

**Praat handout #2****Basic introduction to Praat**

Praat is easy to use, but it may take a little getting used to at first, because it looks somewhat different from most Windows or Macintosh software. This handout will introduce you to the basic layout of the program and show you how to open a sound file and save a sound file to your computer. Information about actually working with sound files is covered in the next handout.

The Praat software is frequently updated by its authors. The changes are usually small, but if you are using this handout with a different version of Praat from the one listed below, you may find that some of the functions and features look or act slightly differently from the way they are described here.

*These instructions were updated for Praat version 6.4.40 on August 19, 2025.*

---

## 2.1 Getting oriented: The main layout of the program

When you open Praat, you see two windows: “Praat Objects” and “Praat Picture”.

- The **Picture window** can be ignored for now; feel free to close it.
- The **Objects window** is like a main control panel. An **object** is anything that Praat has in its working memory. Examples include a sound that you have opened in Praat from a file saved on your computer, a sound that you have just recorded using the Praat SoundRecorder, or a non-sound object you can generate while working with a sound file (such as a spectrogram or a spectrum, which we will use later in the course).

Here is what you see in the Objects window:

- (a) A **top menu bar** and **buttons** on the bottom. These features are for basic file and object management. They never change, regardless of the type of object you are working with.
- (b) A **list of objects** on the left side. This is empty when you start Praat (it looks like a large white box).
- (c) A **right-side list of buttons**, which shows different buttons depending on what kind of object you highlight in the list of objects (see (b)). No buttons will be showing if the list of objects is empty.

---

## 2.2 Opening a sound file (reading it into the Objects window)

To work with a sound file in Praat, you first have to open it and “read” it into the Praat Objects window. You do this as follows:

- (1) In the Objects window, click on `Open`, then `Read from file`. A dialogue window will pop up; find the desired sound file and click on it.

- (2) After you have told Praat to read in a sound file, it should appear in the Praat objects window as “Sound XXX” (where XXX is the filename).

---

### 2.3 Saving a Sound object from the Objects window to your computer

The sound files listed in the Objects window are temporary working copies. **Any changes you make to them in Praat will *not* affect the file saved on your computer.** If you have changed a Sound object and you want to make the changes permanent, you need to **save** the Sound object to your computer, as follows:

- (1) Highlight the Sound object (by clicking on it) in the Objects window.
- (2) Click on `Save` in the top menu bar, and then choose `Save as...` for whatever audio file format you like. If you are on a Windows system, you may want to use `WAV`; if you are on a Macintosh, you may want to use `AIFF` or `AIFC`. But it doesn't really matter unless you plan to use these sound files with some other software on your computer. Just be sure to use an **audio** format (i.e., not “text” or “binary”!).
- (3) Once you choose a file format, a dialogue box will pop up, which lets you specify a file name (use a name that will remind you what the sound file is) and where to save the file.

---

### 2.4 Where to find more help with Praat

Praat has a **help manual**, although it is often quite technical. To access it, click `Help` at the right side of the top menu bar of any Praat window. The help manual also has a **general introduction to Praat**. To access this, go to the Objects window and click on `Help > Praat intro`.

Other sources of Praat help and information are accessible from our course web site.

- Go to <https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling520.html>
- Click on *Praat resources*