueing tool, set a line's start point and have the system place three 1 kHz beeps one second apart plus a streamer. Record yourself or a volunteer delivering a short line, starting on the silent fourth beep. Repeat until entry is consistent.

• Did you (or your performer) tend to come in early or late, and what helped correct it, the beeps or the streamer?

• How many loops did it take before the entry timing became reliable?

• What pre-roll length let the performer feel the scene's rhythm before the beeps started?

Exercise: Match the Microphone and Perspective

Take an existing production line (boom or lavalier) and try to recreate its sound in a dead room. Choose a matching mic type, set a similar distance and angle, record a test line, and A/B it against the original for distance, brightness, and body.

• Was the original a boom or a lav, and how did you match the mic type and distance?

• How close did your test recording get to the original's perspective, and what still differed?

• What would you change about mic placement before recording the real take?

Worksheet: Session Recording Log

Fill one row per cue during the session so the editor can find the keeper takes fast. Note which take you marked as the best for energy and which for sync.

Cue number

Performer

Mic type and distance used

Number of takes recorded

Best take for energy (take number)

Best take for sync (take number)

Shot type (close-up / wide / off-camera)

Session notes (direction given, issues)

Checklist: Session Setup and Recording Checklist

[ ] Recording space is acoustically dead, no studio reverb captured
[ ] Microphone type, distance, and angle matched to the production mic
[ ] Levels set with peaks safely below 0 dBFS for headroom
[ ] Performer monitoring set: cueing beeps and guide track at a comfortable level
[ ] Three beeps and streamer firing accurately on every cue
[ ] Each cue records to its own labeled region or playlist, takes stacked
[ ] Several takes captured per line, including at least one strong for energy and one for sync

Editing ADR Into Sync

Slide takes into frame-accurate sync, lay continuous room tone with cross-fades, and comp the best pieces of several takes into one seamless line.

Exercise: Sync a Take to the Plosives

Place a replacement take on a track below the original production line. Find a shared hard consonant (p, b, t, d, k, or m) near the start of the phrase, slide the take so it lines up, then play against picture and check the lips on any close-up.

• Which consonant did you use as your sync anchor, and why was it the clearest?

• After aligning the anchor, how much did the rest of the line drift, and how did you fix it?

• Did you need to time-stretch any syllable, and how did you keep it from sounding warbly?

Exercise: Lay Continuous Room Tone

Take a scene with an ADR line and build an unbroken room-tone bed beneath it, sourced from recorded room tone or harvested from quiet gaps in the same scene. Cross-fade every join and confirm there is no dropout when the ADR line plays.

• Where did your room tone come from, and how well did it match the scene's ambience?

• Before adding tone, where did the background drop out, and did the fill fully close the hole?

• How long did your cross-fades need to be to make the joins inaudible?

Checklist: Sync and Room-Tone Checklist

[ ] New take placed below the original production line as a sync reference
[ ] Line anchored to a shared hard consonant and checked against the lips
[ ] Time-stretching, if used, kept subtle with no warbly artifact
[ ] Continuous room tone laid beneath the whole scene, no silent holes
[ ] Cross-fades applied at every ADR edge and room-tone join
[ ] Comp edits cut on silence or consonants, never on sustained vowels
[ ] Breaths sound natural, with distracting or doubled ones softened or removed

Blending ADR Into the Final Mix

Match microphone tone with EQ, recreate the scene's space with reverb or worldizing, and run a final invisibility check across systems.

Exercise: Tone-Match the ADR to Its Neighbors

Put your synced ADR line in sequence next to an adjacent production line from the same scene. A/B the two and use gentle EQ to bring the ADR's brightness and presence into agreement, aiming for the line to sound the same as its neighbors rather than best on its own.

- Was the studio ADR too bright, too close, or both, compared to the production line?

- What EQ moves (high-frequency roll-off, presence dip, low-end match) brought them together?

- Could you still pick out the ADR by tone after matching, and if so where did it differ?

Exercise: Place the Line in the Room with Reverb

Add reverb to the dry ADR to match the on-screen location, choosing a type and amount by comparing to the production track. If you can, try worldizing one line by playing it through a speaker in a real space and re-recording it, and compare the two approaches.

- What kind of space was on screen, and what reverb size and length matched it?

- How did you judge the right amount of reverb without muddying the words?

- If you tried worldizing, how did its realism compare to the artificial reverb?

Worksheet: Blend Settings Log

Record the blend treatment for each ADR line so you can reproduce a good match and learn your own moves over time.

Cue number

Reference production line used for matching

EQ moves applied (high roll-off, presence, low end)

Compression or dynamics applied

Futzing applied? (phone / radio / TV, or none)

Reverb type and size

Reverb amount (relative to production line)

Worldized? (Y/N)

Still detectable after blend? (Y/N) and notes

Checklist: Final Invisibility Checklist

[ ] ADR A/B-matched in tone to an adjacent production line, no brighter or closer
[ ] Futzing applied where the source is a phone, radio, or TV in the scene
[ ] Reverb matches the on-screen space in type and amount without muddying words
[ ] Room tone, background ambience, and reverb all agree with the production track
[ ] Whole scene played start to finish and listened to as an audience member
[ ] Checked on a second system and at conversational volume, not just loud monitors
[ ] No remaining tell: line does not float, drop out, sound too clean, or sit in the wrong room
[ ] Stopped at good enough rather than over-processing a clean line into a new problem

Your Action Plan

1. Spot a short scene and decide which lines genuinely need ADR versus restoration
2. Build a time-coded cue sheet with cue numbers, characters, line text, and shot types
3. Set up a cueing system that fires three beeps one second apart plus a streamer
4. Prepare a dead recording space and match the microphone type, distance, and angle to the original
5. Record several takes per line, marking the best for energy and the best for sync
6. Sync each take to the picture by anchoring to a shared hard consonant and checking the lips
7. Lay a continuous room-tone bed beneath the scene and cross-fade every join
8. Comp the strongest pieces of multiple takes, cutting only on silence or consonants
9. Tone-match the ADR with gentle EQ and place it in the room with matched reverb (or worldize a critical line)
10. Play the finished scene end to end on more than one system and confirm no replaced line is detectable