

AN INDEPENDENT AUTHOR'S

GUIDE TO

AUDIOBOOKS



WELCOME



Hey! My name is Liza Jacob, and I'm an audiobook narrator and total audiobook fanatic.

Over the years of working with independent authors, they often had the same questions about process, cost, and production.

Here I hope to completely demystify audiobooks from top to bottom.

PLEASE NOTE

This guide is for an independent author looking to turn their work into an audiobook by hiring a narrator. If your publisher owns the audio rights to your book or you are working with an audiobook producer, much of the following will not apply.

This guide is pulled from my own experience, opinions, and things I have picked up along the way. This guide in no way encompasses everything about audiobook narration. It is not a complete or absolute explanation of the audiobook process or industry.

This guide is, however, my best attempt to share knowledge about a medium I love so dearly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



PART 1 FIND A NARRATOR

- TYPES OF NARRATION
- WHERE TO FIND NARRATORS
- WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN NARRATORS
- AUDITION GUIDELINES
- EVALUATING AUDITIONS
- NARRATION COST

PART 2 THE BOOK GETS RECORDED

- NARRATION PROCESS

PART 3 DISTRIBUTION AND PROMOTION

- SALES AND GROWTH
- MORE RESOURCES

TYPES OF NARRATION



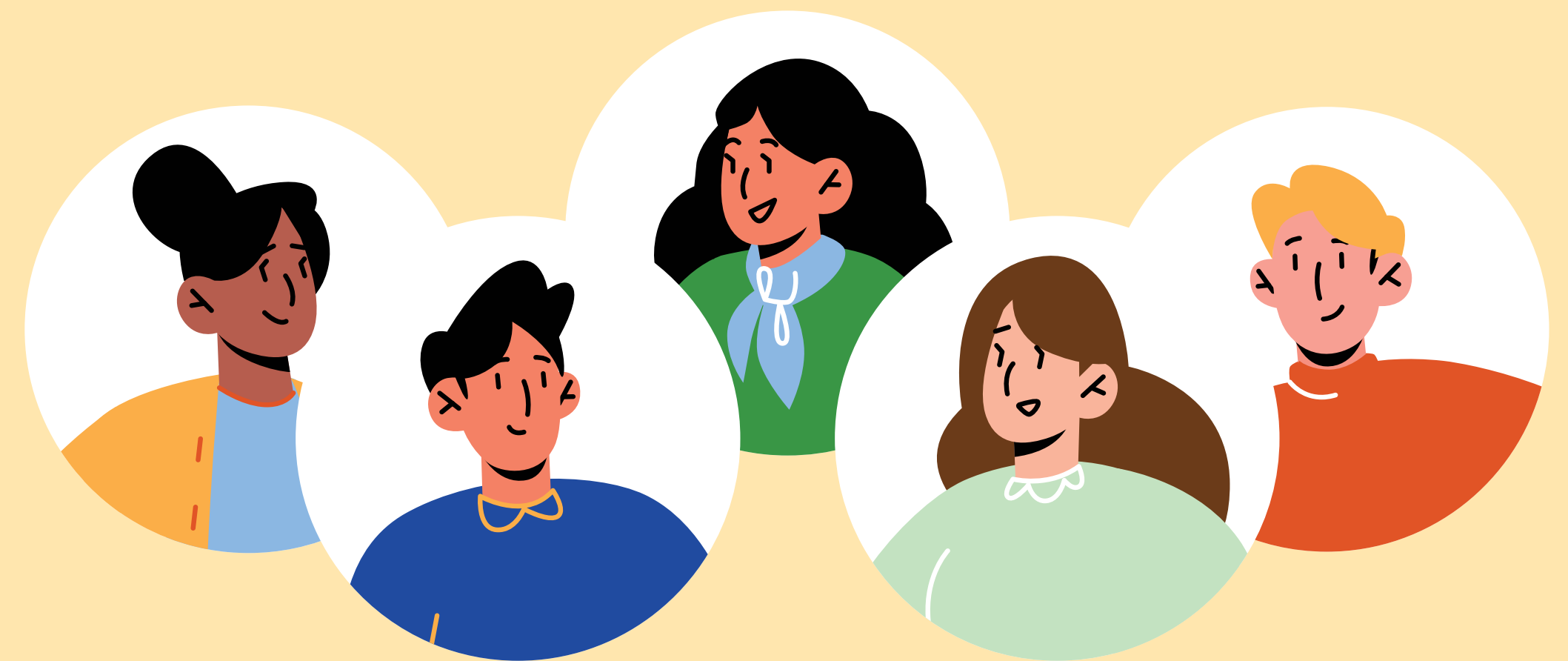
SOLO - One narrator reading the whole book



