

How to Podcast

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This short guide will:

- Define a podcast for the purposes of this document
- Suggest possible uses for a podcast
- List necessary software & hardware
- Bring the reader through a step-by-step guide to producing a podcast

What is a podcast

The exact definition of a podcast is often contested. While a digital audio file being placed online is sometimes accepted as being a podcast; it is often a requirement that there is a means of subscription. A simple definition might be that a podcast is "a series of episodes that are downloaded on request to a user's device". The term can be used as both a noun and a verb.

A podcast can consist of audio, video and/or PDF files. In this instance however; we will focus on traditional audio podcasts (mp3's). For a user to subscribe; you must also produce and maintain a small XML file that holds data about each 'episode'.

Why Should I Podcast?

New uses for podcasts are appearing all the time, but here are some suggestions:

- Give students a valuable study aid to help them keep pace when residency, clinical or laboratory (or just life) commitments force them to miss a lecture
- Offer full-motion video replay of expert procedures and techniques demonstrated during class
- Provide wider access to highly specialized faculty members and guest lecturers
- Deliver Web-based orientation and procedural training to staff or to students (e.g. a library tour)

What do I need?

To make a podcast you need:

Access to a server to hold your files; a willingness to edit a simple pro-forma XML file; the facility to create audio (a microphone, a computer, and recording software)

To subscribe to your podcast, your user will need:

An internet connection; the software to play audio files; an RSS aggregator like i-Tunes or the Google homepage

How do I make a Podcast?

Full Specifications and guidance for placing a podcast on iTunes can be found here http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcaststechspecs.html#_Toc526931673.

1. Deliver and record your lecture

You can use free software to create a podcast. Every installation of Windows comes with Sound Recorder. Mac users can choose from a variety of free downloads: <http://www.monkeybreadsoftware.de/Freeware/SoundRecorder.shtml> is an excellent simple recorder; <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> is a good recorder and editor. You could, of course, simply use your mobile phone.

2. Edit and convert to appropriate format

You may need to convert this audio file to .mp3. An online search will provide a good number of free converters. You can look in <http://www.dirfile.com/freeware/wav-to-mp3.htm> or http://www.download.com/Free-Mp3-Wma-Converter/3000-2140_4-10602212.html?tag=tab_pub.

3. Update XML

This is perhaps the most intimidating step for a podcaster without web design experience. In fact it is very straightforward. The i-Tunes page given above includes the full text of the xml file. Copy and paste this into a simple text editor (preferably Notepad) and save it with a .xml extension. Below is a portion of the XML; this gives the user the data necessary to download one episode. The sections in bold are all you need to change and, as you can see, they are relatively self-explanatory.

```
<item>
  <title>Shake Shake Shake Your Spices</title>
  <itunes:author>John Doe</itunes:author>
  <itunes:summary>This week we talk about salt and pepper shakers, comparing and
    contrasting pour rates, construction materials, and overall aesthetics. Come and join the
    party!</itunes:summary>
  <enclosure url="http://example.com/podcasts/everything/AllAboutEverythingEpisode3.mp3"
    length="8727310" type="audio/x-mp3" />
</item>
```

4. Place on the web

Upload both your audio file and the edited XML file into the appropriate folder on your server.

For the user to subscribe using iTunes they just need the address of your XML file (e.g. <http://www.esd.qmul.ac.uk/eointests/podcasttest/delupodcast.xml>). They should choose Advanced > Subscribe to Podcast > and enter this address. They are now subscribed and their computer will automatically check for and download new episodes as you place them online