Title: How to Catch a Podficcer as Artist for ACBB
Original Date: 30 May 2022
Last Updated: 28 May 2023

Disclaimer

The title and general idea has been inspired by a frequently recommended reference guide "[How to Catch an Artist (A Writer's Guide, by an Artist)](#)" that focuses on visual art. I cannot speak for all people who create podfic, guarantee that these thoughts will help in any fandom event other than the After Camlann Big Bang, or promise that a writer will 100% catch a podficcer. Some podficcers may also contribute cover art, chapter headings, scene break art, or other art that makes visual information useful when taking part in a fandom event, but this is being written for the auditory specific considerations.

What is podfic?

From [Fanlore](#):

> Podfic is an audio recording of fanfic, read aloud by a fan (or several). The term is also used as a verb; someone may ask to podfic someone else's story, or spend an afternoon podficcing. [...] A fan who produces podfics can be called a podficcer, a podfic reader, or a podfic artist.

For ease of reading and continuity's sake, I will be using 'podficcer' in this post. The very basic description of what a podficcer who posts on AO3 does: They record an audio file of themself speaking, probably do some degree of editing, upload the audio file onto a host site, and then share the audio file in an AO3 post.

For non-podficcers: AO3 does not host audio. It truly is non-negotiable that the audio file will have to be uploaded somewhere before it can go into the AO3 post. Per [this January 2022 comment thread](#), a podficcer can "host your audio files wherever is easiest for you" as the mods "aren't too worried about the files being found before the posting date". Personally, I have not encountered someone accidentally stumbling upon audio on a host site before the deadline for a fandom event.

Note: The matter of whether an individual writer considers podfic to be a type of art or a transformative fanwork is not up for debate. After Camlann Big Bang accepts podfic as an Art Type (see below).

What does the FAQ say about podfic?

This is accurate as of [copying this quote](#) over on 29 May 2022:

> **Are podfics counted as an art? Can I make a podfic instead of any aforementioned art styles?**

> Yes, as of 2018 podfics are counted as an art. Please check the summary claimings where people will specify if they are interested in receiving podfic as their art. Or alternatively you could approach a writer individually to see if they would be interested in a pre-match, and vice-versa for any writer interested in having their work podficced. Given that the amount of time it takes to record a podfic can vary between podficcers, we do not have a specified minimum time length for podfics (we do not require the whole fic to be podficced) at this time, this should be decided between the writer and the artist when they are matched. Please note that in the future, we may decide to specify a minimum length for podfics.

Update to Artist Summaries in 2022

Under the 'Art Specifics' line, there is an addition:

> If you'd like to partner with a podficcer, please include any expectations/likes/dislikes you have (such as intro music, ambient sounds/sound effects, specific accents, etc).

This came about after the visual guide for creating artist summaries was shared in the ACBB channel in The Tavern [Discord server], and I pointed out some things that I would find helpful as a podficcer, such as knowing if there are other languages or conlangs in a fic. Truthfully, I would not expect a randomly selected writer who does not already have experience with podfic or collaborating with a podficcer to give much thought to what can go into creating a podfic in terms of narration choices and editing.

The discussion was not meant to convey what most or all podficcers would 100% find helpful. I put a bit of an explanation of the differences in how podficcers approach reading the text and editing under Things to Consider, but a sizable number of podficcers don't even do music, sound effects, or anything listed as examples in the addition. After consulting with other podficcers, I have received variations of 'no, that's not really helpful' to the addition, especially without knowledge of the conversation in the Discord server. For example, the matter of trying to gauge what a writer already knows about podfic that may impact their expectations did not inherently follow along with just listing 'expectations'. It's possible that those examples in the addition might still be helpful for a writer to think about before collaborating with a podficcer, but I would not guarantee that this addition will remain on the artist summary form every year going forward.

New to Artist Summaries in 2023

I did not keep track of an archivable form of the updates in the Airtable form, but I did notice a 'Podfics Specifics' section that was added:

> If you'd like to partner with a podficcer, please include all languages used in your fic. Please also consider if there are certain scenes you think would make good podfic excerpts, or if you would prefer a recording of the full fic (understanding that the podficcer will record whatever draft you share and may not be able to accomodate later edits).

This means that the [anonymised] 2023 Artist Summaries have lines for Art/Podfic Preferences, Art Specifics, and Podfic Specifics.

Summary Breakdown

Title

This isn't going to be a make it or break it point of consideration. In this year's summaries, there are a few working titles that may change and at least one placeholder for filling in the title later. If someone were to give a long phrase in a language I'm not familiar with (as a quote or song lyric, perhaps), then I might pay more attention to the title.

