



Podcasting

Distribution of media files by subscription (free) over the Internet for playback on mobile devices and personal computers.

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RSS Feed icon

What is Podcasting?

Podcasting is simply distributing audio content using RSS, a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated digital content, such as blogs, news feeds or podcasts. The process is surprisingly simple, and by making audio content available using RSS, podcasters give listeners more control over what they listen to and when.

In a nutshell, podcasting is simply online audio content that's delivered via webfeed. Think of it as radio on demand. However, it gives you far more options in terms of content and program style than radio.

Plus, podcasting is like TiVo for radio. That is, you can download whatever programming you want and listen to it whenever and wherever you want. You also generally have full access to the audio archives for the programs you like. This removes time, use, and content restraints.

What can you do with a Podcast?

The options are nearly infinite. So far, most podcasts emulate the kind of audio programming we've grown accustomed to in the radio world: music shows, talk shows, commentary and analysis, etc.

Here are some other possibilities:

- Specialized industry news from educational/research institutions.
- Language lessons or other educational materials that benefit from audio
- Recipes or other how-to instructions for hands-on tasks
- Self-guided walking tours
- Speeches, interviews and lectures
- Audio from conference sessions (plenaries, panel discussions, etc.)
- In-house news or updates for a company or organization (delivered via intranet)
- Training enhancement or reinforcement
- Expanded access to online content for the visually impaired.
- Quick highlights from newly academic or scientific research papers (abstracts translated into plain language)

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The Basics: How to Make and Receive Podcasts

Create your audio content. This can be any kind of audio content, from spoken commentary, to news, to presentations, to audiobooks, to language lessons – you name it. If you can hear it, you can podcast it.

To create a podcast, you must be able to save your audio content in the form of a digital audio file. The file format should be readily usable by any of the popular portable digital audio devices generically called MP3 players. On the low end, you can use a digital voice recorder with a plug-in microphone, or the microphone that came with your computer. Of course, such low-end recording options offer limited audio quality. More accomplished podcasters use professional microphones, audio editing and mixing hardware and software.

Post and announce your audio content online. You'll need access to a server where you can store your audio files. Also, it helps if you have a weblog that is supported by software that automates the creation of your webfeed. Your feed will include enclosures. After you create, edit, and format/compress an audio file, you upload the file to your server and attach it to a weblog posting. When you publish that posting, an item is added to your webfeed that includes a link that says "Enclosure." That "enclosure" link also appears on your weblog items, for people who are visiting your site rather than reading your feed.

People download and listen to your audio file. Podcasting is popular because portable MP3 players are so popular. Many mobile phones have MP3 players built-in. When people learn (via your webfeed, a podcast directory, or by visiting your site or blog) that you've posted a fresh audio file, they can download that file and store it on their MP3 player. Then they can take your file with them to listen to it in the car, at the gym, while cooking or cleaning, in line at the bank, etc.

Webfeeds make this process even easier by automating it. When you subscribe to a podcast, your computer can detect new enclosures on the webfeeds you subscribe to and automatically download them to your computer or MP3 player.

The only things you absolutely need to receive and listen to podcasts are broadband internet access and some way to play audio files. That's right – **You don't actually need a portable MP3 player, let alone an iPod, to listen to podcasts.** You can download podcasts to your computer and play them from your computer using common programs that come bundled with many operating systems (such as WinAmp, RealPlayer, or QuickTime Player) and iTunes freely distributed from Apple for Windows and Macintosh operating systems.



UCD Podcasting Help: <http://clm.ucdavis.edu/podcast/about.html>

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