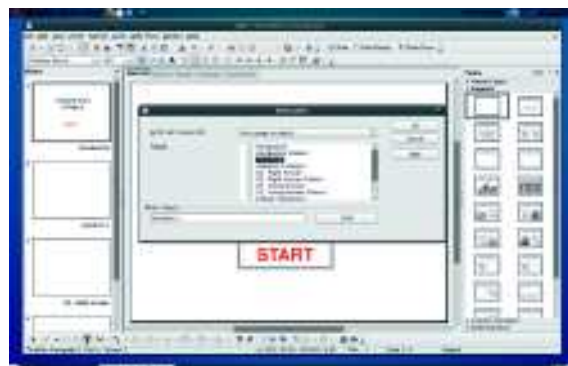


» **First Steps** Beginner-level tutorials for users dipping their toes into Linux

Impress: Create

Impress can do more than just display pretty pictures. **Andy Channelle** guides you into a realm of interactivity...



» You can link to any other element in the presentation, including notes pages and sound files.

it can be used effectively for similar types of work as long as you aren't too ambitious.

In this tutorial, we're going to create a simple flash card applet with a series of pages, then put them together in a non-linear fashion. We'll also add a few external links and set up a trigger to play a sound file. We're using *OpenOffice.org* version 2.4 for the purposes of compatibility, but the process is identical if you're using a more recent edition.

Structure and content

The project begins with a blank presentation, so when you launch the application – Applications > Office > OOo Impress or similar – click straight through the Presentation wizard without changing any of the values. Once you hit the final Create button, you'll be presented with the normal *Impress* interface. This has a toolbar and menu bar at the top, a Slides panel down the left-hand edge, where you can select and manage slides, and an editing pane on the right where various options can be defined. To keep things simple we'll use the basic white slides, but it's possible to begin with one of the many templates available on the internet (*Impress* can work with *Powerpoint* templates) or create your own.

In the Slides pane, right-click any blank space and select New Slide. Do this twice more, so you have four slides in the pane. These can be selected by clicking each one, and the main work area will then display the selected slide. Note that by default the slides are named "Slide 1", "Slide 2" and so on. It's often worthwhile renaming them; to do this right-click a slide, select Rename Slide and input a new name. We've called our slides "Introduction", "Question 1", "Q1-Right Answer" and "Q1-Wrong Answer", which gives us a logical progression through the slides.

With the structure in place, add a text box to the introduction slide using the Text tool, which you can access



Our expert

Andy Channelle

Andy seems to have been taking his first steps in free software forever, and has been interested in technology since the advent of the Dragon 32.

Impress is the presentation element of the *OpenOffice.org* productivity suite. At its most basic, it's used to create a series of slides which are displayed in a linear fashion. However, it's also possible to build non-linear productions with *Impress* for use in kiosk presentations (where the user advances the slides themselves) or a product catalogue. It could even be used to make a talking book style presentation, where the user triggers events such as animations, sounds or opening a new page. *Impress* may not have the same facilities as *Flash*, *Director* or many other authoring environments, but



» It's best to design the structure of the presentation before thinking too much about content.

» **Last month** We showed you how to be stylish with Scribus templates.

engaging slides

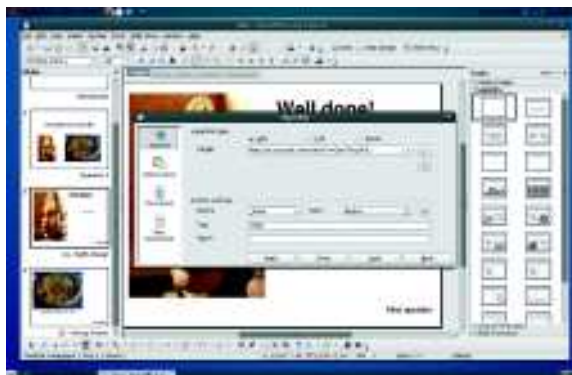
via the T icon in the Draw toolbar at the window's base. Click and drag a frame to the page, then add text. This can be formatted as normal using the Formatting toolbar.

It's easy to jazz this opening up with a picture too. Add one by selecting Insert > Picture > From File... and then navigating to your chosen picture. This can be moved around and resized using the handles that appear when an image is selected. We're going to use text for the interactive elements, but the same process could be applied to graphics.

