



Podcasting Introduction

Adult

Introduction

This class covers what podcasting is and how it differs from simply putting up an audio file for download.

You will learn the simple process for creating a one-person podcast, options for creating podcast content, equipment and software options, and options for hosting your podcasts on the web.



What is a podcast?

Imagine having your own radio show, on any topic you wish to discuss, that listeners can subscribe to and download to an iPod or other audio player. This is a podcast.

A podcast is a digital audio show, usually more than one episode, that can be downloaded to a portable player (like an iPod), and most importantly, subscribed to so it is automatically downloaded to the listener's device when a new episode is available.

A podcast can be about any topic. There are podcasts by comedians that have thousands of subscribers, while others deal with specialty topics and may have fewer listeners and subscribers.

The simplified Process of Producing a One-Person Podcast

1. Determine a topic and have some idea what you are going to discuss
2. Record the podcast
3. Edit the podcast
4. Publish

Now, each of these steps can get a quite complex, but overall it really is that simple. Let's take a look at each of these steps...

Determining a Topic

Will your podcast have a regular topic? Is it about skateboarding? Music? Movies? Will you interview interesting people? Once you know what your podcast is about, when recording each episode it's good idea to have some notes about what you want to discuss on the show. This doesn't have to be complicated. A simple outline is fine.

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Recording the Podcast

You will need a microphone you can plug into your computer or some kind of audio recorder whose recordings can be downloaded into your computer for further editing.

Learning to speak clearly and with good tone takes practice. You may be surprised at the way your own voice sounds. Learning to talk about a topic for a few minutes without lots of unnecessary pauses and “uhhs” takes practice. This is all part of the recording process. One nice thing about a podcast, however, is that it isn’t live (at least not usually). If you really flub something, you can go back and redo it, repeat it more clearly, and then edit out the junk in the editing phase.

Editing the Podcast

The better your original content is, the less editing is necessary. This is an important point. The longer your podcast is, the more time it will take to edit, if the original content isn’t good.

You will need some software for editing your audio file. Audio editing software can be quite expensive – or it can be free! Plano Public Library has Adobe Audition. This very expensive, professional quality software with a lot of capabilities is available for use at the Library. Mac users can edit in GarageBand. PC and Mac users can download the free editing software – Audacity. More details in the software section.

Good editing is critical for a good podcast. It is very rare that a person can record even 10 minutes of audio that doesn’t need to be cleaned up. If you listen to a podcast that is, say 30 minutes or an hour of unedited conversation or solo-talking, it is usually pretty bad, unentertaining, and difficult to listen to.

As a general rule, when editing your podcast, you need to listen to every single part and decide if that part is actually important to the podcast. Will the listener care? Does the listener want to listen to 30 seconds of you and your friend laughing? Remember, even though it may have been fun while you recorded it, it may not be great for a listener to hear.

Very Important: Don’t publish anything that would embarrass you or anyone else. Like any form of social media, you don’t want to publish anything you wouldn’t want out in public.

Edit Ruthlessly! If you don’t think it adds to a listener’s experience in a 100% positive way, cut it out.

Publishing the Podcast

The podcast must be published and available for subscription and for download if anyone is going to hear it!

Publishing the podcast means you will need to upload the finished audio file to some storage space on the web. The best option of this is a podcast hosting company. Again, as with software, there are some that are expensive, and at least one that is free. More details in the Podcast Hosting Sites/Companies section.

Generally, free podcast hosting sites are fine to experiment with and are a good alternative if you can’t pay for hosting. The audio quality isn’t great, but then again it is free. You get what you pay for.

When you set up an account on one of these services, you will find that they each have a simple system for uploading your podcast and entering some descriptive information about it and each episode.

Recording – Microphones and Software

Nothing will affect the sound quality of your podcast as much as your microphone. It all comes down to the mic. No amount of alteration in editing will make a bad mic sound good.