DUAL - Two narrators reading chapters, usually from a main character's point of view.



DUET - Two narrators who read all their characters' dialogue regardless of chapter or POV throughout the entirety of the book



MULTICAST - A full cast of narrators, each voicing a different character. Music, sound effects, and other audio editing are often used.

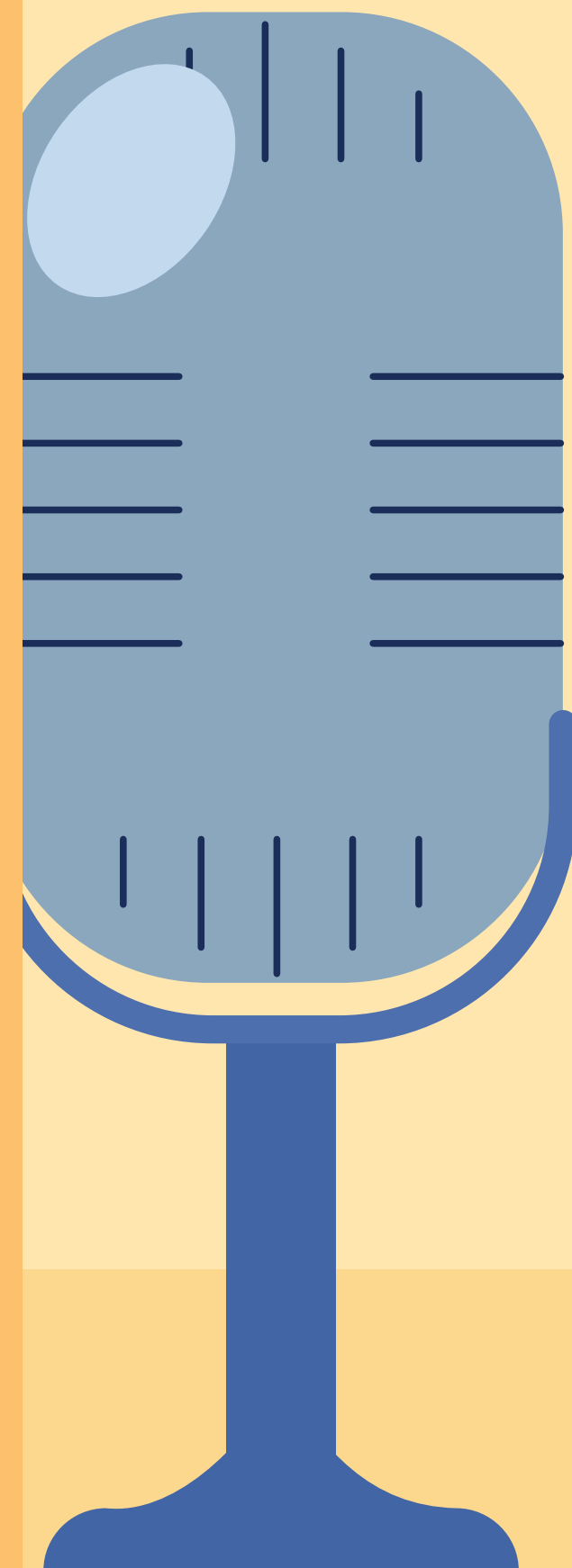
WHERE DO I FIND NARRATORS?

