

DIALOGUE

A movie soundtrack is put together in many interconnected stages by a number of different sound professionals. The first step in assembling the soundtrack is recording the dialogue, which includes not only conversations between two or more people, but also voiceovers and narration. Most of the dialogue is recorded during filming on the soundstage or on location by the production sound mixer and his or her crew. When the cameras are not running, the production sound crew records “wild tracks” or “wild sound” for post-production use by sound editors and mixers. These recordings can later be cut into the soundtrack if they are needed.

Not all film dialogue is recorded live. Automated Dialogue Replacement or ADR is used to record new dialogue if the live track is unusable or if the director wants to change some of the actors’ lines. During ADR, actors watch a scene many times and practice matching the words to the lip movements of the characters onscreen.



A microphone boom captures the voices of actors Virginia Weidler and Dickie Moore during the filming of Paramount’s 1935 film *Peter Ibbetson*.

Narration and voiceovers and specific sound effects are also recorded in post-production. Voiceovers can clue us into a character’s private thoughts or provide voices for animated characters. The most common example of narration is found in documentary or educational films, when a voice on the soundtrack informs the audience about the happenings onscreen.

According to Oscar-winning film and sound editor Walter Murch, humans can

focus on a maximum of two sounds at a time. In daily life, we tune out most of the background noise, focusing only on what is important to us.

DIALOGUE TERMS

DIALOGUE: All the words spoken in a film, offscreen and onscreen, whether by the characters or by a narrator.

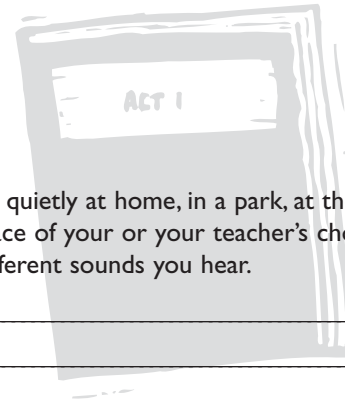
LOCATION: Any site outside a movie studio where filming takes place.

NARRATION: A technique for conveying story information that is not part of the dialogue. Voiceovers are the most common way of presenting a narration.

POST-PRODUCTION: Any part of the filmmaking process that occurs after filming has been completed. Most of the components of a soundtrack are created in post-production.

SOUNDSTAGE: A large, soundproofed room in which a film set is built.

WILD TRACKS: Sound recorded on the set but not in synchronization with the camera. Also called wild sound.



Sit quietly at home, in a park, at the mall or in a place of your or your teacher’s choice. List all the different sounds you hear.

Now describe the qualities of each sound. Is it high- or low-pitched? Is it fast or slow? Loud or soft? Rhythmic?

Did you hear any unexpected sounds? What were they?

Was it ever completely silent?

How did it feel to listen carefully to sound? Do you agree with Walter Murch’s statement? Why or why not?
