

Getting Started with Podcasting

From pre- to post-production and beyond!

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Agenda

Pre-Production (Planning)

- Understanding your offering
- Choosing a format
- Creating an outline
- Guest Management
- Interview Best Practices

Production (Recording)

- Equipment
- Locating a recording space
- Creating a recording space
- Recording best practices

Post-Production (Editing and Sharing)

- Audio Editing
- Publishing and sharing
- Accessibility

Why do you want to make a podcast?

Course content: Recording lectures for asynchronous learning, supplemental materials, exam prep, responding to student questions in AMAs, or providing audio alternatives to readings

Research creation: Using podcasting as methodology, audio documentaries, oral history projects, collaborative research narratives, or experimenting with scholarly communication formats

Knowledge dissemination: Creating publicly accessible content about your field or discipline.

Knowledge Dissemination Podcasts

Podcasts that share a field's research, debates, and specialized knowledge with public audiences who want to engage with academic expertise. The content reaches interested listeners beyond students or institutional colleagues.

Common formats:

- **Expert interviews:** Host conversations with researchers, authors, practitioners (Sean Carroll's Mindscape, The Ezra Klein Show)
- **Critical commentary:** Analysis of trends, movements, or public discourse (Decoding the Gurus, Know Your Enemy)
- **Dialogic exploration:** Co-hosts thinking through complex topics together (Very Bad Wizards, Philosophy Bites)
- **Public scholarship:** Accessible explanations of specialized research (Hidden Brain, Stuff You Should Know)

Key characteristics:

- Distributed on public platforms (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, etc.)
- Requires audience-building beyond institutional networks
- Balances accessibility with intellectual depth
- Host expertise and perspective are central to the value

This is the most common type academics create outside their teaching duties.

What is your favourite academic podcast?

Let's analyze it

- What do the hosts offer?
- Who is it for? (knowledge level needed)
- What's the format?
- Episode length?
- When/where do people listen?
- What makes it work?



Pre-Production

Understanding Your Offering

What do you bring as a host?

- Expertise and credibility
- Ability to explain complex ideas clearly
- Interview skills and curiosity
- Critical perspective
- Network of interesting guests
- Authentic engagement with the material

What's the knowledge barrier?

- Low: General audience, explain from first principles
- Medium: Assumes undergraduate familiarity
- High: Assumes graduate/professional expertise

Your value proposition:

- What can you offer that doesn't exist elsewhere?
- Be specific, be consistent, be yourself

Choosing Your Format

Format options:

- **Solo:** You talking directly – requires strong structure and energy
- **Interview:** You + rotating guests – most common for academics
- **Co-hosted conversation:** You + regular partner – requires good chemistry
- **Panel:** Multiple guests – harder to manage but dynamic

Consider:

- What plays to your strengths?
- What can you sustain long-term?
- What does your content need?
- Is video important for your audience?

Episode Structure and Length

Basic structure:

- **Intro:** Who you are, what this episode covers (1-2 min)
- **Body:** Main content – interview, analysis, discussion
- **Outro:** Key takeaways, where to find more, preview next episode (1-2 min)

Episode length:

- **20–30 min:** Focused conversations, commute-friendly
- **45–60 min:** Standard long-form, allows depth
- **90+ min:** Deep dives – only if content demands it

What determines length?

- Content depth needed
- Audience listening context
- What you can sustain in editing

Real Example – Behind The Role

Topic: Working at McMaster, particularly in the Library

Format: Interview podcast

Target Audience: Other McMaster library employees

Episode Length: 15–40 minutes

Listening Location: Their desk/office

Hosted on: MacVideo, secure to McMaster employees



**Behind
the
Role**

Guest Management

Finding and inviting (4-6 weeks ahead):

- Clear, specific pitch: your podcast's focus and why them
- Explain time commitment: prep, recording, review
- Remote or local recording

Preparing (3-5 days before):

- Send outline or key questions
- Tech check for remote recording
- Set expectations: conversational, not scripted
- Clarify what's off-limits

During recording:

- 5 minutes casual conversation before recording
- Give water breaks
- End with: "What didn't I ask?"

After:

- Thank-you email with publish date
- Offer preview of edited episode
- Provide shareable assets when published

Create an outline

Episode structure:

Introduction

Welcome and episode topic
Guest introduction (if applicable)
Why this topic matters now

Main content (organized into 3–5 segments)

Each segment = one major idea or question
Build logically: background → complexity → implications
Plan transitions between segments

Conclusion

Synthesize main takeaways
Open questions or further resources
Preview next episode

Before recording:

Write out your questions, not a script
Research key points, studies, or context
Identify 2–3 "must cover" items
Know your opening sentence and closing thought

Assign roles (if co-hosting):

Who introduces and closes?
Who leads which segments?
Who handles post-production?