THERE ARE A MYRIAD OF PLACES TO LOOK FOR A NARRATOR.
AND THE GOOD NEWS IS, THERE ARE NO WRONG ANSWERS!

- AudioFile listings
- ACX samples and profiles
- Social Media
- Other authors' recommendations
- Searching Audible within your book's genre
- Audiobook awards such as Earphones Awards and Audie Awards



WHAT DO I LOOK FOR IN A NARRATOR?



PROFESSIONALISM

Their profiles, website, and social media all convey respect for themselves and their work, are clear, edited, and updated.

GREAT SAMPLES

Studio-quality audio with professional-level storytelling. Bonus points if they have samples you love in the genre you write in.



A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR MAIN CHARACTER

Does this narrator share a gender identity, passion, vocation, ethnic background, culture, or personality with your main character?

WHAT ARE SOME AUDITION TEXT GUIDELINES?

1-3 pages long

Includes your main character.

It can be pulled from multiple chapters. Don't feel limited by choosing only one passage.

It should have a clear context or write the narrator a note giving each scene its needed context.

Alongside the audition text, give a basic synopsis of the book, a basic description of the main characters, and any accents needed.



HOW MANY NARRATORS SHOULD I ASK TO AUDITION?

2-4 you could really see being a good fit. It's OK to ask more than one narrator to audition, but be sure anyone you ask is a great candidate.

HOW DO I EVALUATE AUDITIONS?

ACTING ABILITY - Did it draw you in and hold you? Did you believe the performance?

AUDIO QUALITY - Did the audio quality sound professional, and if not (which is OK) do they have previous experience and access to a studio?

PROFESSIONALISM - Was the audition on time? Did you have good communication? Did they follow the audition brief?



WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK THEM?

- When are they available to begin recording?
- Roughly how long until the book is complete?
- What payment models do they accept, and what are their rates?

WHAT DOES IT COST?

TYPICALLY THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO PAY YOUR NARRATOR:



Royalty Share

The rights holder/author and narrator split all earned royalties evenly.



Royalty Share with a stipend/ Royalty Share Plus

This is the same as the royalty share model, but with an added one-time payment to the narrator (often a portion of the narrator's typical PFH rate).



Per Finished Hour (PFH)

Rates vary on multiple factors including experience and expertise. The rate is not applied to time worked, but for the finished run time of the audiobook.

SIGN A CONTRACT WITH YOUR NARRATOR

Signing a contract with your chosen narrator is a very good idea. It makes sure all expectations are clear and protects both sides. It doesn't need to be overly complicated or long, and sample contracts are available online to edit/ alter for your needs.



SEND YOUR NARRATOR THE FINAL MANUSCRIPT

Once you sign the contract, the narrator will need the final manuscript. If the finished, fully edited manuscript isn't ready, that's OK. Just let your narrator know as soon as possible. Everyone wants to get the project moving, but sending a manuscript that needs changes down the road will only slow things down for both you and the narrator.

HOW DO AUDIOBOOKS GET MADE?

Step 1

Prep- They will make note of characters, plot points, themes, etc., and assign each character their own voice.

