

USB Microphones for Your Online Lessons

I was looking to solve my online teaching issues. My voice was getting tired, I hated the way I sounded to myself, and I found myself "reaching" both physically and psychically toward my student on the screen. I needed something that would reassure my "Lizard Brain" (the part of my brain issuing automatic instructions) that I could be heard and didn't need to work so hard. My husband is a songwriter and has been a music producer and engineer for decades, and he sat down with me to solve my problem.

I wanted a USB microphone that sounded good, that had no latency (time between when I spoke and when I heard myself speak) a way to control both the input level (gain) and what my student was hearing (volume). I also wanted a mute button and wanted it to have a reasonably small footprint.



We looked at several mics, and after reading up on them, including both pro and user reviews, we listened to the four we liked best on YouTube reviews. It was really hard to decide, since they all had great things going for them. In the end we picked the Blue Yeti. The prices are all in the same ballpark, and they all sound great, so it was difficult to choose. I'm pretty sure you can't go wrong for teaching with one of these mics.

Why USB?

A USB microphone is the easiest way to improve your audio for lessons or anything else you're recording directly to your computer. You don't need extra equipment or software: You can just plug a USB microphone directly into the USB port on your computer. Usually it will appear as an additional input you can choose in your system settings or "conferencing interface" (Zoom). Traditional mics need extra equipment to connect to your computer, so USB is much easier and sounds just as good.

Blue Yeti



It's not blue. That's the name of the company.

Sound: This mic sounds great. It's as good as some of my husband's really expensive studio mics.

Size: 4.9 x 4.7 x 11.6 inches It's on the big-ish side as these mic's go, and is hefty at almost 4.5 pounds. Not hard to pick up, but heavy enough to stay put.

Latency: Zero latency. The headphones plug directly into the mic itself with a mini plug.

Volume: There's a volume control on the user side.

Gain: There's a gain control opposite the user side.

Input patterns: There are four input patterns.

Price: \$130

Other: This mic has a mute button which is handy but can be distracting. It comes with one of two mounting kits; a table stand and a boom rig for hanging the mic. If you want both, get the table stand and order the boom separately.

Samson CO1U

Sound: Another fabulous sounding mic. Picks up lower frequencies beautifully.

Size: Apx. 3 x 9 inches and only 1.5 pounds.

Latency: Zero latency. The headphones plug directly into the mic itself with a mini plug.

Volume: Not on the mic itself. You'd control the volume from whatever you've plugged it into.

Gain: N/A

Input patterns: Hypercardioid, which means it will sound fantastic if you're in it's cardioid pattern, and it will minimize sound outside that pattern.

Price: \$90

Other: Compact and light, this mic gets stellar reviews.



Shure MV5



We almost bought this just because it was so dang cute! Also, Shure is a very reputable company for microphones.

Sound: Small diaphragm condenser mic optimized for iOS. A Mac person's dream.

Size: 2.5 x 2.5. .35 lbs

Latency: Low latency. The headphones plug directly into the mic itself.

Volume: You can adjust your headphone volume from the mic.

Gain: N/A

Input patterns: A cardioid mic with digital signal processing. There are three modes; instruments, speech, and flat.

Price: \$99

Other: Has a mute button. Comes with an **iOS app** that records uncompressed audio for video. Has a USB to plug into any laptop or desktop, but also includes micro-USB to Lightning cable for use with iOS devices.

Samson Satellite

Sound: Great. Shock-mounted diaphragm reduces unwanted noise.

Size: 1.7 x L: 8.6", .75 lbs

Latency: Zero latency. The headphones plug directly into the mic itself.

Volume: You can adjust your headphone volume, as well as turn your headphones off, directly from the mic.

Gain: N/A

Input patterns: Three input patterns.

Price: \$99

Other: The mute button is touch sensitive so it's silent. The stand is PART of the mic, the little legs fold right into it. Light, small, compact, and great sounding. You can also use it with an overhead or boom stand.

