

THE 30-DAY QUICK-START GUIDE TO
FIELD
RECORDING
FROM
RESEARCH^{TO} WRAP

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By
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Why a 30-Day Quick-Start Guide?

Field Recording: From Research to Wrap introduces you to sound effects recording beyond the studio.

It suggests equipment you need to begin. It considers the goal and purpose of field recording. It explores the winding path of a field recording session. It explains tricks to use and hazards to avoid while shooting sound effects.

What's the next step? How do you start? How can you take this knowledge and put it to use? What equipment is best to buy? What sound clips should you capture? How can you learn the skills you'll need to record compelling sound effects?

The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide to Field Recording: From Research to Wrap explains. It leads you from theory to action. It is a guide designed to teach you field recording by completing just one bite-sized task every day. Each of the thirty steps teaches the skills you need to become a confident field recordist. It shares how to master your gear, develop expertise, and begin gathering a sound library. With a bit of diligence, the thirty steps can be completed in a month, even if you have a full-time job.

The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide takes the ideas from *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* and offers daily tasks that guide you, step-by-step, to beginning a career in field recording. You'll learn how to choose gear, and select a goal and audience. You'll complete daily field recording missions that teach you skills of sound isolation, field recording techniques, research, scouting, creative input, and more.

It does this through *discovery*. You'll develop skills through actually practicing field recording a wide array of subjects.

It is possible to complete this guide more quickly than thirty days, if you'd like. I've given each task ample time to finish. This is so you will adopt a reasonable pace that keeps you eager and engaged. You're certainly welcome to complete the tasks more swiftly. It's your choice.

Don't feel pressured to work faster if you don't want to. Field recording skills don't merely appear. They need time to develop. There's no need to rush. Achieving any grasp on both technical and creative field recording skills within a month is quite an accomplishment itself.

What You'll Find Inside

Field recording is a complex craft. It blends creative expression with practical expertise. *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide to Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* breaks down each simply.

Few people have thousands of dollars to spend on pro equipment. *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide* helps you find gear to match your budget. It begins with "[Working with Equipment](#)." This chapter shares steps for deciding your approach, then researching, buying, and learning your gear.

"[Framing Your Recordings](#)" gives your field recordings context. Why are you recording, and for whom? What is your style? What tech specs are the best choice? This chapter helps you conceptualize your library and technique.

The remainder *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide* teaches you how to begin field recording. It gives you a program to follow. This helps you get out of your chair and into the streets pursuing sound effects. Studying sound is important. At some point, however, you'll need to perform and learn from experience itself.

"[Practicing Field Recording](#)" does this by assigning you a daily field recording task. Each step suggests new sound effects categories to record. They're presented in a way to become familiar with your equipment, develop your ear, and learn skills. You'll begin with basic sound clip recordings, then advance to more sophisticated effects as the book progresses.

The book doesn't attempt to explain every technique. It does not describe how to capture every prop. The idea behind *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide* is to avoid checklists and imitation. Instead, you'll discover skills through practice, and learn what recording style works for you.

Because of this, the field recording missions will be simple shoots of common subjects in familiar environments. They're sessions you can complete on your own. They're meant to create a foundation for your craft before you graduate to working with elaborate props and large crews in stressful locations. That comes later.

"[Recording at Home](#)" begins capturing sounds in a controllable environment: your house. You'll learn the power of your equipment, and its limits. You'll develop your ear with critical listening. You'll investigate technique. This chapter introduces using creativity and performances to evoke evocative sound effects.

The guide will lead you gently beyond your home into the wild. In "[Recording Outside](#)" you'll learn to use your skills in more demanding, exterior locations. You'll try recording in challenging environments with problem sounds, security, and overlap.

Want more? *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide* concludes with ideas for advanced shoots, sophisticated recording techniques, and ways to develop a thoughtful approach to field recording.

The result?

You'll be prepared. You'll have a well-rounded collection of field recording skills. You'll craft a focused approach to recording. You master your equipment, refine your technique, and explore your creativity.

And let's not forget you'll have something to show for all this work. At the end of thirty days you'll have captured a substantial collection of more than 1,000 of powerful sound effects.

How to Use This Guide

The 30-Day Quick Start Guide presents a sequence of thirty days of tasks. Each day's lesson leads to the next. For example, the skills of day 12 build on those from day 11.

You'll begin with easy tasks. This will allow you to become comfortable with your equipment, skills, and ideas over time. I introduce new subjects and tasks that grow from earlier ones.

Each day focuses on completing one type of task. Each task is either **Research**, a **Decision**, or an **Action**. I've labeled which at the beginning of each day. I've divided the tasks this way because each is a separate mode of working. Decisions, research, and action all require different amounts of focus and diligence. Knowing which type helps plan your work.

I've also listed the expected **time** to complete each task. It's an estimate. Some tasks can be completed in an hour or less. The times become more fluid when you begin the recording missions in "[Practicing Field Recording](#)." You'll have a choice of which effects to capture. Some take longer than others. Finding and scouting exterior locations adds time as well.

Each mission focuses on one **subject**. I'll offer **suggestions** of which clips to capture, and a **number of sound effects** to aim for. There will be a summary of **what you'll learn** from the mission. I'll also include **tips** for recording provocative takes of these subjects.