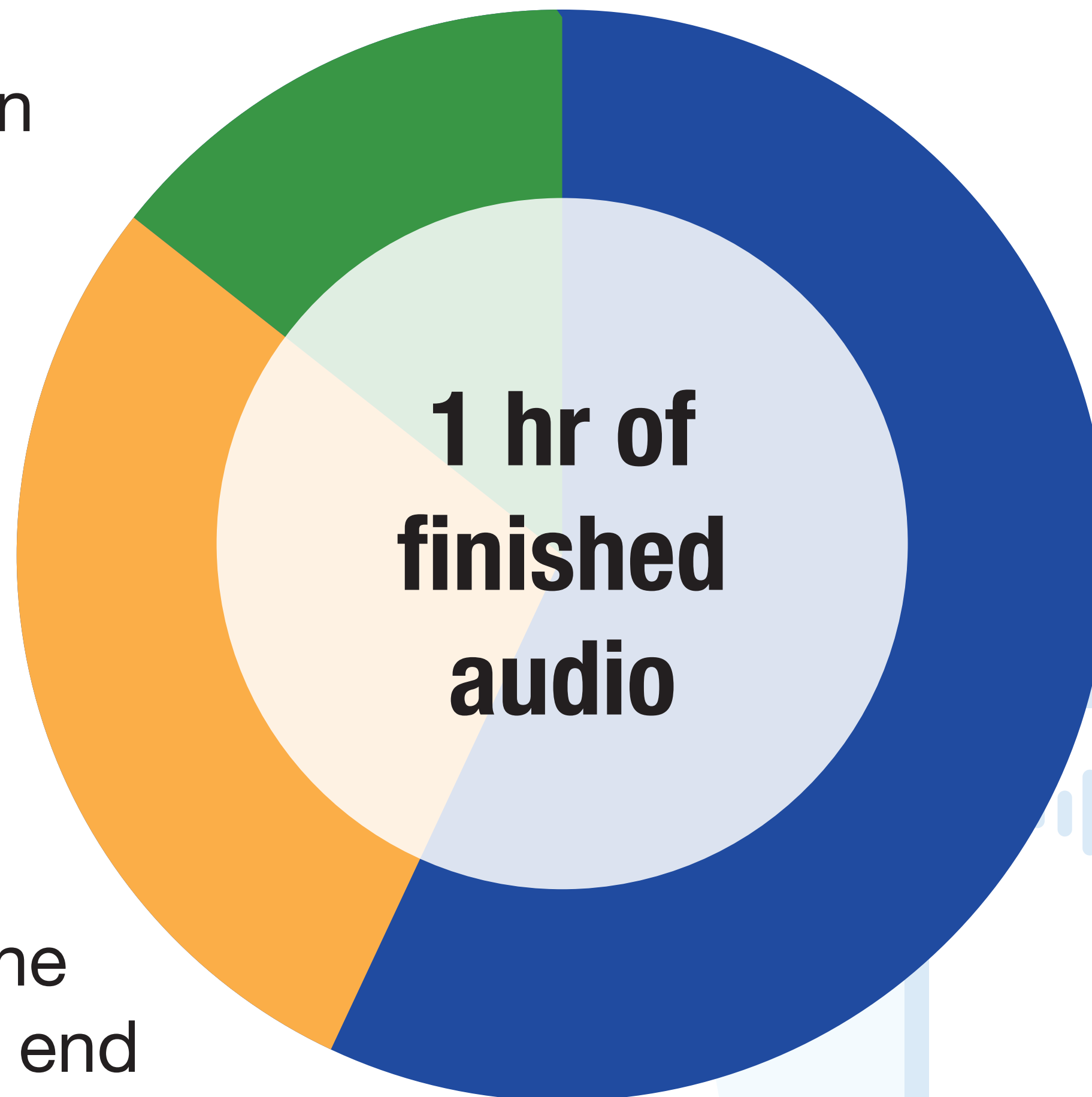
Takes 1-1.5 hrs on average to prep 1 hr of finished audio.