Stay flexible:

Best moments come from following interesting tangents
Outline is a guide, not a constraint
Let the conversation breathe



Production

Equipment

Necessary Equipment:

- Microphone
 - Computer
 - Editing Software
-

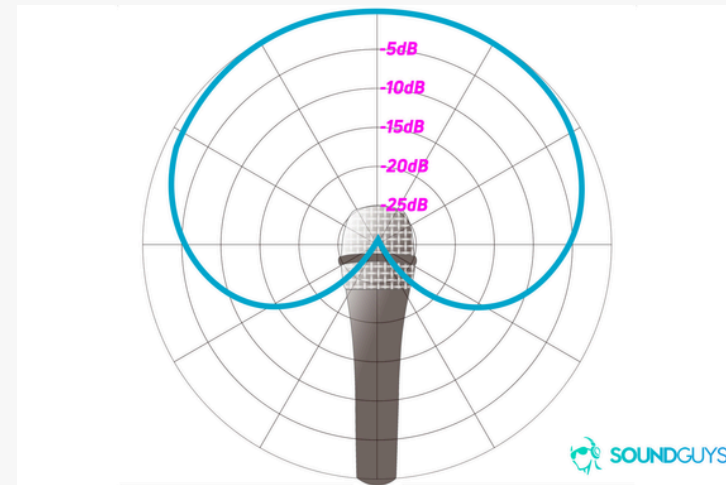
Beginner Set Up

- USB powered microphones with a cover/pop filter
- Mic Stands
- Laptop

Advanced Set Up

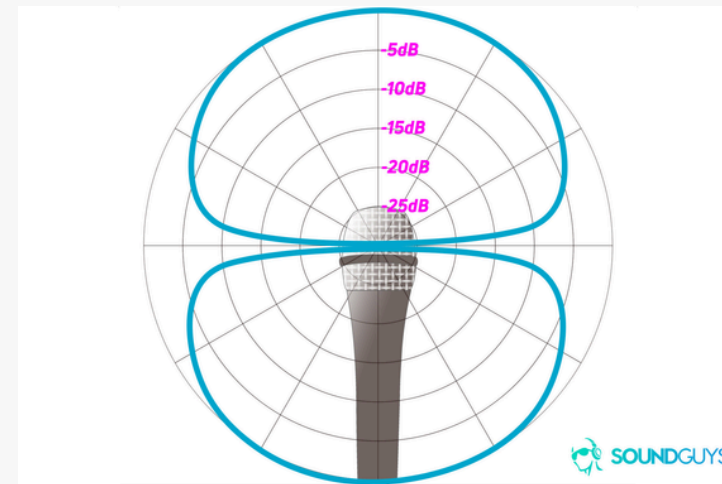
- XLR or USB microphones with a cover/pop filter
- Mic Stands
- Audio mixer
- Headphones
- SD card reader
- Laptop
- Studio space/soundproofing

Microphone Recording Patterns



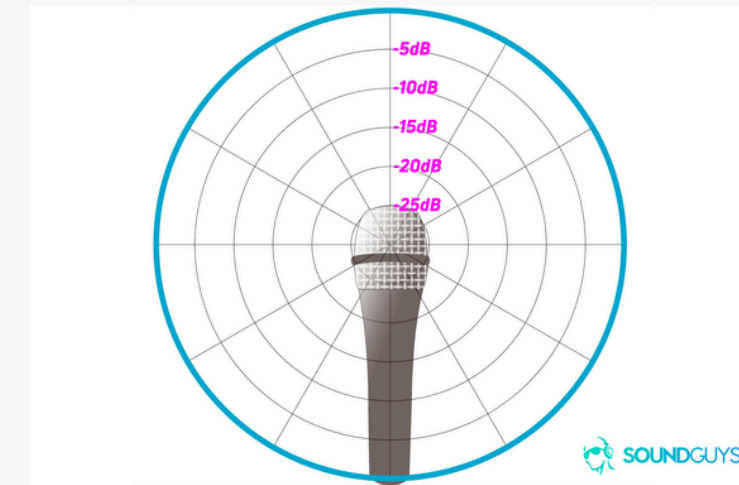
Cardioid

Most sensitive to sound from the front, with some sensitivity from the sides and minimal pickup from the rear. Good for vocals, instruments, and isolating a single sound source.



