

Intro to Podcasting: Concepts, Best Practices, and Resources

Abolition for All Time Humanities Lab (Abolition Lab)

Knox College

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Please email with any questions or to set up an appointment—I am happy to meet in person or over Zoom.

Lab Hours

See our updated hours on the [lab's website](#)

Podcasting as Digital Public Scholarship

A podcast is a digital audio program that is made available on-demand to listeners either through downloading or a streaming service (such as Spotify or Apple Podcasts).

Podcasts are usually (but not always) produced as episodes in a series, with new episodes posted on a regular schedule. They can cover a wide range of topics, including news, storytelling, interviews, history, arts & culture, education, entertainment, and more.

Podcasting is an effective form of digital public scholarship because it can make research more widely available to a broader audience by using a medium that is usually free to access and can be experienced at one's own pace. Podcasts also foster a dialogue between the creator and listener, transforming audience engagement into an interactive experience.

Like other forms of scholarship, podcasts can be interdisciplinary and collaborative productions. They can also extend their value as educational tools through additional resources, transcripts, or further reading. And finally, podcasts can foster a sense of community among listeners who are invested in specific issues. As a medium, podcasting can be a powerful tool to educate, inform, and inspire your audience.

Podcast Examples

- [Talking Abolition](#) - created fall 2024 by MUS 125
- [America's National Parks Podcast](#)
- [Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness](#)
- [The Splendid Table](#)
- [Slow Burn](#)
- [NPR Podcasts and Shows](#)

Recording + Editing Technology

Reserving equipment

The Abolition Lab's equipment can be reserved for three days at a time and can be used on or off Knox's campus. When you are ready to check out equipment, you can stop by the lab's front desk during our open hours (10am-3pm) and check out the items you need. If you need help deciding which technology you need, our lab staff can help you. A full list of our available technology can be found on our website's [tutorials and equipment page](#). ***Please take care of the lab's equipment as if it were your own, and be sure to confirm that your files have been exported from all SD cards.***

Recording



Blue Yeti USB Multi-pattern
Microphone | [Quickstart Guide](#)



Zoom H4N Pro Black Multi-track
Handy Recorder | [Quickstart Guide](#)

Editing

[Audacity](#) is a free and popular audio recording and editing app that can be downloaded to Mac, PC, or Linux systems (see our [Audacity Handout Guide](#))

Creating a Story: Best Practices

One of the best parts about starting a podcast is that you can do it for free, with little to no experience, and with modest tools. Podcasting is for everyone, no matter your background or skill level!

- **Choose a topic** that interests you, but is neither too narrow nor too broad. Browse existing themes to see what is already available, and how your podcast might expand or differ.
- Your topic will largely determine who **your audience** will be. As you prepare your podcast content, learn more about your listeners. This will determine **the purpose of your content, the depth of coverage, and tone.**
 - Knowing your audience is also important for marketability and promotion
- **Be creative!** Choose a compelling podcast name, write a brief description, and even make cover art!
- **Write a podcast script.** Even an “unscripted” podcast should have some sort of outline for your talking/discussion points. At a minimum, include:
 - Introductory remarks
 - Guest welcome (if applicable - for interviews or guest features)
 - Segue into your topic for discussion or interview conversation
 - The topic/discussion (should have some structure; think of sections guided by key themes or questions)
 - For interviews, questions may be sent in advance to guest speakers, however this can also affect the natural flow of conversation.
 - Outro (and thank you to guests)
 - Call to action (can reinforce the message of your episode; where to locate additional information/resources, and a promotional bit for upcoming episodes)
- **Post-production:** edit your podcast in an editing software (like Audacity) to clean up long silences, ambient noise, excessive filler words, distracted conversation, or

crosstalk between hosts. Be careful not to over-edit though, and maintain a natural sound.

- **Editing your audio** may also include multitrack mixing (additional sounds, intro/outro music), noise reduction, and transcribing.

A Note on Interviewing Guests:

Having guests on your podcast episode can create a dynamic listening experience that brings in new voices (literally) and fresh perspectives. Preparing and leading an interview can take a lot of work. Take the time to:

- **Craft strong interview questions.** Do not write questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Begin questions with “how” or “why.” You might also draw on specific examples/quotes and have your guest respond to them. Reflective questions can lead to thoughtful dialogue.
 - Write more questions than you think you will need, and also be prepared for natural flows into other questions or conversations during the interview. Some interviewers share their questions ahead of time, but know that this can lead to an over-structured and over-prepared conversation. It is best to speak with your guest about their preferences.
- **Take the time to learn about your guest** as well as their background, experience, and expertise.
- **Be an active listener.** Stay engaged with your guest, reinforce their talking points, and let your guest have the last word of the interview to really hit the point home.
- **Be sure to thank your guest,** both on-air and in a follow-up message after the interview ends.

A Note on Recording:

Not everyone may have access to recording equipment or soundproof spaces, but some small adjustments and making use of the resources that you do have can help improve your audio recording.

- Find a quiet space with soft surfaces (upholstered furniture, carpet) to keep sound from echoing.

- Try to remove anything that produces “white noise” – fans, running water, vents, etc.
- Phones and computers can serve as good recording devices if you do not have an external microphone. Do a test-run with your equipment and listen to it before starting an actual recording.
- Wear headphones or earbuds so that your voice doesn’t create feedback in the recording.
- Position yourself at the correct distance and angle from your microphone, about 6-12 inches depending on the mic.
- Record about 5 seconds of silence on the audio track at first– Audacity will use this to reduce background noise.

Additional Resources

1. NPR’s [“Starting your Podcast: A Guide for Students”](#) includes many helpful resources and tips for getting started.
2. [The Audacity to Podcast: Getting Started](#)
3. Alison MacAdam, [“Want to Start a Podcast? Read This First,”](#) *NPR*, 2018.

Extras: Audio Clips and Sound Effects

For free open-access music and sounds, check out the [Free Music Archive](#), [ccMixer](#), [freesound.org](#), and the [BBC’s Sound Effects Library](#)