Step 2

Recording- The narrator (or narrators) will read the book from beginning to end in a recording studio with a professional-quality mic. The audio will be recorded on a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW). **Takes 2-2.5 hrs to record 1 finished hour.**

Step 3

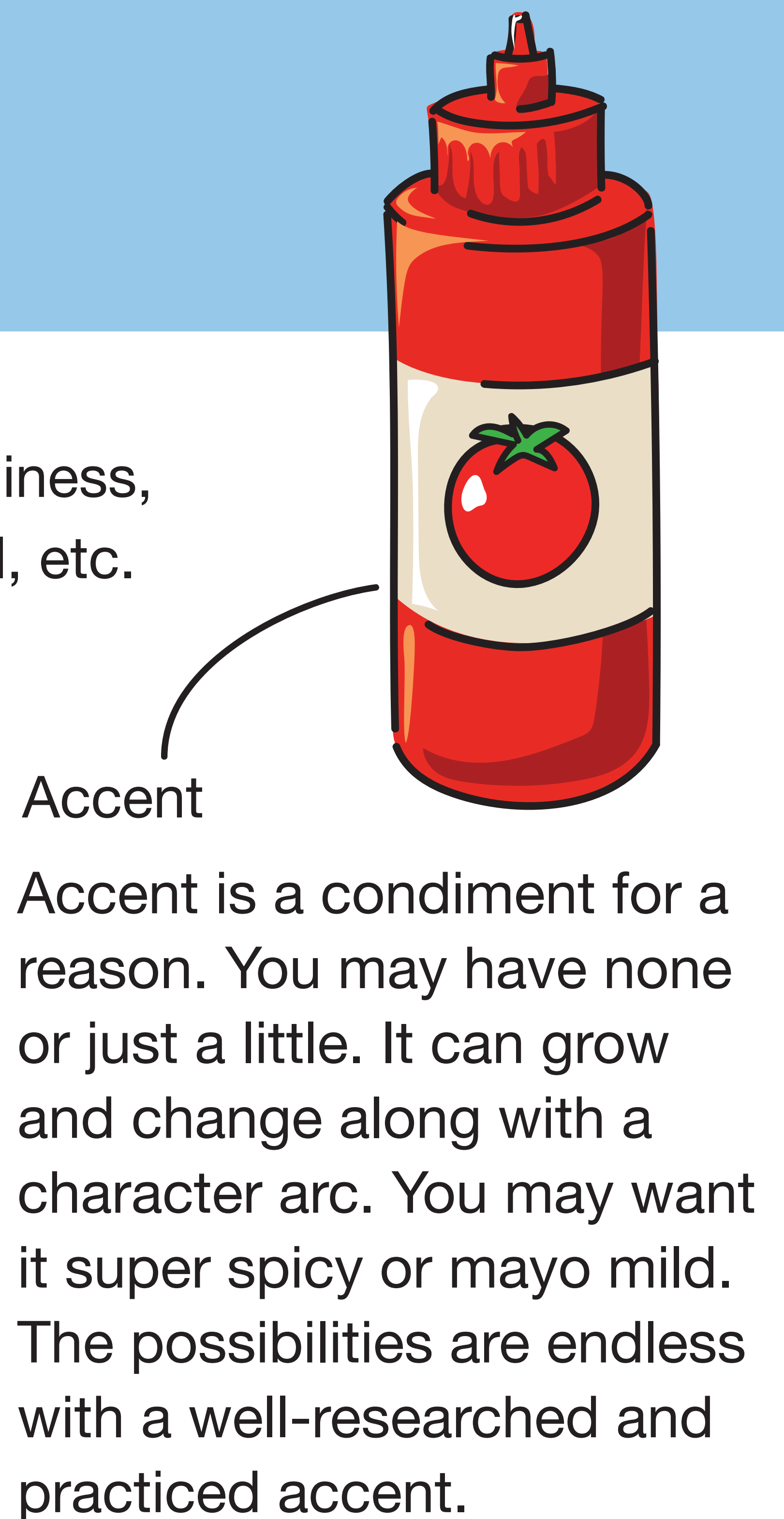
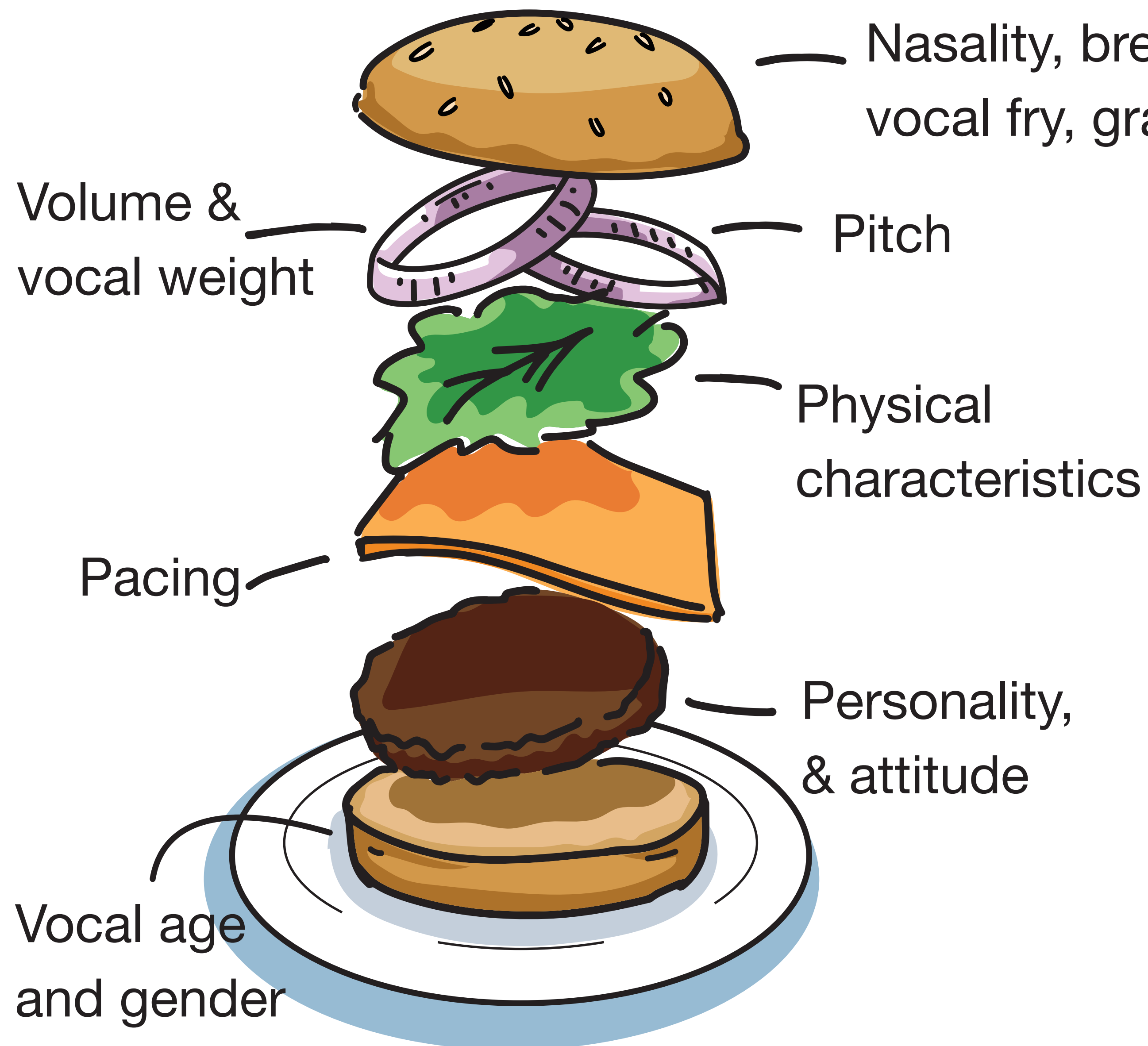
Edit, Proof, and Master- All recorded audio will then be edited, proofed for errors, and mastered. **It takes 3.5-5 hrs to edit, proof, and master 1 finished hour of audio.**