Bidirectional

Picks up sound equally from the front and rear, rejecting sound from the sides. Useful for recording two sources facing each other.



Omnidirectional

Picks up sound equally from all directions, making it ideal for capturing ambient sound or recording multiple sources at once.

Other microphone types include Supercardioid and Hypercardioid

Recording Spaces

Where can I find a recording studio?

Local Libraries

- Most libraries offer this service for free if you have an associating card
- Provide the equipment and space for you

Local film/media studios

- Your city may have a local film studio, I suggest looking there
- Most likely not free, and may not include equipment

Online Recording

Use Zoom to record remote guest interviews

- Easy to use
- Multiple file types

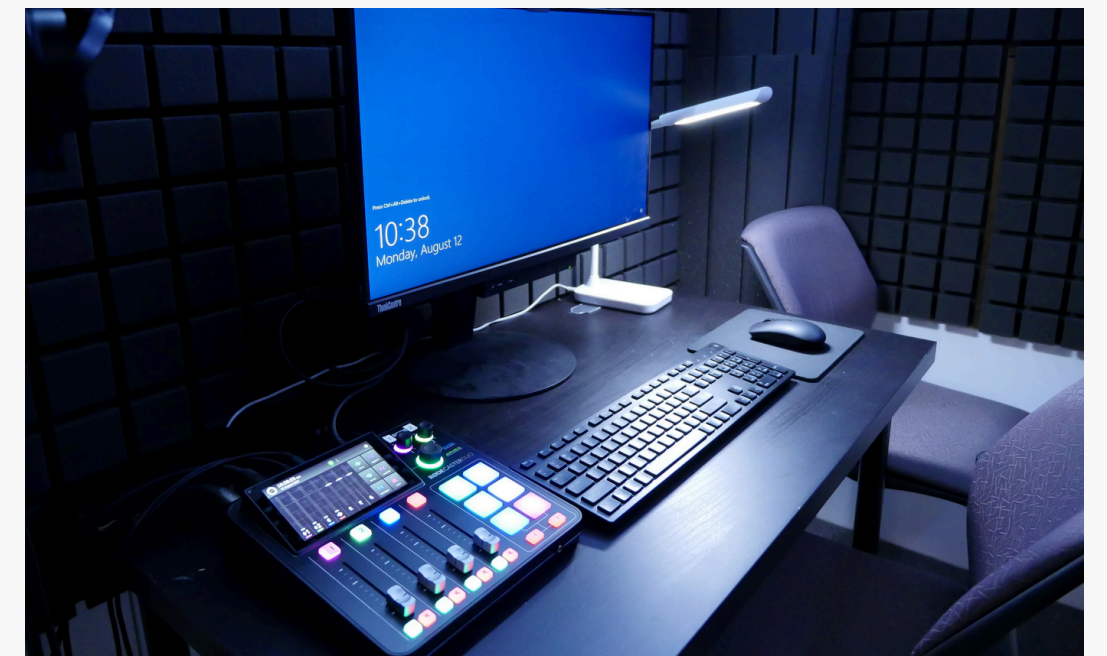
Where can I record at Mac?

 Lyons New Media Centre
4th Floor of Mills Library

- Free to use for McMaster students, staff, and faculty
- Fully equipped for recording podcasts
- Must be booked in advance!
- Suitable for group and solo recording
- Can book for 2 hours a day



PODCAST STUDIO



DUO AUDIO BOOTH



Scan to learn more,
or visit
u.mcmaster.ca/lyons

Podcast Studio

For groups of 1-4

Equipment available:

- Rode mixer
- 4 Rode PodMics
- 4 pairs of headphones
- High quality webcam
- PC Computer
- Customizable LED Lighting



Duo Audio Booth

For groups of 1-2

Equipment available:

- Rode mixer
- 2 Rode Mics
- 2 pairs of headphones
- High quality webcam
- PC Computer
- Customizable LED Lighting



Solo Audio Booth

Meant for solo recording

Equipment available:

- USB Powered Microphone
- Headphones (borrow from our help desk)

Users are required to bring their own laptop with a USB A port to use our microphone.



Mobile Podcast Kit

We've created 3 Podcast kits that are available for loan. Students, staff, and faculty can book this kit for 24 hours, and can record anywhere!

