

# Creating a Podcast

By Lorrie Jackson

## WHY A TECHTORIAL?

### What will I learn today?

You will learn the steps for creating a podcast for your K-12 classroom.

### What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

The techtorial applies to any computer with Internet access. Specific software does vary. (See the following for specifics).

### Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial will help teachers accomplish standard IIIa in particular.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#).

## WHAT'S A PODCAST?

Podcasts -- audio recordings that are available online -- are making their way into K-12 classrooms. [Students and Teachers, From K to 12, Hit the Podcasts](#), a New York Times article published on January 25, 2006, for example, highlighted how podcasts changed teaching and learning in several middle school classes.

For some educators, however, podcasts seem either inaccessible ("Don't you have to have an iPod and a Mac?") or overly complicated. Luckily, though, you *don't* need a Mac or an iPod to create or listen to podcasts. And, as for creating podcasts, this is one more instance in which it's less important to be a tech geek than it is to be well organized and to take your time.

So, let's take a look at how you can create a podcast!

Note: If you're new to podcasts, take a look at the Education World techtorial [What is a Podcast?](#), in which we cover what a podcast is as well as the steps for listening and subscribing to your first podcast.

## PODCASTING STEP-BY-STEP

First, the bad news: there's no one easy way to create a podcast at no or little cost for *both* PC and Apple users. For example, for Mac users with [iLife 06](#) (released in January 2006) and a Mac account (an online file storage service by Apple), creating podcasts is a breeze. For others using PCs or without Mac accounts, podcasting is definitely doable -- just a bit more complicated.

Regardless of your platform (PC or Mac), you will need to have a newer operating system -- Windows XP or Mac OS X -- and you'll need to download and install iTunes, a free music-sharing program from Apple. (More on that later.)

Next, the good news: The steps, if not the products used, are the same for both platforms. And even better news: Almost every week, a new software program -- many of which are free or inexpensive -- makes podcast creation simpler and quicker.

So... until a better mousetrap is built, let's look at the basic steps the potential podcaster needs to take. They include

- planning the podcast;
- recording the podcast;
- converting the format;
- creating the XML code; and
- publishing online.

Sound like Greek to you? Relax, take a breath, and we'll walk through the steps together. Remember, the goal is not to be able to create a podcast right now, but simply to understand the basics so that you know where to begin when using your own platform and software program.

### STEP ONE: PLAN AND RECORD

First: Plan, plan, plan

- Pick a topic: Pick a topic you already know about (best bet -- a lecture you know cold) and plan what you're going to say. The less you have to worry about the topic, the more you can focus on the steps.
- Decide on a speaker: Plan who is going to speak, you or your students. Is this a lecture on transcendentalism? Or are students giving podcast reports on their trip to

a local animal sanctuary?

- Practice: Doing one yourself first will give you a better idea of how everything works. (Does the microphone pick up the sound of the air conditioner turning on?).
- Start small: Start with a basic (audio only) podcast and then build up to an enhanced podcast (in which you add slides, as in a PowerPoint presentation) and finally, gulp, a vodcast (audio *and* video). See [What is a Podcast?](#) for more information on the three types of podcasts.

Second: Can we talk? (Recording the podcast)

- The software: If you've got Windows XP, you simply can use Sound Recorder (Start > Programs > Accessories) to record and save your podcast. Apple users can choose from Quick Time Pro or Garage Band (cost varies). Or, try [Audacity](#) as this author did. It's cross-platform, easy-to-use and -- most importantly -- free.
- The hardware: Okay, lots of folks say you need a fancy microphone. Do you really? That depends on your computer's internal microphone. All the podcasts you heard in [What is a Podcast?](#) were done with internal microphones on laptops. You can spend lots of money on a mic, but first check to see if you really need to.
- The process: This is pretty simple. Open the software program, click the record button, and speak clearly. Press the stop button, and save your file. (Different programs save work differently.)

That's it. If possible, save your file as a WAV file. If you can't, don't worry. We'll change it later.

## STEP TWO: CONVERT THE FORMAT

There are many different formats (file types) for audio files. It doesn't matter, however, whether you use Windows' Sound Recorder or Audacity or Garage Band, ultimately whatever you record will have to be converted to an .mp3 file to work on iTunes. Here's how to convert from any format to .mp3.

- The software: [iTunes](#), a free program from Apple, is quite easy to install. Just click Free Download to begin.

Creating and listening to podcasts is free. In order to subscribe (i.e. listen to a full podcast) or (eventually) make more complicated podcasts using video or slides, however, you need to create a Music Store account, which requires a credit card number. There are a few

non-iTunes alternatives, such as [iPodder](#), but they're not as user-friendly. So, you might want to create an iTunes account at this point. Remember, you'll need an account to publish enhanced podcasts or vodcasts, but not for basic ones.

- The process: Drag your podcast into the iTunes library, and then tag it. That means:
  - Click the podcast after dragging into iTunes.
  - Click CTRL I or Command I
  - Add your name and other details about the podcast.

You'll also have to change the format to mp3 and make some custom changes to how the file will be imported.

## **STEP THREE: CREATE XML CODE**

Now it gets tricky.

Unless you love to program in XML code, you'll need a software program to help "code" your file as an RSS feed -- or you can use a blogging site's tools to create the feed. For many classroom teachers, both ideas are, well, scary to say the least. A program such as [Podcast Maker](#), [Garage Band 3](#) (Mac only) and others will do the hard work for you, so it might be worth investing \$30 or so to speed through this step. (See [iPod Resources](#) for more ideas.)

## **STEP FOUR: PUBLISH**

Here's how to publish a podcast:

- The hardware: Well, not hardware per se, but you will need a Web site to store your podcast on. The easiest is a .Mac account for those who have one -- but most educators don't. So, ask your school or district if you can upload your podcasts on its Web site. Or, you can use your personal homepage.
- The process: After uploading a podcast to the designated Web page, go back to iTunes and click Submit a Podcast on the Podcasts page. Copy and paste the URL from your own Web site.

Sound overwhelming? Again, view the steps above as a general overview of the process. How you will create a podcast will vary tremendously based on your software, platform, access to storage on the Web, tech skills, and patience.

## PODCASTS IN EDUCATION

Is all the effort worth it? Why not just record narration in PowerPoint and e-mail the slide show to whomever you want to share it with?

Many educators have found that students who create content for real audiences (not just other students and teachers) constantly are pushing to create *better* content. By creating and publishing podcasts, students share their work with the world, increasing interest in -- and improving the quality of -- their work. Moreover, the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that more than 50 percent of U.S. teenagers have created "digital content". That includes creating Web pages and blogs or publishing original photography and music. These new content creators see information not as a five-page book report, but as a multimedia product. Why not tap into this generation's interests and skills? They still learn the facts and themes of your topic, but they do so in a way that engages them.

Want concrete proof that podcasts are moving into the school in meaningful ways? Check out David Warlick's [Education Podcast Network](#). Simply scroll through the menu on the left and double-click any topic of interest. You even can hear many of the podcasts without opening iTunes.

## TELL ME MORE!

### Where can I learn more about podcasts?

For the basics, see the Education World techtorial [What is a Podcast?](#). See [iPod Resources](#) for more ideas.