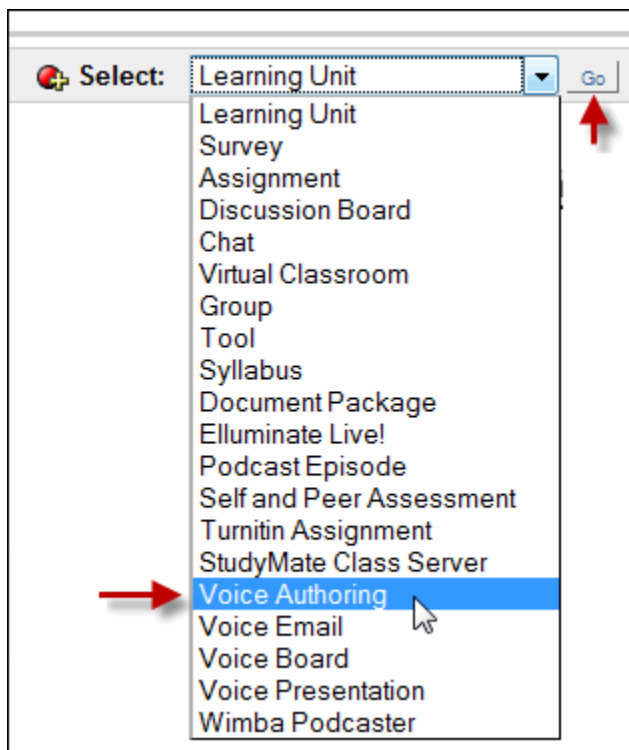


[Tech Topic—Wimba Voice Authoring Tool]

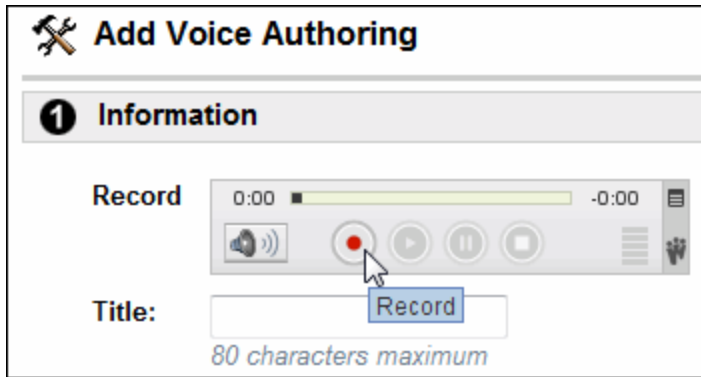
The Voice Authoring Tool

Voice authoring allows you to place an audio message to your students in your Blackboard course.

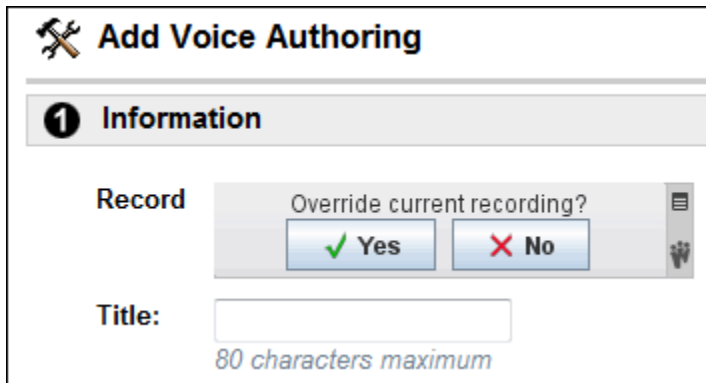
1. Login to Blackboard and enter the course content area where you wish to place a voice recording. This can be any area except the Announcement area. (Note: there is a Wimba Voice Announcement tool accessible through the Control Panel, but we strongly recommend that you do not use it).
2. Click "Edit View" in the upper right of the content area screen;
3. Click the "Select" drop-down;
4. Choose "Voice Authoring";
5. Click "Go".



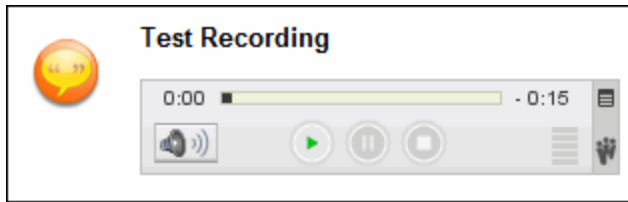
- The "Add Voice Authoring" page will appear, with (after a brief initialization routine) the voice recorder present at the top of the screen. To record your message, click the round red record button on the recorder and speak into your microphone.



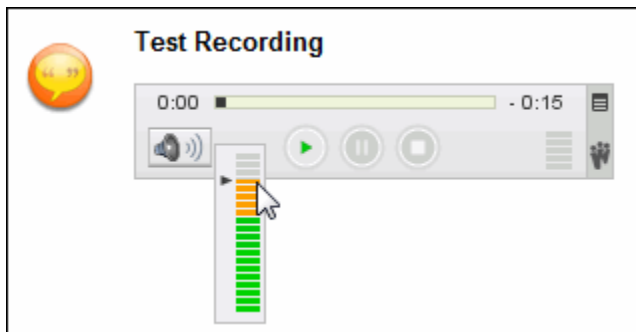
- When done, click the square stop button.
- Click the triangular play button to hear your recording. If not satisfied, click the record button again and re-record. You will be asked if you want to “override the current recording”:



- If you answer “Yes” a new recording will start, overwriting the old one. Old versions are not saved.
- At any time while recording (or playing back) you can click the Pause button (two parallel bars) to pause the recorder. Clicking it again will restart the recorder.
- Note that while you are recording there is a counter in the upper right of the recorder that counts down from 20:00. This means your recording can be 20 minutes long, max, and the idea of this timer is to let you know how much time you have left.
- As you are recording you will see the sound level monitor moving indicating (roughly) your recording level. If it reaches the top bar (the red one) it means that your recording is too loud. Speak less loudly, move the microphone away from your mouth a little, or reduce the recording level on your computer (See our “Wimba Voice Technical Requirements” document on how to do this). The ideal recording level is to reach the orange level (next to the top) without reaching the top one). If your recording reaches the red level occasionally, don’t worry about it. That is normal. But you do not want your entire recording to be made in the red because it will sound distorted when played back.
- When done, give the recording a title, set Blackboard availability options if desired (defaults are to Make content available; do not track number of “views”; and no date availability parameters), and click Submit.
- Your voice recording will appear as an item in the content area, like this:



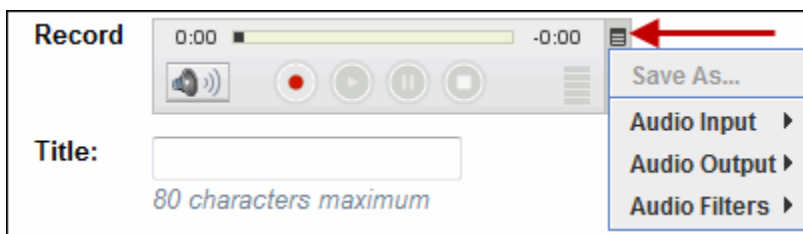
- To play the recording your students must have speakers attached to their computers that are turned on with the volume turned up enough to be able to hear (or, alternatively, properly configured headphones). Users can control speaker volume levels a) on their computers; b) on the speakers themselves with the volume control knob; and c) within the Wimba player using the speaker icon:



For more information on setting recording and playback levels or for attaching a microphone to a computer (for both PC and Mac) see our Wimba Voice Technical Requirements document.

Troubleshooting

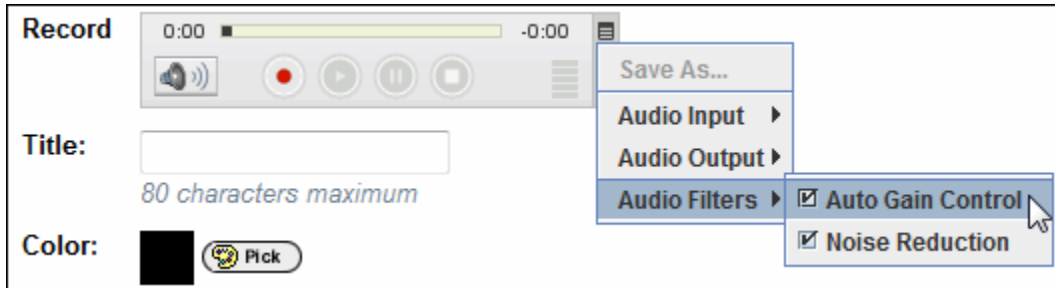
If you click the record button, but do not see the volume level meter move, and you are sure your microphone is not muted and that recording levels as set through your computer are at a high enough level, click the menu button within the Wimba Voice Recorder (the small, parallel lines icon in the upper right of the recorder).



Move your mouse over the Audio Input menu item and you will see a sub-menu of all possible audio inputs installed on your computer. Click in the radio button corresponding to the audio input you are using. Then test again to be sure audio input is working correctly. If you are sure you have selected the correct audio input, then the problem is elsewhere, either the microphone itself is muted, or the microphone levels on the computer are set too low.

If you notice problems with audio levels in your recording, you might also want to try recording with “Auto Gain Control” turned off. This is controlled from the same Voice Recorder menu button. Click the

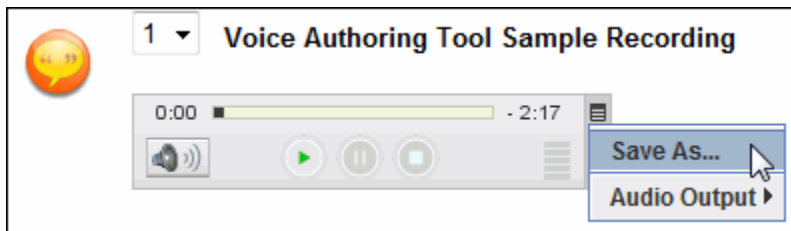
menu button and hover your mouse over “Audio Filters”. When the sub-menu appears, you will see that “Auto Gain Control” is selected. Click in the check box to deselect it and try recording again.



The automatic gain control tends to over-react to recording levels and throttle them down once recording begins. If this produces an unacceptable recording level, turning off Auto Gain Control solves this problem.

Saving a Voice Authoring Recording

Once a Voice Authoring recording has been placed in a Blackboard course content area, it can be saved locally by clicking the Voice Recorder menu button and selecting Save As...



After selecting Save As... a java Save dialog box will appear. The default Save As file format is WAV. To save in another format, click the drop-down menu in the Files of Type field and select from spx or mp3 format (we recommend mp3). Note, however, that java in use with IE 7 or Firefox 3 behaves oddly in that the Save dialog box will sometimes disappear when the file types field is displayed. This will undoubtedly be corrected with future versions of java, but it will still work. Select the format you want, then click on your screen anywhere and the Save dialog box will re-appear. Navigate to the location you want to save the file in and click Save.