On Air: Podcasting for Authors

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Over the past few years, podcasting has grown monumentally. With digital audiences stretching into the millions. As a writer, you can tap into that audience to expand your writing career. Join us in this workshop to talk about how you can take your idea from paper to our earbuds.

**The Basics**

In 2021 there were 850,000 active podcasts.

The very first question you need to ask is WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE? What does your audience want and what is it only you can say that they want to hear?

1. Your audience who is going to listen
2. Your objective What do you want to achieve
3. Your idea what are you even going to talk about

**Find your Niche!!!**

Remember those 850,000 active podcasts? You need to be specific to be heard.

Are you interested in queer YA Fantasy and you want to talk about transgender and non-binary characters in books you’ve read?

Or how about a deep dive into cozy mysteries for women over 40?

Or maybe you write horror and want to explore how real-life events influenced books/movies/etc

Or maybe don’t want to talk about writing AT ALL and that’s fine too.

When you’re narrowing in on that topic, you need to do two things:

1. Try to come up with several episode ideas
2. Check Apple Podcasts to see if anyone else is already doing it. And if the are and you still want to do your topic anyway, HOW WILL YOU DO IT BETTER?

**Choose your format**

**Interview** (OtherPPL, Literaticast, Picturebooking, The Yarn, This Creative Life, Wish I’d known then Podcast)

**Chat** (Author Pep Talks, My Favorite Murder, 3 Point Perspective: The Illustration Podcast)

**Reviews** (Middle Grade Mavens, Remember Reading, What Should I Read Next)

**Scripted Fiction** (Magnus Archives, Welcome to Nightvale)

**Going Deep** (Talkin Tolkein, Let’s Get Weirding)

**Other options:** News, Non-fiction (like Brain Junk), Quick writing tips

**Equipment and Set-Up**

* Microphones

USB or XLR: USB plugged direct into laptop. XLR needs an interface like a mixing board or a Focusrite

Microphones have recording directions and specialties. Want to know more on mic specifics, <https://www.musicianonamission.com/types-of-microphones/> is an excellent starting point.

Blue Designs Snowball USB $40.00

<https://www.amazon.com/Blue-Snowball-Condenser-Microphone-Cardioid/dp/B014PYGTUQ/ref=sr_1_2?crid=IFSMX51OJ4UD&keywords=blue+designs+snowball&qid=1657062800&s=musical-instruments&sprefix=blue+designs+snowball%2Cmi%2C120&sr=1-2>

USB Blue Yeti different recording modes—limited on how you can place it because table top $110.00 <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00N1YPXW2?tag=georiot-us-default-20&th=1&psc=1&ascsubtag=tomsguide-us-1251548707703392300-20&geniuslink=true>

XLR Rode Podcaster the Lamborghini of mics needs an XLR connection $99.00 <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07MSCRCVK?tag=georiot-us-default-20&th=1&psc=1&ascsubtag=tomsguide-us-9586548821743135000-20&geniuslink=true>

Shure MV88 iPhone compatible $149.00

<https://www.amazon.com/Shure-MV88-Digital-Condenser-Microphone/dp/B010W6W8OW/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?crid=1X5RNL19JILVW&keywords=shure%2Bmv88&qid=1658768661&sprefix=shure%2Bmv88%2Caps%2C146&sr=8-1-spons&th=1>

* Recording Location

Sound proofing and creating a space that is low echo.

Making thick foam covers for windows

Working in a closet or other small space

Think sound booth and work out from there with what you have. I’ve worked with a blanket over my head, in a tent, with a foam box around the mic.

**The Four Biggies**

1. **How long is your episode?**

Figure out how long you need to say what you want. Try to keep this consistent. 20-30 minutes is a sweet spot for listeners.

Want to dive into some metadata about podcast length check out Pacific Content by Dan Misener <https://blog.pacific-content.com/podcast-episodes-got-shorter-in-2019-69e1f3b6c82f>

1. **How often will you publish?**

Once a week is fairly standard. Whatever the amount, pick a schedule and stick to it.

