

Introduction to Podcasting

Temp web site: <http://www.guidesandtutorials.com>

What is a podcast?

A podcast is:

- An audio file you create and convert to an mp3 format...
- Which contains your own radio show or rant or any audio you wish others to have or be able to listen to...
- That you upload along with an **RSS** (Really Simple Syndication) file to a **server** (your website for instance)...
- That your intended listeners download using one of several programs that have been created to retrieve your audio file automatically...
- So that they can listen to it at their convenience through a web browser or on their own ipod or an mp3 player.

What you need to know to create a podcast

In order to podcast you will need to learn a few skills in this order and be able to use some simple equipment.

1. How to record and edit your audio and save it as an .mp3 file.
2. How to create an RSS file which holds the “directions” for sending your file when a user’s program like iPodder requests it.
3. How to write the “directions” that are inside the RSS file and save it as an .xml file
4. How to upload the RSS “feed” and your .mp3 file to a web server do others can download it.
5. How to validate that the file is written correctly and will send the file when requested.

Step 1: Recording your Audio and Creating Your MP3 File

The first step in creating your podcast is to record your audio and create your .mp3 file that your users will download. There are many tools available to assist in this and you can do it with very expensive equipment to get studio quality sound, or you can do it for next to nothing and still get adequate results. The choice is yours.

Typically, you’ll need a microphone to speak into and a way to record and edit your audio on your computer. Audacity (www.audacity.sourceforge.net) is a free multi-track audio editing program that is available for PC, Mac, and Linux computers. You can download the Audacity software at:

Download Audacity here:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

You will also need to download the LAME MP3 encoder which allows the software to export your audio files into an MP3 format. The LAME encoder can be downloaded from the Audacity web site.

In addition to the audio recording and editing software, you will need a microphone. There are many types which range in price and quality, but for somewhere between \$50 and \$100 bucks, you’re going to get good quality sound. From zero to \$50, you’re going to get something that sounds anything like your speaking at the bottom of a barrel to poor AM radio quality transistor radio. You can get studio quality sound for a little over \$100.



You can find a decent quality microphone at most Radio Shack or Best Buy stores, but in order to get a really professional quality sound, purchase the best microphone your budget will allow from a professional audio brand like Audio Technica, Shure, Sennheiser, Samson, Behringer, Neumann or other professional microphone manufacturers. Your sound quality originates at the microphone. Since you want the best quality sound you can get, if you can afford it, don’t scrimp by using a cheap microphone. You want you listeners to enjoy the experience.

If you're on the go, get a good unidirectional, dynamic-type microphone like the Shure SM58. If you're going to do most of your recording at a fixed location, you'll get better quality sound from a cardioid-condenser microphone such as the Audio Technica AT3035 or AT4040. A good middle of the road USB microphone that provides nice sound quality is the Samson CO1U for about \$80.

Cardioid condenser microphones require an external power source also known as phantom power. Dynamic mics do not require external power, and they are typically more rugged and durable.



Step 2: Creating Your RSS Feed File

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication (really!). An RSS feed is simply a text file with the extension .xml. You can name it anything you like as long as it ends in .xml.

Inside the RSS file are directions that are written in what is called Extensible Markup Language or XML. It's very similar to HTML tags that make up web pages.

The easiest way to create an RSS file is to copy another RSS file as your template and then simply modify it as needed. This can be done in a web editing program like Dreamweaver, or in a simple text editor like notepad on a PC or BB edit on a Mac.

Here is a sample of an RSS file:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<rss version="2.0">
  <channel>
    <title>EdTech Conversations</title>
    <link>http://www.edtechlive.org/vpd</link>
    <description>Sample podcasts from CTAP Region 3</description>
    <language>en-us</language>
    <copyright>Copyright 2006 EdTech Live All Rights Reserved.</copyright>
    <lastBuildDate>Fri, 13 Oct 2006 18:35:21 PST</lastBuildDate>
    <ttl>240</ttl>
    <item>
      <title>Introduction to the EdTech Leadership Network</title>
      <link>http://www.edtechlive.org/vpd/podcast101/etln\_info1.mp3</link>
      <description>An invitation to attend the CTAP 3 EdTech Leadership Network</description>
      <pubDate>Fri, 13 Oct 2006 12:10:56 PST</pubDate>
      <author>CTAP Region 3</author>
    </item>
    <item>
      <title>College Student Talks about Using Technology</title>
      <link>http://www.edtechlive.org/vpd/podcast101/proj2\_export2.mp3</link>
      <description>A sample podcast interview</description>
      <pubDate>Fri, 13 Oct 2006 11:59:56 PST</pubDate>
      <author>CTAP Region 3</author>
    </item>
  </channel>
</rss>
```

Notice that your RSS feed has a “channel” that can include multiple items. Each item provides information about a specific .mp3 file or podcast. There is a title of the podcast, a link to the .mp3 file that is located on a web server, a description of the podcast, and a publication date in a very specific format. This is so that the feed readers will know you have a new item on your channel.

A few notes about the XML tags:

1. Every tag is a pair that includes a beginning and an end tag. For example <Title></Title>.
2. Tags are case sensitive so TITLE is not the same as title.
3. Ending tags always have a backward slash (“\”).
4. The information between the tags is called an element.
5. Each podcast is included in its own item and you can include multiple items in one RSS file.

Step 3. Upload the.MP3 file, RSS file, and Validate the RSS

RSS files must reside on a web server so that your subscribers will be able to access the file. If you have your own web site, you already have a server where you can upload files.

You upload your RSS file along with the .mp3 audio files for your podcast using either an FTP program such as WSftp or CuteFTP. FTP stands for File Transfer Protocol and it’s a program that helps you move a file from one computer to another. Make certain the full address to the .mp3 file on the server is the same as that listed in the RSS file in the link tag

Validate Your RSS File to Be Sure It is Written Correctly.

Once you have the full address of your RSS file you can use any number of validator tools to validate the code. This is necessary to make certain that everything in your RSS file is correct and will point your subscribers in the right direction of your mp3 files.

FeedValidator.org
<http://feedvalidator.org>

RSS Scripting
<http://rss.scripting.com>

RSS Validators
<http://validator.w3.org/>

Enter the full address to your RSS file that you uploaded to the server. This is the URL for that tells your subscriber where to find your RSS file. The feed validator will examine the code in the rss file and will let you know if it’s okay or whether or not you need to correct something. If necessary, go back to your text editor and make any edits suggested by the feed validator to the RSS file, then upload the RSS file to the server again and check the validation until it’s correct.

Once your RSS file has been validated, all you have to do is provide the address of your RSS file to anyone who wants to subscribe to your podcast. It’s that simple.

If you want to advertise your podcast, you can list it in any number of directories that are available on the Internet so people know it’s there and can subscribe to your podcasts.