Types of Microphones

1. **Built-in microphone on your computer.** Most computers now have some kind of built-in mic, which is useful for doing Skype, internet telephone, etc. If you are low on money, this is a good option. Sound quality will not be fantastic, but it may not be too bad either.
2. **Gaming Headset.** If you play video games, you may have a gaming headset that will work pretty well for capturing your voice. Quality can be fairly good with this.
3. **USB Microphone.** Recommend for new podcasters. A good USB microphone is powered by the USB connection, gets good volume, can give pretty rich sound and is simple. No mixing board or additional audio interface required. Plug the microphone into your computer, and you are ready to go. The Audio-Technica AT2020 is a good option. Using a USB Mic or a headset is also a good option for multi-person podcasts in which the conversation is captured from a Skype conversation, or similar kind of thing.
4. **Dynamic or Condenser Microphone with a Mixer or some other audio connection interface.** If you want to have two or more microphones “in the studio”, you will need to have a mixing board or some other audio interface for your computer and most likely a microphone with XLR connections. This is a big topic. Briefly, a mixing board allows you to use multiple microphones and control the volume of each, and feed the entire thing into your computer for recording in whatever editing software you are using. Dynamic mics are non-powered, provide a rich sound, and don’t pick up a lot of room noise. Condenser mics are generally for more sound-controlled studios, as they are powered and very sensitive.
5. **Digital Audio Recorder.** You can record your podcast into a digital recorder, then import the audio into your computer for editing via USB cable, or SD Card reader. One nice thing about this option is that you can take your recorder “on location”. Most of these kinds of recorders have very good built-in condenser microphones, and get excellent sound. A couple of nice recorders are the Zoom H4N, and if you are really on a budget, the Zoom H1.

Editing Software

You will need some kind of editing software with which to work on your audio files.

All good editing systems share a few similar characteristics. They allow you to import the files you want to work with. They allow you to create multiple “tracks”, so you can for instance have some music at the beginning and end of your show, and you can fade the volume in and out. They allow you to control the volume level of each track. And they allow you to export your finished file in a common audio format, preferably .WAV or .MP3. (Note: WAV files are much bigger than MP3 files. They are fine to work with, but you will want to finish the file up as an MP3)

Plano Public Library has **Adobe Audition**. This very expensive, professional quality software with a lot of capabilities is available for use at the Library. It’s a lot of fun, and great to learn how to use. However, you don’t need to spend anywhere near this kind of money.

For beginning podcasters there are two editing software systems available for free.

Mac users – GarageBand. GarageBand comes installed on all Mac computers. It’s very easy to use GarageBand to record your podcast. You can drop an audio file from some other source into GarageBand. It supports lots of multiple tracks. GarageBand isn’t terribly hard to learn. It also has a nice user interface.

PC and Mac Users – Audacity. You can download and install [Audacity for free](#). It is freeware. Being freeware, the user interface for Audacity isn’t the greatest, but it works. It does, however, offer a couple of really nice features that are not available in GarageBand:

1. It allows you to work with and save your work as high quality WAV files
2. It has a “noise filter” function you can use to clean up audio
3. It actually has a number of nice features like the noise filter

Even if you are a Mac User, you should install Audacity for the extra functionality. Like GarageBand, Audacity supports multiple tracks. It’s really a great application especially for being free. Like any software, it takes some time, practice and learning.

Formats for your Audio File

There are lots of different formats for audio files. Generally, this is what you need to know. When you are working with a file in Audacity, GarageBand, Audition, etc, those applications usually have their own format for saving your project for further editing. These are not the formats to upload to your podcast host.

The best format to save for uploading is MP3. Save that, and then upload it to your podcast host.

Podcast Hosting Sites/Companies

Podbean [Link](#): Podbean allows you to have a free account to try them out, with a limited amount of storage space (enough for a short podcast). A good way to get started.

LibSyn (Liberated Syndication) [Link](#): LibSyn specialized in podcast hosting. They have a variety of hosting services available, starting at only \$5 per month. A good deal, and a really good company to work with.

Blubrry [Link](#): Blubrry also specializes in podcast hosting, and is a great company to use.

Additional Resources

Explore additional resources on our [website](#) and blog [Plano Library Learns](#), including information about library [databases](#). A Plano Library card is required to access most databases.

Podcast Answerman [Link](#)

The Podcaster’s Studio [Link](#)

The Audacity to Podcast [Link](#)

Podcaster’s Roundtable [Link](#)

Lynda.com [Link](#): search learning Audacity, GarageBand, Adobe Audition

Ask a Librarian [Link](#): Ask a short question about podcasting and a librarian will get back to you with an answer

Book a Librarian [Link](#): Request an appointment with a librarian for one-on-one help