

AUDIOBOOK PRODUCTION VOCABULARY

Dual Narration – Most common in 1st person narrative where the POV changes from chapter to chapter, or section to section. Each narrator voices the entirety of their section, including all dialogue. Narrators record separately but often work together to ensure consistency. This format costs about the same as when one narrator records the entire work.

Duet Narration – Sometimes used in 1st person where the POV switches, the two narrators record simultaneously. The person performing the narrative will usually change from chapter to chapter, and commonly the female narrator records all the female dialogue and the male all the male dialogue. This usually costs more than twice the amount of a single voice narration as both narrators must be present at all times and the editing is more complex.

Editing – an art unto itself, the editor not only removes any distracting sounds but takes the rhythm the narrator has set and refines it, ensuring consistency.

Full Cast Narration – Multiple narrators are cast to create a more cinematic or radio play effect. The most expensive of all formats, it usually requires that the actors record in a studio together, and sound effects are often employed as well.

Mastering – also requiring experience and the right equipment, mastering takes the “raw” recorded audio and processes the files to ensure clarity and stability. The final product should meet all distributor’s requirements as well as be smoothly pleasing to the ear whether the listener uses earbuds, headphones or speakers.

Per Finished Hour (PFH) – The time length of the completed audiobook. Most narrators get paid a certain rate (\$190 - 250 and above for experienced narrators) multiplied by the number of finished hours, no matter how many hours they spent in the studio to record it.

Pickups or Corrections – Re-recording the material to fix errors. One round of pickups is usually included in a narrator’s rate. Narrators should be paid extra for pickups needed due to last minute rewrites.

Preparation – Narrators must read the entire manuscript before starting to record (unless it is simply not possible). This is the only way to create consistent characters and to understand the tone and pacing of the entire book. Preparation is included in the PFH rate. If there is a great deal of pronunciation research to be done, narrators may be compensated for that additionally.

Post Production – The process which takes the narrator’s initial recording and turns it into an audiobook ready to download and/or to be burned onto CDs.

Punch record vs. straight record – When a narrator works solo, they generally do a punch record, a nifty innovation that allows the narrator to edit as they go, keeping only the desired takes and discarding the rest. In a straight record, a narrator just stops and does a new take, but the recording continues. This generally requires a director or engineer to keep track of the takes and then an editor must spend time to remove all the unwanted takes later.

QC or Proofing – A well-educated and trained person listens to the first pass recording and notates any errors, unwanted sounds (including distracting breaths) or other mistakes, which are then removed by an editor or re-recorded by the narrator. Some companies will put a book through two rounds of QC.

Room Tone – 20 – 30 seconds of what it sounds like in the narrator’s booth when he/she is just sitting there “silently” (it’s never really silent). This is used to fill in any spaces when editing, including replacing spots where there was a loud breath, noise or the space between chapters.