Rating

Don't underestimate the importance of the rating and what types of mature or explicit content you indicate. Some podficcers only read Explicit fic, some have to carefully plan when they can read sexual content out loud, some stick to Gen rated fic, some love darkfic, and so on.

Current Word Count & Estimated Final Word Count

As of the FAQ update in 2018 listed above, podficcers are not required to podfic the entire length of a fic by the deadline, nor is there a required minimum. Writers and podficcers may collaborate on an excerpt, and that can open up what word count listed in the summary will be considered.

That being said, some podficcers like to aim for podficcing the complete fic, or they like to make arrangements to finish podficcing the entire fic if they only got to a certain point. There can be a wide range of what word count is feasible for any particular podficcer. As I pointed out on Discord:

> Someone with a different amount of time to record each day/week/month and a faster editing process than I might be able to crunch out over 100K in two months without breaking a sweat. Someone who pre-matched and started in February or March might feel like they have enough time to do over 200K. Someone who does a lot of soundscaping, sound effects, and/or music interludes might feel like a 1K to 5K scene with that level of detail would be reasonable.

Title: How to Catch a Podficcer as Artist for ACBB
Original Date: 30 May 2022
Last Updated: 28 May 2023

This response might seem a bit vague to a writer who would like a podficcer as a match but is worried about their word count. At this point, I can only say that there's no word count that will be ideal for every podficcer or definitely dissuade someone from choosing a summary.

Pairing(s) or Gen

I feel like this line is pretty self-explanatory.

Warnings

Most content warnings that a writer might list for a potential reader or visual artist will also be useful to a podficcer. Some specifics might be dependent on the fic and its premise, so it might be hard to account for every possible future fic out there. For example, "brief mentions of racism" is a warning that can be helpful to people who do not have the spoons or mental bandwidth to read that. Other podficcers may want to know more specifics, such as whether a character will use a slur in racist dialogue or not.

[2022] Traditional Art/Graphic Art/Video/Fanmix/Podfic (Please specify which of these medium/media of art that you wish to receive. If you have no preference and love everything, say so here!)

For ease of reference, I'm going to call this the 'Art Type' line. On the surface, the Art Type line should be easy, but for some summaries, the clarifications in the Art Specifics section can muddy what writers have put here.

> Art Type: I would prefer some type of Traditional, Graphic, digital art, but I would be pleased to receive anything at all!

> Art Specifics: I am not interested in receiving a podfic or a fanmix.

First, I appreciate when people who do not want podfic are upfront about it. That makes my process of removing summaries where writers only want visual art easier, and this greatly reduces the odds of accidentally matching with someone who does not want podfic as their Art Type. However, that type of clarification does change a message of "anything" in the Art Type line because the writer does not actually mean 'any Art Type is acceptable'.

Some writers may think this is splitting hairs, or they might think that's exactly how the split between the Art Type and Art Specifics lines should be. Personally, I think specificity is the writer's friend here. If they truly only want visual art, listing out those Art Types or "anything visual" gets to the point more than 'any'.

Note: ACBB is an event that started out with visual artists for matching, and the vast majority of writers who have taken part in this Big Bang since podfic was allowed as an Art Type have not matched with a podficcer. Quite literally, two podficcers - including myself, this year in 2022 -

Title: How to Catch a Podficcer as Artist for ACBB
Original Date: 30 May 2022
Last Updated: 28 May 2023

have taken part in this fandom event since podfic was added as an Art Type in 2018. I don't think I'm alone in not wanting to find out via an inappropriate match that a writer did not actually mean 'any' because they are used to only having visual artists during claiming.

[2022] Art specifics (List any specifics of the art that you want or don't want to receive, including the preferred ratings. If you'd like to partner with a podficcer, please include any expectations/likes/dislikes you have (such as intro music, ambient sounds/sound effects, specific accents, etc))

As stated above in the 2022 section for the addition to the artist summaries, other podficcers probably will not find the addition to the Art Specifics lines for the [2022 summaries](link) helpful. However, it was an option this year, so, I have anonymised examples:

On a summary with "open to literally everything" in the Art Type line:

> Art specifics: I'll love anything and everything. I don't have the know-how of art to list any preferences in style ^^' The only exception is podfic, where I have one request: for the podficcer to give the characters distinct voices.

As someone who does not do something like a 'Kid Voice' or 'Old Man Voice' when reading out loud, I did find this helpful in knowing that my style of delivery would not be what the writer wanted. However, I'm not sure if a podficcer who regularly does character voices would want any other notes ahead of time.

