

# podcasts in outdoor education



(andrew mannion, whitefriars college)

# what is a podcast?

A podcast is simply an audio file (usually in .mp3 format) that is downloaded to a computer or portable audio device.

Usually these files are stored on a website with a file called an RSS feed that enables people to subscribe to and receive updated versions.



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# what is a podcatcher?

A podcatcher is a software application that enables users to subscribe to podcast feeds.

iTunes is a well known example, but there are many others – including the open source and very easy to use Juice ([www.juice.com](http://www.juice.com)).

(a copy of Juice is included in the CD)



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# available podcasts

Existing podcasts include:

- professional and amateur radio shows
- sermons, speeches, or debates
- expanded access to online content for the blind
- audio from conference sessions
- bands, musicians, comedians, and other vocal/music performances
- self-guided tours and guides
- audio books



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# why podcasts in education?

- ubiquity of personal audio devices
- use new technology as a motivational tool
- provide flexible learning options
- enable access to learning anywhere, anytime
- cater to alternative learning styles
- expand range of resources and tasks available for teachers and students
- empower students to create and distribute



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# what's an educational podcast?

*for teachers ...*

- record classes/lessons for absent students
- use podcasts to accompany other material
- podcasts as extra resource for self-paced learning
- support for students with reading or other learning difficulties
- interviews/guest speakers from remote areas
- story-telling and language acquisition



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# what's an educational podcast?

*for students ...*

- use as alternative assessment form
- develop podcasts for other students



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# podcasts in outdoor ed?

- recordings of student reflections and group discussions
- data collection – audio from birdsong, frog noises, waves, wind, storms, etc.
- ‘just in time’ delivery of lectures
- audio stimulus material for reflection and inspiration
- better use of travel time



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A 'just in time' history of  
Waratah Bay?



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# a podcast how-to

1. have something to say
2. say it – record to digital audio
3. edit it if you need to
4. upload your audio file to a web server
5. create an RSS feed



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a podcast how-to

# have something to say

Content is the most important aspect of your podcast

- For students this'll usually be obvious – whatever the topic at hand is
- For teachers it might be your subject area or some other area of interest



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a podcast how-to

# have something to say

Script or no script?

- There's much debate about whether to develop a script or have no script or something in between
- Do whatever works for you and your students



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a podcast how-to

# say it – record to digital audio

You can do this in a number of ways:

- Record in a traditional audio format then convert to digital
- Record directly onto a computer
- Record using a voice-recording capable MP3 player
- Record using a purpose digital audio recorder



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a podcast how-to

# say it – record to digital audio

Audacity open source software

- Easy to use to record direct to a computer
- Can use any microphone or line input
- Easy to use to edit audio tracks
- Can be used to convert tracks from one format to another



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a podcast how-to

# say it – record to digital audio



iRiver 700 series

Zoom H4



Examples of MP3 players with voice-recording capability, and of digital audio recorders



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a podcast how-to

# edit it if you need to

Some podcasts are heavily edited after recording.  
Editing can include:

- Deletion of irrelevant parts
- Inserting other comments, audio or music tracks

How much editing and post-production occurs will depend on you and your students' interest and available time.



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a podcast how-to

# upload your audio file to a webserver

You can treat a podcast like any other digital file – storing it, transferring it via CDs, memory sticks, etc.

But uploading the file to a webserver and making it accessible from a website increases the potential audience of the podcast.

Be aware of storage capacity for your webserver!



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a podcast how-to

# create an RSS feed

An RSS feed allows for your podcasts to be subscribed to and allows subscribers to receive updates and new podcasts.

An RSS feed is a simple XML file that is attached to your webserver – usually somewhere near your podcasts. Subscribers simply add the address of your RSS feed to their podcatcher to enable the subscription to your feeds.



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