Now add a second text frame and type 'Start' in the frame. This is going to be the link that launches the whole production; when the user clicks on this word it should take them to the first question on the second slide. Select the piece of text (it will be highlighted once selected) and then go to Slideshow > Interaction in the menu bar. Use the drop-down list in the resulting dialog box to select Go To Page Or Object, which changes the display to show all the pages and their associated notes. Select Question 1 from the list and click OK. You can test whether everything is working by selecting the first slide, then running the slideshow (hit F5 or go to Slide Show > Slide Show) and clicking the Start text. The show should advance on to the next slide. Press Escape to return to the editing interface.

With that first link created, you can begin adding the rest of the content to the other slides. On the first question slide we've added a textbox with a French phrase and two images representing potential answers. The first is a picture of ice cream (CC Mujitra), the second some pizza (CC The Pizza Review). Remember to hold the Shift key when resizing an image to retain its proportions.

One of these images represents the correct answer, so select that image, then go to Slide Show > Interaction and link the image to Q1-Right Answer slide. Similarly, the incorrect picture should be linked to Q1-Wrong Answer. Again, test whether everything works correctly by running the slideshow and clicking through the various links. With that done, add some appropriate content to the answer pages and also set



› Links can be created using either a piece of text or a button that will be embedded in the slide.



up a link to the next question on both pages. This is how the progression through the entire applet is created.

Now we want to add a sound file to the question page. In this case it will read out the question phrase, but it could be used to include any kind of audio. To do this, select the slide and then Insert > Movie and Sound before navigating to the WAV or MP3 file you want to include. Select it and you'll see a speaker icon added to the page. This can be resized, and we've made it so small that it isn't visible. Adding a piece of video can be done in a similar way and the result can be repositioned or resized just like an image.

Going outside the app

The final piece of content will be a link to a web page which, when clicked, opens inside the system's default browser. There are quite a few uses for this; in a sales presentation it could link to an order page on your company's website or a contact form. Here, we're using it to link to a YouTube video to reinforce the answer and provide a reward.

First create a text box and add a piece of text to be the link. Now highlight the text and select Insert > Hyperlink to launch the Configuration dialog. Make sure Internet is selected from the options on the left, then put the URL for the link into the target bar. In the Further Settings section, change the Frame option to Blank to ensure the page opens in a new browser window or tab and set the Form to Text, or Button. If you select the latter, use the Text space below the option to define the word(s) used for the button. Finally, click Apply and Close, then test the production again.

With the show completed you may want to export it for wider use. If you're sure your audience has access to *OpenOffice.org*, then the native format is best. You could also use the *Powerpoint* format, which has the advantages of being widely used and embedding the content into the file itself. The third option is to use *Impress*'s HTML output wizard, which should result in a folder full of files that can be played back on almost any computer. Note that our attempts to output to Flash didn't work as expected and all of the interaction elements were lost. **LXF**

› Exporting to Flash wasn't as reliable as the native format, *Powerpoint* or converting the file to HTML.

Quick tips

Find templates to use in your presentations at www.smalldata.problem.org/ooextras.

Quick tips

Too much audio in presentations can be annoying. Try to use it sparingly!

›› If you missed last issue Call 0870 837 4773 or +44 1858 438795.

Audacity: Make

Personalise your mobile using a snatch of your favourite tune.

Many people are reluctant to spend 79p on a downloadable single, but will pay £3 per month for access to a couple of songs to use as ringtones on their mobile phones. Thankfully, you can avoid the cost with some free software and your own music library. In this tutorial, we'll show you how to kill two Byrds with one Joss Stone by taking a normal music track and editing it into a personalised ringtone.

We'll begin by installing the latest edition of *Audacity*, one of the best free software music programs available, which

"It's better to select music with high tones and staccato delivery."

we'll use to trim the music track to an appropriate length and convert it to MP3 format

for use with your phone. If you're using Ubuntu, Fedora or SUSE, the software will be available via your normal package manager; just try searching for 'Audacity'. We're using 1.3.4 Beta here, simply because this is the version that ships with Ubuntu Hardy, but as this tutorial only involves basic editing, the procedure is the same in other versions of the program.

In addition to the application itself, you'll probably also need to install the *Lame* encoder in order to read and write MP3 files in *Audacity*. If *Lame* doesn't appear in your package manager, there are links and instructions for installing the encoder on the *Audacity* website. This is also where you should go if you want to download the latest development version of *Audacity* instead of the most recent stable variant.

With your chosen version of *Audacity* and the *Lame* encoder ready, your first job is to select the tune to edit.