On a summary with "open to everything" in the Art Type line:

> Art specifics: I don't have any art preferences; as to podfics, there are lyrics embedded in the fic (The Amazing Devil), so there's always an opportunity to work with that :)

Alright, so there are an undetermined amount of song lyrics. The use of 'embedded in the fic' makes it sound like an intro, scene break, or outro for the chapters is more likely than characters singing. I appreciate having that heads up and knowing who the group is because that means I can prepare for including snippets of the song in my editing process.

Of note: Some podficcers try to be careful about how much of a licensed or copyrighted song appears in their podfic, since they might face issues with their hosting site, and others don't want to include music for other reasons.

On a summary with "open to anything" in the Art Type line:

> Art specifics: Any rating is fine with me! [...] For podficcers, I have zero knowledge of podficcing, so I don't have any expectations, likes, or dislikes, but I'm happy to work things out as we go.

Speaking for myself, I can appreciate knowing ahead of time that I may need to prepare to explain things, grab links to 101 guides, or do a certain level of 'here is what I mean' education.

On a summary with "A podfic would be really cool too!" in the Art Type line:

> Art specifics: I'd like all art to be T rated, but I'd love art of the couples being affectionate with each other. No whitewashing if the artist wants to draw Gwen [potentially identifying information redacted], I'm really excited for art with ancient Greek aesthetics!

Examples of questions that this Art Specifics line prompts: Would the writer prefer a Black podficcer to voice Gwen, or are concerns about Gwen's depiction solely visual based? Do I have to worry about actual ancient Greek phrases showing up? Could I ask about how the most common Greek place names used in the fic repeatedly are pronounced, or will I be expected to find a separate ancient Greek beta? Will I need to find anything about ancient Greek music, or are the 'Ancient Greek aesthetics' a visual art note?

Honourable mention to two summaries that make a point of including podfic somewhere, but the writer has no Art Specifics notes. There are also six summaries with what amounts to "any" in the Art Type line, but the Art Specifics notes only address visual art. A good faith interpretation of "any" may still catch a podficcer if they like the premise, ship, and other parts of the summary, but some podficcers may feel wary of taking a gamble that the writer didn't actually mean 'Any visual'.

[2023] Art/Podfic Preferences, Art Specifics, and Podfic Specifics

> Title: Le Chanson de Voloir (The Song of Vows)
>
> Art/Podfic Preferences: If pressed, I would prefer digital/graphic art, but honestly would be so so pleased with and grateful for anything you make for my fic!
>
> Podfic Specifics: I use english, and some dragonspeak in my fic (just the bit of Merlin calling Kilgarrah). I will be sectioning my fic into chapters, so though I am not sure what specific sections would be best for a podfic, They will be in chunks that are more manageable on their own!

This is the first example of an author using the Podfic Specifics line to communicate with a potential podficcer, and I do appreciate that someone used it. I included the title to make a point of noting that there's at least one instance of French, but I would guess it's the only instance. As someone who has encountered a few 20K single chapter fics, I can understand the impulse to clarify that this will be a multi-chapter work.

> Art/Podfic Preferences: Traditional art, Digital art, textile art all welcome. Anything visual is welcome.

> Podfic Specifics: Having never listened to a podfic or even really any audiobooks I'm not quite sure what to put here.

I do like a good "anything visual" for clarity's sake, but I think "N/A" works a bit better in the Podfic Specifics line for someone not wanting to match with a podficcer. To me, it reads as more succinct, and I don't have to figure out if someone's maybe doing a sort of "if no one else picks this, I guess a podfic will do" hedging.

> Art/Podfic Preferences: While I love all art types, and everything you lovely creators make, I do think traditional, digital, or graphic art would be the best for this fic.

And another Artist Summary:

> Art/Podfic Preferences: I'd love to work with traditional or digital/graphic art as I have done that before and loved it.

> Podfic Specifics: I'd prefer working with a traditional/digital artist since I don't think my story is really suitable to be podficced?

There's nothing 'wrong' with either of these summaries, but personally, I don't need to know the why - the explanation - of a preference. If the author just has a preference for visual art, that's okay. Like the second author, the majority of authors taking part in this event will have only matched with a visual artist, but I don't think someone who doesn't have experience with matching with a podficcer should try to argue their work's 'suitability to be podficced'. That's for the podficcer to decide – quite literally, in this process of looking at summaries to claim.

