The Writer's Lab	How to create your own podcasts and audio files

Podcasts are digital files, usually audio, that you can download to a digital device like an mp3 player or an iPod, or just listen to directly on your computer. One of the most common uses of podcasts is for radio series, which listeners can subscribe to and download.

Podcasts are an easy and effective means for communicating your ideas to a specifically targeted audience – or anyone who wants to listen.

As a business communicator, you could record great case studies, breakthroughs or achievements, product features and benefits or how-to guides, and more. **For writers,** you could record a selection of stories, host your own book review series or even record a serialised novel!

Content is only limited by your imagination. It's is a convenient way to get your or your organisation's message across and create a loyal group of listeners or clients. The key is to **focus on what your customers, clients or readers are interested in or want to know more about**, and to deliver value.

How do you create a podcast?
It's simple – all you need is some software and a microphone. Two easily available audio editing software packages are Audacity and Garageband. If you have a Mac, it probably came with the iLife suite, which includes Garageband. Audacity is available on Mac or PC and it's free.

Save your audio file in mp3 format and name it something that says exactly what it is (but don't include any symbols or special characters). Make sure your track is as good a quality as you can make it. Edit out long silences or lots of background noise and, if you use music, make sure it's copyright free. You can create your own copyright free music and effects with Garageband.

Podcasts might sound like casual chats but you need to know what you're going to talk about and that means creating a script. The more organised you are with your content the more professional your podcast will sound.

Now what?
Make sure you include a great cover image for your podcast. For people searching for interesting podcasts, the cover art is their first introduction to you, so it needs to be appealing. You can design it yourself using non-copyrighted images – or preferably get a skilled graphic designer to do it for you. Remember, this is a great way to enhance your brand – whether it's your organisation's brand, or 'brand you'.

Once you've created your audio file, one way to get it out there is to put it on your blog or website, and make it available through various podcast directory sites like iTunes. First, you'll need to look at how your blog or website works.

Wordpress blogs, for example, require a space upgrade to upload audio and video files. These start at around A$20 for 5GB. Directories then link to your podcast as an RSS feed. When listeners subscribe to your podcast, the directory keeps them up-to-date with any additional content you create.

Got a story to tell, but want to improve your writing skills?
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