



MIC STANDS: MISTAKES AND SOLUTIONS

Back in 2007, when I was a remote recording newbie, I showed up for my first author interview with a tabletop microphone stand. The author's two enormous cats looked on with classic cat curiosity as I set up my equipment on the dining room table — no doubt hoping for something to bat across the hardwood floor. They almost got their wish after I dropped a mic clip. I had to dive under the table to grab it as they lumbered toward me.

My plan for this interview had been to facilitate a comfortable, chatty conversation about the author's books and writerly lifestyle. My plan did not consider a room full of hard surfaces that created echoes or all the thumps and booms that were recorded every time one of us touched the table. Unfortunately, I didn't know I needed to scout location before I showed up to record. And my plan did not include cat meows sprinkled throughout the author's brilliant responses to my questions. I learned a lot that day.

I had conducted many interviews before that nerve-wracking experience. But most of those interviews had taken place in a recording studio or I'd gone on location with a sound engineer who set up and ran the equipment.

If anyone had told me that my interview in the author's home would be the first of hundreds of remote recordings I'd make on my own, I might have panicked and quit my job. Making hundreds of recordings on my own is exactly what happened. But

those experiences unfolded over months and years, giving me lots of time to make mistakes and get smarter.

Part of what I learned was to use the proper mic stand for each situation. Here are the basics.

Straight Floor Stand: The most traditional stand. It either has a solid, round base or a tripod base. Both stands feature a straight pole with a mic clip on top. This stand works well for recording a person who is standing, so it's fine for short recording session. If the person is seated, however, they would likely need to put one leg and foot on each side of the microphone to get close enough for a good recording.

Boom Floor Stand: Unlike straight stands, boom stands have an extendable arm that reaches out from the top of the stand. This gives you many set-up options. Your interviewee(s) will be able to sit comfortably in any sort of chair because you can adjust the length of the stand to accommodate their position. As with the straight stands, boom stands have a solid, heavy base or a tripod base.

Overhead Floor Stand: Overhead mic stands are similar to boom stands, but they have a much longer extension arm. An overhead stand is best when you have many voices to record, such as a small choir or a roundtable discussion. Your microphone will point downward to record the group. Most overhead mic stands have a tripod base or a four-pronged base on wheels.

Low-Profile and Tabletop Stands: Low-profile stands are shorter versions of floor stands. Tabletop stands are small and easy to pack and carry, but they have a couple of disadvantages. First, no one can touch any part of the table. If they do, those sounds will travel from the table, up the mic stand, into the microphone, and onto your recording, sounding like booms or thuds. Second, you and your guest must sit close to the table in order to be near the microphone, which makes it more difficult to remember not to touch the table. You can buy both straight and boom arm tabletop stands.

Lavalier Microphones: Convenient for live speakers who need to move around a room. But they are the most unreliable microphones for personal interviews since

they can get muffled by clothing and pick up other, unintended, sounds. Also, the person wearing the lavalier mic must maintain a consistent distance from the mic. Anytime they move their head, the sound fades or gets louder.

Mounted Stands: For remote recordings, your mounted stand would not be wall-mounted, so you'll need one with a table clamp. The table clamp adjusts to accommodate various table thicknesses. These stands have a flexible arm that can extend across the table for better mic placement. However, since they are attached to the table, some of the same tabletop microphone issues apply here.

No matter what type of stand you use, you'll need the best microphone for the situation. Information about that is in this article: [How To Choose A Microphone](#).



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