Note: Anything 'on the page' can be rendered into an auditory based communication. On the whole, podficcers have created podfic out of chat messaging, described images inserted into meta, have created sound effect processes for flashbacks/thoughts/time travel/footnotes, and have figured out how to communicate emoji, keysmashes, and glitch font, among other textual considerations. An individual podficcer may have their own preferences for whether they want to handle one of these situations, but there isn't a fanfic that is universally considered unsuitable to be podficced for all podficcers.

> Art/Podfic Preferences: I would prefer traditional or digital art (but I'd be okay with anything really)

> Art Specifics: I'm open to basically all things! I'm sure I'll be very very happy with whatever you choose to do <3

> Podfic Specifics: same thing applies here as with art specifics

It's a very enthusiastic 'maybe', but I don't have anything that was noted in the Podfic Specifics line to go off of. Is this fanfic going to be entirely in English or not? Are there any scenes or excerpts they have in mind, or do I need to aim for the full work to be podficced?

Art/Podfic Preferences: Traditional or digital/graphic art, podfics. Preferably not fanvids or fanmixes

Podfic Specifics: English, ideally full fic to be recorded

This is the first of two summaries with a noted preference for the full work to be recorded. That isn't a dealbreaker for some podficcers, but I did want to pull out an example of someone mentioning that.

Art/Podfic Preferences: I'm fine with any kind of art medium! Mine might be kind of hard to podfic/I'm not as versed in it, but I'm willing to work with you/give it a try if mine is the one you want.

Podfic Specifics: All of my fic is in English with the exception of like... (I think, one or two words in French in the second act). It's assumed they're all speaking French in that act, but I don't need or expect an accent or the language at all, I express it in English in the fic. I honestly don't know much about podfic or the process of it. I'm not done and do still have a lot of outline bits interspersed within the third act (and a lil bit of the second, but I'm 100% confident that beyond a Major Life Event suddenly cropping up unexpectedly, I will be finishing it on time). But I don't think it would be feasible to do the whole fic and make it work. If you want to just do part of it... hmm I'm not sure what would be the best options, maybe one of the more flashback chunks? I wish I was better at giving you more info, I guess if you can try and make the voices somewhat distinct? They don't have to be super characterized/different, just a little more clear who's talking etc.

Again, there's no need to speculate on how hard or unsuitable a fic is to be podfic, especially if you - as the author - have no experience with podfic. That being said, there's all sorts of clues - a few French words, mostly English, and the author does have an excerpt in mind. (Though it's entirely possible that a podficcer could record the entire fic at this point of claiming.) This might genuinely sound surprising to those who are not familiar with podfic, but many podficcers already try to differentiate characters when speaking, even if they don't go for full accents or character voices.

Note: It's certainly not easy if something like ten characters are all talking at once without any "he said" "she said" clarifications, but pure dialogue is still possible to podfic. This event is also a situation where a podficcer can easily ask about a dialogue only scene, so authors, please don't talk yourself into no one possibly being able to podfic your fanfic because of something like this.

Art/Podfic Preferences: I'd love any medium!

> Podfic Specifics: My fic is all in English! I prefer a recording of the full fic but if not possible, an excerpt of the prologue and chapter 1 would be nice (Arthur has his Naming Day and is severely disappointed, only for him to find his destined one in the dungeons.)

I pulled this out as the second example with a preference for the entire work to be recorded, but there's also a very specific excerpt in mind as well and a note on language. As far as a basic clue for figuring out whether I, as a hypothetical podficcer, would want to consider this Artist Summary, this works.

Things to Consider

There's not really a foundation that all podficcers do when it comes to decisions around line delivery and editing. Just to get that out of the way upfront.

One podficcer may do character voices (a 'kid' voice, an old man, a snob, etc.), another may respectfully try accents, and another person won't do anything different from how they usually speak. There can be different degrees of 'calm, steady' narration or inflection and tone, and this may depend on the type of scene. For example, some podficcers will add in breathy dialogue when indicated in the text to sex scenes, but others will do a straight read. Some podficcers sing, speak lyrics indicated in the text, or include portions of the song in editing.

In my Discord musing about different approaches to editing when it comes to stylistic choices, I pointed to soundscaping, sound effects, and music:

> Sound effects, to me, are local and specific, such as putting a pencil scratch before reading a letter, while soundscaping is more ambient and may occur under narration for a bit. Like, if the scene is in a forest - are there bird calls, leaves rustling or wind, the noises of walking, and that sort of thing. Music might be song snippets that have been included in the fic, or it might be intros/outros for the entire work, for chapters, or in between scenes.

