VOICEOVER & ADS

ACX Audiobook

What ACX actually requires from an audiobook file, in plain language, plus the four rejection reasons that account for most failed submissions. Written for authors narrating their own book who have discovered that the technical spec is the hard part, not the reading.

a production checklist · 5 segments

Five parts: the spec, the room, the reading, the checks, and what gets rejected. The numbers here are the ones that get files accepted.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Record a two-minute test and run it against the spec before you record the whole book. Authors routinely narrate eight hours and then discover their room noise fails, which is unrecoverable without re-recording.
- One file per chapter, and never change your microphone, position or room partway through. A listener will not name the change but they will feel the book get strange in chapter nine.
- Check the current requirements on ACX itself before submitting. Platform specs move and a page like this one is a working explanation rather than a legal source.

01. The spec, in plain terms

the numbers

[verify against ACX before submitting - specs change]

Each file must sit inside a loudness range, stay under a noise floor, keep peaks below a ceiling, and carry a specific amount of room tone at the head and tail. One file per chapter, consistent across the whole book.

Three of those four are fixable after recording with normal editing. The noise floor is the one that is not, because you cannot remove a room you have already recorded without the voice going with it.

02. The room is the whole game

before you record

[spend the effort here, not on the microphone]

A cheap microphone in a quiet soft room beats an expensive one in a hard empty one, every time. Carpet, curtains, a wardrobe of clothes, a duvet behind you. Turn off the fridge, the boiler and anything with a fan.

Record thirty seconds of silence in your space and listen to it at high volume. Whatever you hear is on every page of your book.

03. Reading for eight hours

the sessions

[stamina is the real skill]

Finished audio runs at roughly a third of your recording time, so an eight-hour book is about twenty-four hours in the chair. Two-hour sessions, water at room temperature, and stop when your voice tires rather than pushing through, because tired voice is audible and unfixable.

When you fluff a line, pause, clap once, and read the sentence again from the start. The clap shows as a spike in the waveform and makes the edit findable without listening back.

04. Checks before you submit

per file

[run all four on every chapter]

Measure loudness across the whole file, not a section. Check the peak. Measure the noise floor in the room tone at the head. Confirm the head and tail room tone lengths. Then listen to the first and last thirty seconds of every chapter, which catches most human errors.

05. The four common rejections

why files fail

[all four are preventable before recording]

Noise floor too high, which means the room. Loudness inconsistent between chapters, which means the setup moved. Missing or wrong room tone at head and tail. And an opening or closing credit that does not match what the platform expects.

Not one of them is about the quality of the narration. They are all production, which is good news, because production is learnable in an afternoon.

USAGE

Free to use. Adapt it, record from it, publish under your own name. No credit required.

Record it with Hilite — hellohilite.com

Studio-quality audio from your laptop mic. Free to start.