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By *deb*

Created 2007-04-16 20:20

Like mushrooms after a spring rain, podcasting is sprouting up everywhere. Chalk it up to the insanely popular Apple iPod, which at last count has sold fourteen kajillion units. Not content to merely listen, iPod devotees now want to jump into the broadcast booth. Anyone with a microphone and an Internet connection suddenly seems to have a podcast, and for good reason: It's very easy to produce and upload audio clips. The tools are cheap, the files are easy to share, and just about anyone can do it. Does it make sense for your classroom? Let's parse out the basics.



Credit: Getty Images

For years, savvy teachers have used various media to help their students connect to the world. Kids have conducted living-history interviews with elderly relatives or other community members or opened up discussions with other children in distant places. Students having difficulty writing essays can find that producing audio clips gives them an outlet to tell their story.

The cool thing about podcasting is that you really don't need much equipment -- essentially, a computer with a microphone jack, and a microphone. Even better, the gear doesn't need to be the latest and greatest: You can achieve very respectable results with that old PC in the corner of the room and a \$20 mic. To get those long-distance interviews, podcast gurus use online telephony services such as Skype or iChat to record their subjects. Once you have your audio sources ready, use sound-editing software such as [Audacity](#) [1] to mix in soundtracks and edit out those long pauses. For inspiration, check out the [Education Podcast Network](#) [2] to hear what other educators are producing.

The final stage is to get that podcast onto the Internet so the world can absorb your students' auditory insights. The easiest way to do this is to sign up with a service that specializes in podcasts. Groups such as Ourmedia.org [3] offer free hosting under a Creative Commons license, or search online for "podcast host" for more options than you could ever need. A podcasting host will give you a place to store your files, and will provide the world with a special kind of URL called an RSS feed.

Think of this feed as your own personal radio channel. Every time you upload something new, people subscribed to your feed will be notified. If you'd like a larger audience, register your new feed with a podcast directory -- basically a podcasting yellow pages -- such as iTunes and Podcast.net. Of course, you should also tell all your friends. You never know -- you might be the next big online success story.

What It Requires

Cost

Inexpensive microphone: \$15-\$20
Old computer: free-\$200
Audacity sound-editing software: free

Time to set up

1-2 hours to get sound recording working
1-2 hours to become familiar with sound-editing software

Geoff Butterfield is senior technical Web producer for *Edutopia*.

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Links:

[1] <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

[2] <http://www.epnweb.org>

[3] <http://www.ourmedia.org>