However, there are also podficcers who would consider these to be under 'Sound Effects', and their editing process is only focused on what is done to their reading of the text itself. I was speculating off the cuff in the Discord server, and I probably should have clarified that those are not the only components of editing. Each podficcer tends to figure a certain process that they do for most of their podfic, and they will, in all likelihood, not want to randomly change their process when it's not required for a fandom event. This means that some podficcers might be up to experimenting with sound effects and editing for an excerpt for ACBB, but other podficcers have zero interest in doing that.

Depending on what exactly is phrased in future versions of the artist summary form, a writer may not be asked about expectations, likes, or dislikes around a few examples of considerations that go into making a podfic again. I'm not sure that writers who did not see the conversation in

the Discord server really understood the intent behind the addition, and I know that other podficcers who did not see the conversation did not find the addition to be helpful at all. So, instead, I've tried to come up with a few questions that might help explain the thought process that went into the original conversation.

Have you included any other languages into your fic? Communication for ACBB happens in English, but that doesn't mean that a writer will not insert another language or a conlang into their fic. Personally, I would also extend this to a mention of whether any canon typical usage of other languages appears in your fic because that still is another language being used. The inclusion of other languages may not be a huge deal for some podficcers, but it can also depend on how much of any other language appears in your fic.

Do you have a fic that explicitly includes song lyrics or music? Some podficcers will just say the lyrics, but others might want to include the line or stanza from the song. Some podficcers will include music referenced, but others will not.

Do you have a playlist for the fic that you think it'd be interesting to reference for intro or outro music to the entire work or to the individual chapters? Some podficcers never use music for scene breaks, intro or outros to chapters, or intros or outros to the entire work, but others choose to do a combination of those.

Is there anything in your dialogue that you think someone saying the text out loud should know? Have you written out standard English in the dialogue but noted 'he said in a thick [insert accent]', or have you tried to write out a dialect or accent that will be unavoidable for the podficcer? Have you given a character a lisp, stammer or stutter, tried to write a drunk character, or anything like that? Again, some podficcers don't do character voices. Non-minority dialect or accent podficcers may not want to risk coming across like they're making fun of a speech pattern that may already be stigmatised. Other podficcers will read in whatever accent they naturally have, and they have no interest in learning other accents for podficcing.

Are there any slurs, reclaimed slurs, or language used that might be particular to a certain marginalised community that someone who is not from that community possibly should not or definitely should not say? This question is not included to dissuade a writer from covering a certain topic in their fic, but unless you know the podficcer well enough to know what they will or will not say, there's a chance of - at the very least - surprising someone.

Do you have at least one scene that you could suggest to the podficcer as an excerpt? The notes about ambient sounds and sound effects were intended to inspire a writer to think about their text in terms of potential auditory moments in the same way that several writers have put forward 'possible visuals' for visual artists. This is not a guarantee that all podficcers will follow any notes about potential auditory moments. You might think that - as a random example - Morgana having prophetic dreams would be a cool thing to do something ambient with, but a podficcer might actually be interested in her IM conversations with another character.

Title: How to Catch a Podficcer as Artist for ACBB
Original Date: 30 May 2022
Last Updated: 28 May 2023

For writers interested in a podfic of their entire work, especially if they do not have a final draft for the podficcer: Are you prepared for a podfic of whatever draft you send to the podficcer that may not reflect your final version? In 2022, the final drafts for writers are due on the 31st of July, and the rough drafts for artists are due on the 6th of August. Quite frankly, it is not a guarantee that the podficcer can redo everything that has already been recorded, edited, exported, uploaded to a host site, and maybe even prepared in a draft for posting on AO3 in six days.

Granted, the exact specifics of a writer and podficcer's situation will vary. Some writers make larger edits between versions, and some writers will hand over a final draft sooner than the due date. A podficcer may need to use most of the two months between claiming and artist rough drafts being due in order to work on the 60% available at claiming and the last 40% handed over at some point. Still, there is a possibility that the podfic will not be one of the final version.

These questions aren't really suitable to the artist summary itself, but some additional questions that writers may want to consider:

- ACBB does not require posting the audio and text together in one post on AO3. Are you okay with the possibility of posting each component separately (linked via AO3's "Inspired By" function)?
- Are you willing or able to listen to any portion of the podfic while it's being worked on?
- Do you want to provide any level of feedback on any component of the podfic? Or would you prefer that questions go to a beta?
- Do you want another username or fandom alias to be credited in the by line instead of your AO3 username? (The writer's username is often stated before the podfic is read, listed somewhere in the metadata for the files, and if cover art is involved, is listed there as well.)

[This has been shared on Dreamwidth.]

End