

## Introduction

Podcasts are audio or video files that are created as a series of episodes and distributed over the Internet. Software products are available that automatically downloading new episodes of podcasts you subscribe to, or you can manually choose to play a particular episode. A podcast can be downloaded and played on a portable media player offline, or on a computer using media playing software. Anyone can make a podcast using a computer, free recording software and a microphone.

## Considerations

- **JISC TechDis offer eight main points with more information on making podcasts accessible**  
[http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3\\_10\\_13\\_3](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3_10_13_3)
  - Check at the earliest opportunity whether any of your students are likely to be excluded by the podcast. If so, discuss with each of them how you can take other, equivalent approaches.
  - Record at the best possible quality and exclude background noises.
  - Recorded audio can be replayed and this may benefit some deaf students - consider doing more with audio or being supportive of students who ask to record sessions.
  - Consider using the podcast Show Notes to describe what has happened in the audio in either summary form or full transcript form, depending on the nature of the podcast and its learning value.
  - Severely or profoundly deaf students will not be able to use the audio directly and you will need to engage them in other ways.
  - Be clear about the value of learning in the recording. If you need to provide alternative materials they should offer equivalent benefits, not necessarily identical content.
  - Do not pre-script podcasts in order to create an accessibility 'transcript' - this is likely to significantly limit the benefits of the podcast for others.
  - Good educational podcasting often leads to learning conversations - think about providing other ways into such conversations that may complement the podcast as a source for ideas.
- **Accessibility of Audio and video streaming controls.** Users who do not use a mouse need to be able to access the controls to play the content and they need to be described so that a screen reader user can understand them. For video, Flash is a widely supported format that can be made both keyboard and screen reader accessible. Audio files embedded in a flash player are a good option for providing this functionality providing keyboard access is available – check by tabbing into the player.

- **Consider the file format of your podcasts.** Some file types require certain players to view them. If these are not widely used, then to access your podcast, people will have to install the player before they can get to the content, which adds an extra layer of complexity. MP3 is the most supported audio format and should be used for audio downloads. Flash is widely supported and therefore makes the best streaming video format at the time of writing.
- **Use ID3 tags (metadata).** When you create the MP3 version of the audio file before uploading, use ID3 tags/metadata which includes the name of the podcast, time/length, artist/producer, album/producer, and genre. These tags help those using a library such as iTunes or Windows Media player to sort and find individual podcasts. <http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/19-podcast-id3-tags.htm>

## Additional Resources

- Web2Access can help you decide which podcast tool to use, by analysing the accessibility of each. <http://www.web2access.org.uk/activity/24/>
- Common Craft provide a screencast about Podcasting, and how it can be used. <http://www.commoncraft.com/podcasting>
- CANnect outlines the steps to producing accessible video and audio content. <http://projectone.cannect.org/advice/video-audio.php>
- Making Podcasts Accessible – webpage with links to useful tools to make accessible Podcasts from College of the Redwoods High Tech Center <http://hightech.redwoods.edu/accessibility/podcasting/>
- An Investigation of the Potential for Accessible Vodcasting of Learning Objects – JISC TechDis project that “aimed to investigate the potential for accessible vodcasting and explore the requirements for creating adaptable learning objects that could be delivered in an accessible format on a portable video media player.” [http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=2\\_1\\_7\\_2](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=2_1_7_2)
- Audacity is a free open source audio editor that can be used to record podcasts or other audio content. <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
- Accessible Podcatcher helps provide access to podcasts for users with visual difficulties. It comes with Webbie, which is an accessible Windows text-based web browser. Podcatcher receives podcasts from your subscribed sources, and is keyboard accessible. <http://www.webbie.org.uk/accessiblepodcatcher>
- Juice Receiver is a free accessible podcast receiver for Mac as well as Windows. <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/>