We've designed this kit to be flexible. This kit is battery powered and can record up to 4 people.

We took inspiration from our audio recording spaces and turned it into a mobile version!



Creating a recording space

- Surround yourself with texture – pillows, blankets, rugs, etc. These materials absorb sound.
- Minimize potential background noise (dogs barking, people walking by, electronics, etc.)
- Record away from walls and windows, as sound tends to bounce off these surfaces.
- If you can, try to sit at least 3 feet away from others.

Investing in the proper equipment and taking the time to create your space will save you time in the editing phase!



Recording Tips

Structure is critical:

- Clear signposting: "First..." "Next..." "Finally..."
- Shorter segments (5-7 min each)
- Vary your pace and tone

Maintaining energy:

- Imagine talking to one specific person
- Use examples and stories
- Don't be afraid to show enthusiasm
- Try recording standing up if you lack energy

Avoiding common pitfalls:

- Don't ramble
- Avoid reading scripts (sounds flat)
- Build in natural breaks
- Record in shorter sessions if needed

Audio Recording Tips

Equipment Set Up:

- Microphone should be positioned around 6" away from your face
- Keep an eye on your volume levels (green, yellow, red.)
- Spend time adjusting your furniture and equipment for optimal recording.

Reduce unwanted noise:

- Avoid wearing loud jewelry
- Try not to type or tap the table while someone is talking
- Turn off notifications

Personal Success:

- Warm up your voice before recording
- Bring water with you
- Practice your outline/script before you record



Interview Best Practices

Active listening:

- Follow up on interesting points, don't just move to next question
- "Tell me more about that"
- "What do you mean by...?"
- Let silence happen – guests will fill it

Managing the conversation:

- Keep track of time without being rigid
- Gently redirect if off-topic
- Draw out quiet guests
- Rein in guests who ramble

Getting good insights:

- Ask "why" and "how" not just "what"
- Request concrete examples
- Ask about failures and challenges, not just successes
- "What would surprise people about this?"

Different recording options

Online Service

Set up your equipment, record, and upload your content all in one platform.

At McMaster, we have: (single track recording)

- Echo360
- Microsoft Teams
- MacVideo
- Zoom

Software

Can use a free or paid software to record in and start the editing process.

Software includes: (multi-track recording)

- Garage Band
- Audacity
- OBS
- Built in voice recorder

SD Card

Record directly to an SD card, then transfer the files onto your computer for editing.