So, for an 8 hr audiobook it could take 52-72 hrs to complete. These estimates change with each narrator, editor, and book.

CHARACTER VOICES

MANY DIFFERENT ELEMENTS GO INTO
CREATING CHARACTER VOICES.



REVISIONS

After the finished audio is given to you, it can be a good idea to listen through the entirety of the book. This will ensure you have no changes or corrections. Every narrator is different, and they may have different policies regarding how many or what types of revisions are included.

Once any needed changes are complete, and you have all the final audio files, you did it! You have an audiobook!



AUDIOBOOK DISTRIBUTION

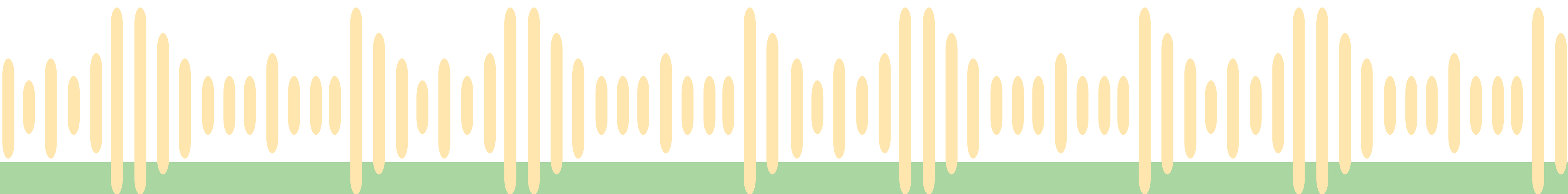
Audiobook distributors facilitate the distribution of audiobooks to various retailers, libraries, and digital platforms. They typically acquire the rights to distribute audiobooks from publishers or authors and then make these audiobooks available for purchase, rental, or streaming.

Distributors handle formatting, encoding, and metadata management tasks to ensure audiobooks are accessible across different devices and platforms.

Basically, they are a bridge between authors and listeners.

A FEW OF THE LARGEST AUDIOBOOK DISTRIBUTORS:

ACX
APPLE BOOKS
GOOGLE PLAY
FINDAWAY VOICES/ SPOTIFY
KOBO
AUTHOR'S REPUBLIC
LANTERN AUDIO
PUBLISHDRIVE
SOUNDWISE



AUDIOBOOK MARKETING

MARKETING YOUR AUDIOBOOK IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS HAVING IT RECORDED. YOU CAN DIY YOUR MARKETING, OR HIRE A PRO. I'VE PICKED UP A BASIC FRAMEWORK THAT HELPS WHEN CREATING A MARKETING PLAN.

PRE-LAUNCH PREP

- Where does your audience live online?
- Does your book fit in well with the core of your niche? Consider:
 - Narration format (solo vs multicast)
 - Audiobook run time
 - Book Cover
- Build awareness with teaser posts/ emails, countdowns, and pre-order promos
- Reach out to influencers in your genre's space to review advance copies

LAUNCH STRATEGY

- Announce the release across all social media platforms and email lists.
- Send out press releases
- Host a promotional event, like a virtual launch party, or live reading
- Invest in targeted ads on social media, search engines, and audiobook platforms. Use A/B testing to optimize ad performance.

POST-LAUNCH ENGAGEMENT

- Encourage reviews and ratings
- Share positive reviews on your social media and website.
- Continue posting regularly with content from and about the audiobook
 - This can include listener testimonials, quotes, and updates on a series.
- Run contests or giveaways to maintain interest.
- Collaborate with Podcasts and Blogs
- Track sales, reviews, and engagement metrics, adjusting based on what is working and what isn't.



BEYOND SALES:

HAVING AN AUDIOBOOK AS ANOTHER MEDIUM FOR YOUR STORY IS FABULOUS, IN AND OF ITSELF. BUT THERE ARE ALSO OTHER CREATIVE WAYS TO UTILIZE YOUR AUDIOBOOK TO GROW YOUR AUTHOR BUSINESS. A FEW IDEAS ARE:

TURN YOUR AUDIOBOOK INTO A CONTENT UNIVERSE

YOU'VE ALREADY GOT A LUSH, IMMERSIVE WORLD RECORDED IN HIGH-QUALITY AUDIO. USE IT!

