

Podcasting Basics

Easy Guides to Podcasting
Terminology and Technology

Loudness

What is it? Why does it matter?



Dave Couto
dave@brightvoxaudio.com

Loudness? Sounds weird

the term 'Loudness' does seem weird,
doesn't it? Surely I mean 'volume?'

Not quite. Volume and Loudness are
different, although related, terms.

Volume is the quantity or power of a
sound. You turn the volume up, and there's
more sound.

Loudness is more subjective. More volume
will sound louder, but other factors
contribute so frequency range and
duration also affect loudness.



Meters

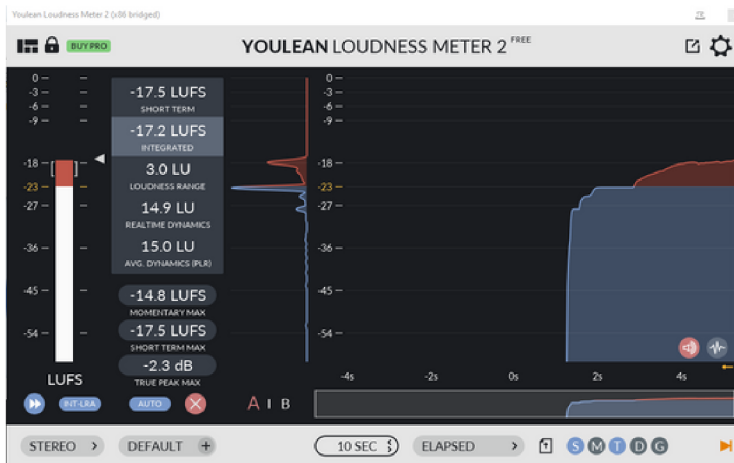


If you record regularly you should be used to looking at a meter. There are various types, but this is a common type. set up to show peak volume.

If you turn the dial up, the indicated value will go up.



The meter plugin I use is the FREE mvMeter2 from TBProAudio
[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)



This is the free version of YouLean Loudness Meter 2
[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

This is a meter capable of measuring loudness and as you can see it is a lot more complicated.

But you don't need to worry about all of the info.



Warning: I'm going to keep stuff very simple. And I'm going to gloss over some terminology I think is unnecessary for the people this is aimed at.

That's a Negative

You may have noticed that most values on both meters are negative. With audio the maximum desirable value is zero. If you cross zero the signal clips and creates distortion or unpleasant artefacts.

Live, Laugh, LUFS

Audio is usually measured as *Decibels (dB)* with a maximum value of zero.

Loudness is measured in *Loudness Units relative to Full Scale (LUFS)* and the maximum value here is also zero.

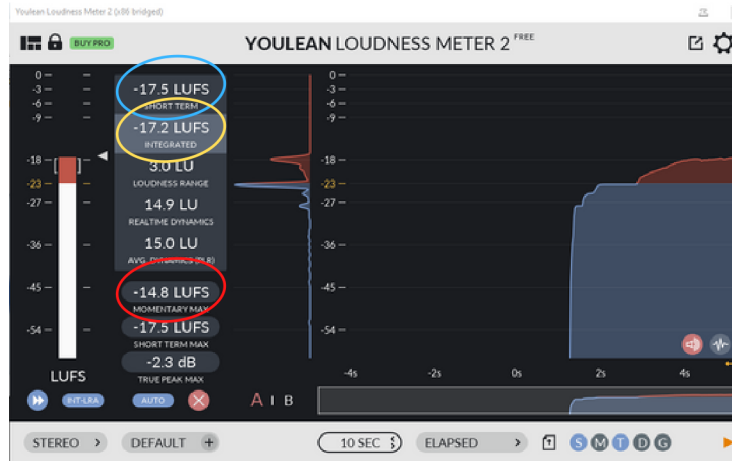
From now on we're sticking with LUFS,
pronounced..ummm... *luffs*



Where's the target?

There are three LUFS values on the meter below.

Momentary, Short Term and Integrated.



The most important for podcasting purposes is **Integrated**. This is the Loudness of the whole episode when you're done.

Momentary and Short Term may be 'Louder' but overall it will average out to the integrated value.

Target loudness is different for Mono and Stereo files.

For Mono the value is -19 LUFS

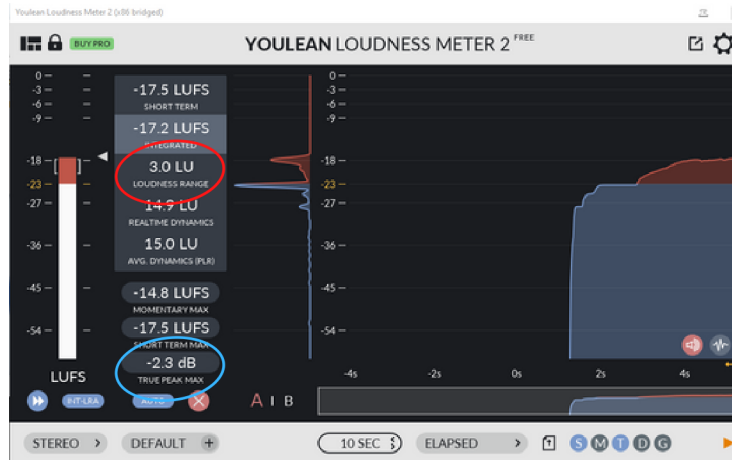
For Stereo the target is -16 LUFS

Some variance is okay, but as long as you're within 1-2 LUFS you're good

And that's it?



Mostly. There are a couple of other values to keep an eye on



Loudness range is the difference between the loudest and least loud points. This should be between 3 and 5 LU

True Peak Max is the peak *volume*. This has to be below zero, obviously. More specific is up to you. Some like to keep below -1 dB, some below -3 dB some are fine with -0.1 dB.

Wait, but why?

Consistency within a podcast is important so that listeners don't need to adjust as they listen.

And podcasts should be similar to each other so that one podcast isn't a lot louder or less loud than the one before or next.



Show Me How

It's easy to achieve target Loudness with several online tools.

Many podcast hosts now offer automated mastering which includes Loudness targeting

And specific software like Auphonic can do it for you as well.

Any professional editor will give you your podcast in spec, and they can do it in a couple of ways.

If you'd like to experiment yourself then try these:

- 1) Using Waves Vocal Rider and/or a series of compressors to get the Loudness within the 3-5 LU target range, then carefully gain-staging to hit the required LUFS level.
- 2) Using a professional tool like iZotope RX or certain DAWs to output at the required spec.