When relevant, I'll list a chapter from *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* at the end of each task where you can **read more**. Consult these chapters in the main book to find detailed information to help with each step.

Before you begin, flip through this guide to learn what to expect. Look at the next day's task before you get there for an impression of what's ahead.

Ready? Let's get started.

Working with Equipment

Day 1: Decide Your Budget

Overview

- Task Type: Decision.
- Task Time: 1 hour.

How do you start field recording?

Well, to even begin capturing sound effects you will need equipment. Which gear? There are hundreds of options to choose from.

However, your goal is to learn and practice field recording. This makes your choice easier. So, your task today is to choose the best gear to improve your skills within the budget you have.

Your Equipment List

Here's the basic kit list from *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap*:

- A microphone.
- A microphone mount (pistol grip, boom pole, or stand).
- Wind protection.
- A recorder.
- Data storage (Flash card, etc.).
- Batteries.
- Battery charger.
- A kit bag.
- Headphones.

Of course, you'll need a computer and software to master and edit sound. However, since we're focusing on developing field recording skills, we'll set those aside right now.

Which microphone should you choose? What's the best recorder? It depends on two things:

1. The sound you'll capture.
2. Your budget.

The Sound You'll Capture

Let's not think about the models or brands just yet. Instead, let's think about equipment more widely.

Some field recordists specialize. They record people, cars, or wild animals exclusively. They need particular gear to do this.

When beginning field recording you'll be exploring a wider variety of props and locations. Why?

Well, the goal is to explore how you will mould sound, adapt to it, and find creativity within it. The best way to learn is by practicing with a variety of subjects. This will develop a wide range of skills.

Because of this, we'll begin by using flexible gear. We want equipment that will capture a broad range of subjects lushly and well. You'll need gear that captures a full frequency spread (20—20,000 Hz) accurately. This helps us choose your equipment.

A condenser microphone is the best choice. They capture rich and accurate sounds. We'll place the most emphasis on this.

What else will we need?

Data storage, batteries, chargers and basic kit bags won't have an immense effect on your recordings. Generic brands will be fine.

For everything else we have options. The quality of your equipment and fidelity of your recordings depend on your budget.

Your Budget

Your first option is to borrow gear from school or a film-making collective. Find the best gear you can.

Want to buy your own equipment? Plan your budget. Why? Your budget has a direct affect on the type and fidelity of recordings you will capture, and how effortlessly you will do so.

When choosing to purchase gear, you'll find sound recording equipment falls within three categories:

1. Less than \$500.
2. Between \$500 - \$1,000.
3. More than \$1,000.

Ideally you want the best equipment with handy features. When our budget is limited, we must make choices. I'll suggest which features to focus on in each

category. I'll also list a few specific products, not as endorsements, but to illustrate options.

Less than \$500.

A good microphone is the most important. Electret microphones are the best choice. Portable handheld recorders use electret microphones because they are cheap and require little power, yet provide decent sound.

Here are options that link to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). You can see the current price, and read customer reviews:

- [Zoom H1](#).
- Zoom H4.
- [Zoom H4n](#).
- [Sony M10](#).

These recorders include everything you'll need in one package.

Use what remains of your budget to purchase additional storage, a kit bag, semi-headphones, and after-market wind protection.

Between \$500 - \$1,000.

Your options expand considerably in this range. Use the extra cash to improve your microphone and preamplifier. The [Sony D50](#) improves on each. Use leftover funds to buy a dedicated microphone mount such as a pistol grip or a stand, and professional headphones.

More than \$1,000.

When your budget grows past \$1,000 you'll find yourself using separate components. You may choose a condenser microphone such as the [Rode NT4](#). [Audio Technica](#) is known as a manufacturer of affordable, decent microphones. You may choose to pair this with a dedicated exterior preamp (an example is the [Sound Devices MixPre-D](#)), or simply connect the microphone directly to one of the portable recorders above.

Another option is to buy a pro field recorder. This will provide professional (XLR) connectors, better preamps, more storage, and options such as pre-roll, limiters, and filters. Examples are the [Fostex FR-2LE](#), or the [Sound Devices 702](#).

The trade off with this equipment is that it requires expensive accessories. Wind protection now requires a blimp. You'll be spending more on cabling. Your microphone mount may grow from a simple table-top stand to a boom pole or pistol grip. Each of these provide a substantial effect on recording. Expect your costs to bloom.

Read More

- "The Field Recording Toolbox"
- "What Do You Need?"
- "How to Field Record on a Budget"

Day 2: Research Gear

Overview

- Task Type: Research and Action.
- Task Time: 2 hours.

Yesterday you discovered your budget. You know which priorities are the best choice for the budget you have.

Today you'll narrow your options, and choose models best for you.

You'll do this by:

1. Exploring options.
2. Expanding your search.
3. Listening to samples.
4. Testing equipment.

Exploring Options

Visit to Web shops like [B&H Photo and Video](#), [Sweetwater](#), and [Amazon](#). Search. Use keywords like "stereo condenser," "portable recorder," or whatever term for the gear you want. B&H and Sweetwater have checkboxes that help you filter equipment in your price range.

Don't buy just yet. Make a list of two or three options. Note technical specifications. Are they suitable for field recording? Read reviews and comments.

This is a sample section of *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide to Field Recording: From Research to Wrap*. Share it with as many people as you like.

Buy the full version at creativefieldrecording.com/books.

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