

How to Host and Edit Your Own Podcast
HKS Communications Program
Monday, March 11, 2019

What is a podcast?

A podcast is an audio recording, usually consisting of spoken words but occasionally including music, and distributed via the Internet. A podcast is typically available as a series, with new episodes being released regularly. Podcasts are not “live” and can be listened to at any time.

How do I listen to a podcast?

With your ears! And with a “podcatcher”, which is a program used to subscribe to a podcast, meaning you’ll automatically get new episodes as they are released. Popular podcatchers include iTunes, Stitcher, and Overcast, available for Mac, Windows, Linux, Android, and iOS. Despite the name, you do not need an iPod to listen to a podcast.

What about recording a podcast — do I need any special equipment?

Yes, but it doesn’t have to be expensive:

- For hardware, I recommend a Logitech USB headset (\$50–100), a Blue Yeti USB microphone (\$129), or the Zoom H4n PRO (\$230).
- For recording software, use the free online service Zencaster, which works in Chrome and Firefox. It creates a private link that you send to your guest; once you’ve both clicked the link, you’ll be able to talk to each other through your browser. Zencaster will record the conversation, and you can download MP3s to edit. When you first sign up, you’ll get a free two-week trial of Zencaster’s premium features, which normally cost \$20/month.
- Finally, to edit, use Audacity and Levelator. Both are free for Mac, Windows, and Linux.

What should I podcast about?

Anything! If you have an opinion to voice, a story to tell, or a cause to promote, then you have a podcast. I’ve hosted six podcasts on the subjects of old Apple computers, online publishing, living with multiple sclerosis, making your own video games, feminism in the tech industry, and *Star Trek*. I happen to like interviewing people, so most of my podcasts feature a different guest each week, sharing their stories and experiences.

It helps to have a co-host — someone with whom you have a good rapport, to whom you feel committed, and who will help you stick to a publication schedule. Try to choose the same time to record every week (such as Saturday at 10 AM); otherwise, you’ll waste time and energy coordinating your schedules.

How often should I publish new episodes? How long should a podcast be?

I’ve seen all sorts of podcast schedules: daily, weekly, monthly, even annually. The more often you release new episodes, the more easily you’ll attract new listeners and retain existing ones. And the more often you release new episodes, the shorter they should be. For example, *Scientific American* has a daily podcast called *60-Second Science*; each episode is — you guessed it — only one minute long. One of my podcasts, *Polygamer*, is monthly (formerly biweekly), and each episode is about an hour. My other podcast, *Transporter Lock*, is also an

hour-long show. It broadcasts weekly but then goes off the air for months at a time, following *Star Trek's* broadcast schedule.

Where do I publish my podcast?

Good question! After all, it's not a podcast until listeners can find and download it. You'll need a host — that is, your own website. If you're not tech-savvy and are on a limited budget, I recommend **WordPress.com**, which is \$5/month, or **Blubrry.com**, which also uses WordPress but costs \$12/month. I've also heard good things about **Libsyn.com**, which is \$5/month, and others use **Simplecast**, which is \$15/month. And some people swear by **Anchor.fm** and **SoundCloud**, which are free.

How do listeners find my podcast?

Most podcatchers draw their catalogs from databases of podcasts — so you need to submit your podcast to those databases. Here are instructions for getting your podcast included in the four biggest databases:

- **Apple iTunes:** <https://itunespartner.apple.com/en/podcasts/overview>
- **Google Play:** <https://play.google.com/music/podcasts/publish>
- **Stitcher:** <https://www.stitcher.com/content-providers>
- **TuneIn:** <https://pb403.org/tunein>

After that, start getting the word out via social media: tell your friends, post on Facebook and reddit, and tweet on Twitter. If there are niche communities or non-profits who may be interested in your topic, email them. This is all free — all it takes is time!

Can I monetize my podcast?

Yes, but it is neither easy nor lucrative. Your best bets are to get recruited by a podcast network, such as **Relay FM**. Or you can sign up for affiliate programs, such as **Audible** and **Amazon**. Finally, you can run an ongoing crowdfunding campaign on **Patreon**. None of these opportunities should be pursued until after you've been podcasting for a while, have demonstrated a consistent quality, and have attracted an audience. (One of my favorite podcasts released 52 weekly episodes in its first year before launching their Patreon; their three hosts now make a combined total of \$165/month — just enough to pay their podcast bills, I suspect!)

Where do I go for more advice?

- Podcast host Blubrry (which develops the PowerPress plugin for WordPress that powers all my shows) has a podcasting manual that includes advice for content, format, logos, and more: <https://create.blubrry.com/manual/>
- Jason Snell, formerly the editorial director of *Macworld*, has an excellent blog called Six Colors where he discusses, among other topics, podcasting: <https://sixcolors.com/topic/podcasting/>
- I recorded an interview with Rob Walch, VP of podcaster relations at podcast host Libsyn, that featured tons of great advice for podcasters: <https://pb403.org/libsyn>
- Email me anytime: kgagne@gamebits.net