CLIP OUT:

- CHARACTER INTRODUCTION MOMENTS
- FUNNY EXCHANGES
- HIGH-EMOTION SCENES (NO SPOILERS)
- AMBIENT/WORLDBUILDING PASSAGES

THEN MAKE:

- TIKTOKS + REELS
- CHARACTER PLAYLISTS
- A "MOOD TRAILER" FOR THE BOOK
- AUDIOGRAMS WITH ARTWORK

PLAY THE AUDIOBOOK AS BACKGROUND AT YOUR BOOTH AT AUTHOR EVENTS.

USE AUDIO AS A LAYER TO CREATE A BOOTH THAT GRABS AND HOLDS ATTENTION.

YOU CAN:

- PLAY THE BOOK AS IS FOR A LIVE LISTENING EXPERIENCE
- SPLICE WORLDBUILDING SCENES AROUND MOOD-SETTING MUSIC
- PLAY ENGAGING MOMENTS OF DIALOGUE AMID AMBIENT MUSIC TO DRAW PEOPLE INTO YOUR CHARACTERS.

PLAN AHEAD FOR YOUR NARRATOR TO RECORD SHORT "IN-CHARACTER" MESSAGES.

FANS EAT THIS UP. VERY, VERY STICKY FOR FANDOM GROWTH.

EXAMPLES:

- A VOICEMAIL FROM THE LOVE INTEREST
- A PEP TALK FROM THE HERO
- A VILLAIN MONOLOGUE TEASER
- A "THANK YOU FOR LISTENING" NOTE IN THE CHARACTER'S VOICE

YOU CAN USE THESE FOR:

- SOCIAL MEDIA TEASERS
- LAUNCH BONUSES
- PATREON EXTRAS

HOST "LIVE LISTENING NIGHTS" OR WATCH PARTIES.

IMAGINE A COZY LIVESTREAM WHERE FANS LISTEN TO CHAPTER 1 WITH YOU, REACT TO CHARACTERS, ASK QUESTIONS, AND LAUGH WITH YOU. LOW-PRESSURE, HIGH ENGAGEMENT.

THIS ALSO DRIVES:

- PRE-ORDERS
- MERCH SALES
- EVENT ATTENDANCE

USE AUDIO TO DEEPEN YOUR PATREON OR MEMBERSHIP.

PATREON LOVES AUDIO. THIS TURNS CASUAL READERS INTO SUPERFANS.

YOU CAN OFFER:

- SIDE STORIES
- ALTERNATE POV CHAPTERS
- MONTHLY FLASH FICTION
- WORLD LORE
- CHARACTER Q&A READ IN A CHARACTER'S VOICE

CROSS-PROMOTE WITH OTHER FICTION AUTHORS.

SWAP AUDIOBOOK SNIPPETS WITH AUTHORS IN YOUR GENRE.

EXAMPLE:

AT THE END OF YOUR AUDIOBOOK, INCLUDE: "ENJOYED THIS WORLD? HERE'S A 2-MINUTE TEASER FROM AUTHOR X..."

AND THEY DO THE SAME. IT'S LOW-EFFORT, HIGH-GROWTH, AND BUILDS GENRE-SHARED AUDIENCES.

THAT'S IT!

I HOPE YOU FOUND THIS GUIDE HELPFUL. THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN, AND NO ONE RESOURCE CAN COVER IT ALL. YOU, HOWEVER, NOW HAVE A HEAD START ON UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIOBOOK PROCESS.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, FEEL FREE TO DROP ME A LINE AT LIZAJACOBVO@GMAIL.COM

THANKS!
LIZA

