

Not everyone has access to expensive microphones and video cameras, so using the built-in microphone on a smartphone is an easy solution

This Christmas, we're inviting choirs across cathedrals, churches, schools and communities to 'join the song' alongside one of the country's leading choral composers in a new interpretation of the beloved carol 'The First Nowell' with a brand-new melody.

We're encouraging all choirs, groups and congregations to record videos of their performances of the carol to share with us, so here are some useful tips to help you capture the best quality audio for your videos.

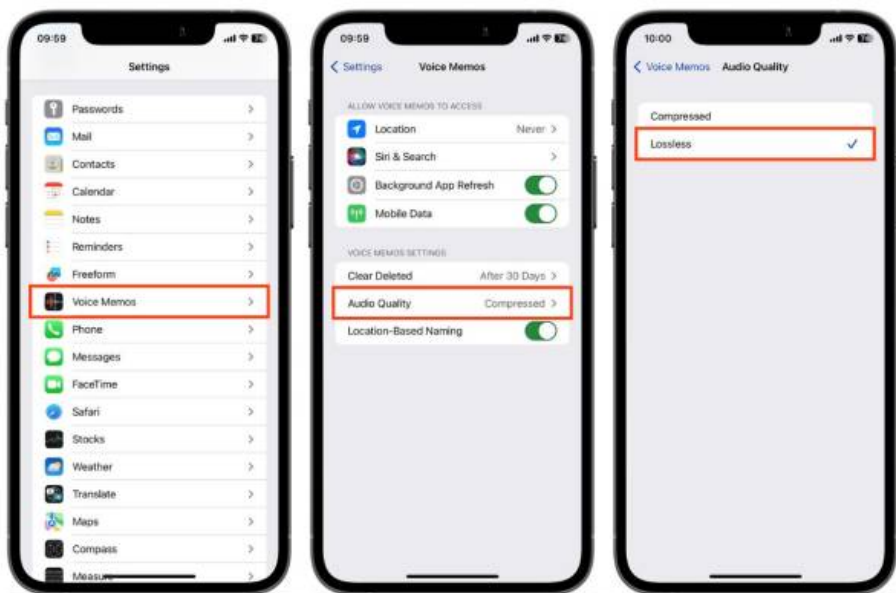
Tips for recording video on your phone can be found [here](#)

### Using an iPhone or smartphone

We know that not everyone has access to expensive microphones and video cameras, so using the built-in microphone on a smartphone is an easy solution. While recording on your phone can seem quite easy, there are a few things that will help improve recording quality.

### Change the format quality

A good application on iPhones which will allow you to record audio is Voice Memos, but its default settings make audio quality lower. Changing these settings will improve the quality but the file will be larger, so you need to make sure you have enough space on your phone to save them before you start recording.



Lossless on the next page.

**Voice Memos** also has an “Enhance Recording” feature, but for the purpose of recording a choir or music we recommend having it switched off.

Most other smartphones have similar applications that can be used to record audio and settings changes for these can be made either in the application or the main settings menu.

## **Where to place the microphone**

The microphone on a smartphone is usually at the bottom of the phone next to the charging port. The phone needs to ideally be on a flat surface, such as a table, and with the microphone pointing towards the sound source – in this case, the choir – to sound the clearest.

It's best to keep the table free of other clutter, such as books, so objects won't block the sound getting to the microphone. Also, try to avoid placing the phone near to other sound sources that could interfere. These can be day-to-day things that you probably won't notice until you listen back to your recordings such as fridges, air conditioning, computers and even a dog barking outside or someone mowing their lawn!

Locations near busy roads can be problematic as well because of noisy traffic.

Don't forget to turn your phone to aeroplane mode so you the phone won't receive any messages or alerts to disrupt the recording.

Sadly, there's no golden rule to how far you should place the microphone from a sound source to get a perfect recording – it takes some experimenting. If it's too close, then it may sound distorted because the sound is too loud; too far and it will capture lots of the reflections of the room and the voices may sound distant and quiet.

A recommended starting point is to set the phone about three or four metres away from the choir. From here, you can do a “test recording” and listen back to it to review how it sounds. If the recording is too quiet, you can move the phone closer; too loud or distorted, and you can move it further away. With some trial and error, you will hopefully find the ideal position.

## **Using a smartphone with an external microphone**

There are a good range of external microphones available that plug straight into your iPhone's charging port or into your smartphone's headphone socket (which also doubles as a microphone input) and these will immediately improve the quality of your audio recordings. Apps for recording audio that offer additional settings and options can also be used instead of Voice Memos.

If you decide to buy a microphone, it's important to check that your phone is compatible, as iPhone products have a connector that only works with iPhones, whereas other smartphones will usually have a 3.5mm connector – the type of socket that works with most headphones.

## Here are some examples:

[Rode VideoMic Me-L for iOS Devices \(for iPhone only\)](#)

[Rode VideoMic Me-L for iOS Devices \(for Android\)](#)

[Shure MV88](#)

[Sennheiser MKE 200 \(\\*adapter required to use with iPhone\)](#)

### **Ask a local hobbyist or professional sound engineer**

Although it's always great to try your hand at something new, if you know anyone in your congregation or group who has an interest in sound recording, why not ask them if they can help? There's a good chance they have some professional level equipment that could help get the very best from your recordings.

Most of all, have fun, and we're very excited to see the variety of performances from across the country soon!

- Rick Smith, Audio producer

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