Some songs suit becoming ringtones better than others, so think about which is the most fitting. For example, Barber's *Adagio for Strings* won't cut through the background noise in a busy shopping centre as effectively as Survivor's *Eye of the Tiger*. It's better to select music with high tones, staccato delivery and immediate starts for this project, rather than use a song with deep bass tones and lengthy notes. Fortunately, one of the advantages of using audio editing software is that we don't have to use the first part of the tune if it's unsuitable – instead we can be more selective. This is especially important when creating an SMS alert, as these need to feature short, sharp sounds to grab attention. Bear in mind that they shouldn't really last more than a few seconds.

Making waves

The interface of *Audacity* is fairly intuitive. Below the menu bar is a set of transport controls that control playback and recording, a toolbox containing six tools and a selection of other tools and monitors. We'll explore these briefly as we work. Below these lies the Waveform window, where most of your editing will be performed, and then at the base of the window is a section where selections can be made numerically, which offers fine control.

The toolbox contains six options which are used in the editing process. From top left, clockwise, the tools are:

» **Selection tool** This is used to select areas of the waveform to keep or discard. Once a selection is made, it can be copied, cut and pasted as with any normal selection of data. We'll be using this and the Trim tool (Edit > Trim) to select the audio for this project.

» **Envelope tool** Used to change the volume or pan (left/right) values over time without having to manually alter the controls as the track plays. We'll use this to fade in the audio.

» **Draw tool** Designed to repair clicks and distortion in waveforms. This is quite an advanced tool, so we won't be using it here.

» **Multitool** Provides rapid access via various clicks to all the other tools.

» **Timeshift tool** Used to cue up the different tracks used in a production.

» **Zoom tool** Moves in or out of the waveform to expose more or less information about the track. It's most useful when editing a particular section of the waveform.

To the right of the toolbox are the input and output monitors, and these can be initiated by clicking the small downward arrow below the L/R meters and then Start Monitoring. To the right of these you'll see the playback and record level sliders and a series of buttons to perform standard cut, paste and zoom tasks.

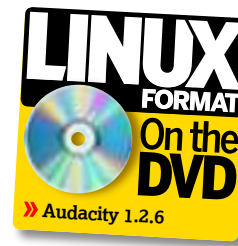
Now you know what everything does, you're ready to get creative with your music...



» **Audacity can import audio from a number of different formats, but the most useful export format for this job is MP3.**

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a ringtone



Step by step: Prepare a song for your mobile



1 Import the song

Audacity supports various formats including WAV, OGG and MP3. Select File > Open and use the file browser to locate your audio file. Once loaded, use the Zoom tool to take a look at the waveform, and the horizontal scrollbars to navigate its length. Push the Play button to hear the track. The playback meters should be animated. If not, click the Meter arrow and select Enable Meter.



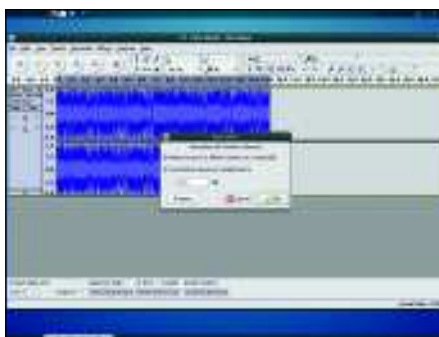
2 Select a section

By default, playback will begin at the start of the track. Use the Selection tool to select a region of the waveform to be the ringtone. The section will be highlighted, and clicking Play will now play back just the current selection. You can use the mouse to drag either end of the selection back or forward, using the Zoom tool for precise adjustments. Hit Shift+Play to loop the playback around the selection.



3 Trim the clip

With the selection made, use Edit > Trim to remove everything outside it. You can now use the Timeshift tool to move the entire waveform to the start of the track. If you don't, you may end up with some silence at the start of your ringtone. It's always better to trim too little initially rather than too much, because shaving off a bit more later is relatively easy.



4 Normalise the levels

Most modern music has consistent amplitude across the entire track, but this may not be the case if you're using a song recorded before the digital age. To get consistent levels, select the track using the mouse and go into Effects > Normalise. Set the Normalise maximum amplitude between -0.3 and -0.0.



5 Save the file

Before going any further, you should save the file (File > Save Project As...) using *Audacity's* native format. This will keep your original file safe and allow you to return to the project later to make adjustments. If you need to transfer the project to another computer at any stage, remember to transfer both the AUP file and the **_data** folder that accompanies it.



6 Export the MP3

MP3 files are commonly used for audio playback on mobiles, so we'll use that format for the final output. To do this, go to File > Export to launch the file browser. In the lower-right of the window, change the file format to MP3 Files, navigate to the required location, name the file and then hit Save. Now transfer the track to your phone as you would with any music file and set it as the ringtone. **LXF**

» **Next month** Build a family tree with Gramps and a mindmap with Freemind.