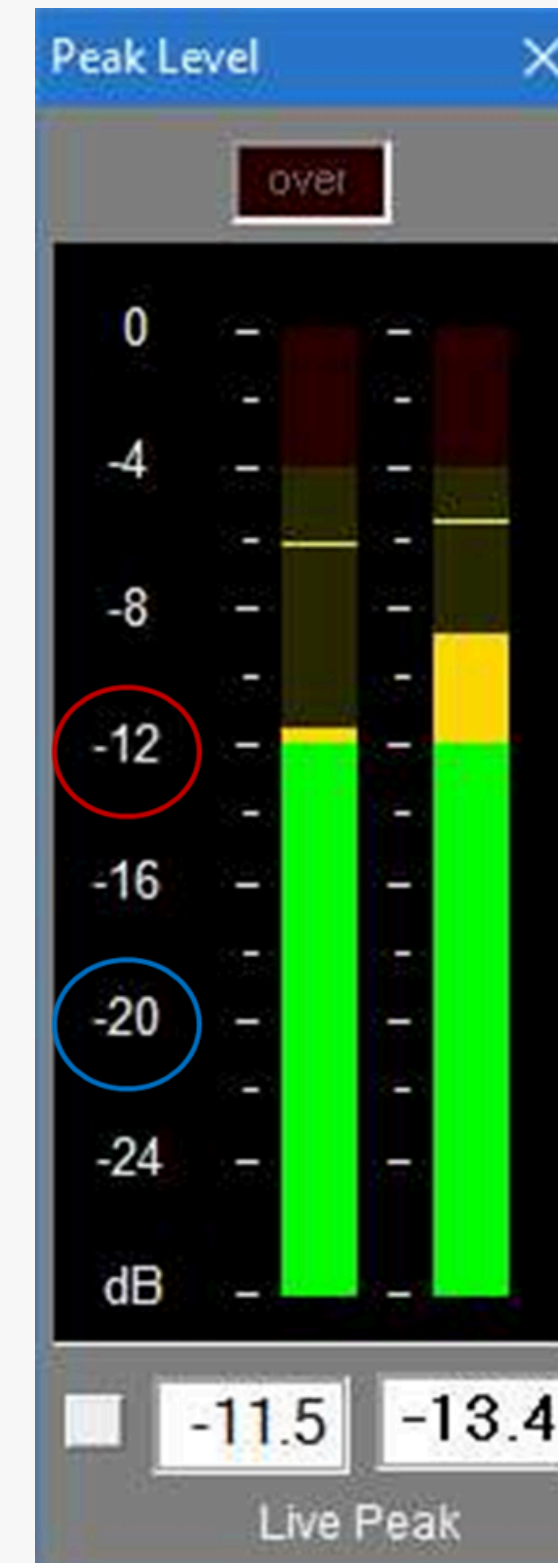


Post-Production

Editing Audio Files

When editing, you will want to do the following:

- Cut out mistakes, ums and ahs, long pauses, loud breaths, mouth noises, background noises
- Level the audio (i.e., loudness of the track)
 - **-12dB:** max main audio level
- Add background music or sound effects in new tracks
 - **-20db:** max background audio level
- Export in the file format required by hosting service



Editing Software: Audio Podcast

	Audacity	Adobe Audition	REAPER
Compatibility	Mac OS Windows	Mac OS Windows	Mac OS Windows
Availability	Free download	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyons New Media Centre • Paid subscription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyons New Media Centre • Free 60-day trial
Resources	Audacity Manual (includes diagrams and tutorials) Frequently Asked Questions YouTube Reddit	Audition tutorials Learning Adobe Audition (LinkedIn Learning Course) YouTube Reddit	REAPER Videos REAPER User Guide YouTube Reddit

There are many different options when it comes to editing. Do some research and find the best fit for you.

Editing Software: Video Podcast

	DaVinci Resolve	Adobe Premiere Pro	Final Cut
Compatibility	Mac OS Windows Linux	Mac OS Windows	Mac OS
Availability	Free download <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can upgrade for \$400 (one time fee) 	Free in Lyons New Media Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid monthly subscription 	90 day free trial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can upgrade for \$400 (one time purchase)
Resources	<u>DaVinci Tutorial Videos</u> YouTube Reddit	<u>Premiere Pro Tutorials</u> YouTube Reddit	<u>Final Cut Support</u> YouTube Reddit

There are many different options when it comes to editing. Do some research and find the best fit for you.

Hosting Services

Uploading your podcast to a hosting service allows you to share your podcast across multiple platforms

	Spotify for Creators	RSS.com	Podbean	Libsyn
Availability	Free!	Free! <ul style="list-style-type: none">• can upgrade to paid plans for more features	Free (500MB storage/month) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$12-24 USD/month	\$5-\$20 USD/month
Features	Unlimited storage, auto-distribution to all major podcast apps, analytics, comments, etc.	Provides RSS feed to upload anywhere, unlimited storage, in-depth analytics, built-in website, etc.	Advanced analytics, wide auto-distribution, built in customizable website	Reliable, IAB-certified analytics, allows guided distribution, ticket system support
Notes	Great free option for beginners! Supports video podcasts	Supports video content. Great for beginners who want a “central” place to host podcasts	Allows more customization, paid plans support video content	Very popular with podcasters, steeper learning curve, paid plans support video content

Sound effects and music

Free Options – great for getting started

- YouTube Studio – account needed, some require attribution
- Pixabay Music/SXF – free to use, no contribution needed
- Freesound.org – many files require attribution
- Mixkit – royalty-free, meant for creators

Paid Options – offers higher quality files and more options

- Epidemic Sound – \$15 USD/month, no attribution
- Artlist – \$16.60 USD/month, no attribution
- Audio Jungle – pay-per-track, good for one off projects
- Pond5 – Pay-per-use or custom options, offers a wide range

Creating transcripts and captions

Why do I need a transcript and captions?

Not only are they important for accessibility, but it allows the viewer to absorb the information in a different format at their own pace. You can add the transcript in the description of your video, or share a downloadable link.

Based on which hosting service or how you are sharing your podcast, captions and a transcript may be automatically created by AI. These tend to be about 90% accurate, so make sure you are able to edit those files. Some editing platforms (such as Adobe Premiere) can generate these files based on your audio file

If your service does not provide automatic captions/transcript, you can use 3rd party options, such as:

- Otter.ai
- Descript
- Rev.com

Final Thoughts

Questions?

Thank you!