1. **Podcast Name**

This is fun AND hard. Check for similar names. You’ve got a few words to create the vibe and help people understand what the podcast is about. Make sure to check you aren’t copying a name on Apple iTunes and Spotify. Google the name and see what comes up.

1. **Logo Art**

Square image with a minimum size of 1400 x 1400 pixels and a max of 3,000 x 3,000 pixels. 72dpi, in JPEG or PNG format

Use Canva (free online) for designing your own quality logos or an online maker market like Fiverr to have artists bid logo designs for a price

**Anatomy of a Podcast**

**Intro:**

* Live or prerecorded voice over (sound quality can be different with the pre recorded intro and that can affect listening. Like if your pre record is really clear then the actual episode is not as great that can turn off listeners)
* Include
  + Name of show
  + Name of hosts
  + What the episode is about
  + Introduce guests (if you have them)
  + Music if you want to have a “theme song”
    - Legality and music. Use free or paid services to license music. I used Kevin MacLeod <https://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/music.html> for Brain Junk’s theme song and paid for a standard license for $30. If you think you might make money off your podcast, you’ll wan to have your music licensed.

**Body:**

Most important is learning how to let your voice flow. Do you rehearse and have that practiced sound or do you do more “off the cuff” and have a looser sound?

**The Delivery**

* Off the cuff
* Bullet outline
* Run from a script
* Or a mix of these. Depends on topic and format.
  + Interview: questions for guest and off the cuff resposes
  + Dramatic present of a chapter from a book: a script

**Outro:**

I suggest using a script so the outro stays consistent. Let listeners know where they can find you on social media and remind them to listen.

**Brain Junk Outro example**

If you’d like to hear more episodes, ask your smart speaker to play Brain Junk podcast! Don’t forget, wherever and whenever you listen, please like and subscribe. You can check out our Instagram for fun science and history facts (and sometimes Trace’s TikToks). Our Facebook page is a great place to go if you have comments or questions. Trace/Amy and I will catch you next time when we share more of everything you never knew you wanted to know; and I guarantee, you will not be bored.

**Recording (aka Software and Services) Creating an MP3**

Audacity­— downloadable and free

Garage Band— downloadable and free

Adobe Premier Pro— Downloadable and $20 per month

Adobe Audition— Downloadable and $20 per month

Zencastr —Online / remote record

Zoom— Online / remote record

**Audacity 101:**

West Virginia Dept of Education Audacity Cheat Sheet <https://wvde.state.wv.us/vschool/documents/AudacityCheatSheet.pdf>

Recording happens in single or multi track. Single is all people recorded into one single track. This single track is usually what happens if you have a group recording without a mixer. The con of single track is editing. If people are talking over each other, it makes it very hard to edit out mistakes.

Multi track give more flexibility each person recorded has their own track. Requires either recording remote with something like Zencastr or the ability to mix your recording in real time.

**Setting up a new recording in Audacity.**

Select your microphone from the drop-down menu.

Hit red dot *Record* button for record to start (remember to let recording run until done then hit stop. Don’t pause)

Check your *Playback Levels* while recording and editing. Recording Levels should be between -6 and -3. Make sure to keep that volume consistent and don’t let it get to zero. That over drives the sound and makes it crackly.

When you stop recording, save the file. Click *File*, hover over *Save Project*, click *Save Project As…* This makes a file you can use to edit easily in Audacity.

Post-editing you save the file again as an MP3: Click *File*, hover over *Export*, select *Export as MP3* and save. You will be asked in another window to *Edit Metadata Tags* (example below) Fill out with things like title, artist, genre, any licensing info, any details that will make the episode more searchable.

Graphical user interface, table

Description automatically generated

I’ve got a basic Audacity tutorial up on my YouTube Channel. You can look me up under Trace Kerr https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZdLJ1qAr35LzQO1TexCB-w

**Podcast Publishing:**

* Anchor FM
* Castos (WordPress plug in)
* Seriously Simple podcasting (WordPress)
* Blubrry/PowerPress
* SquareSpace
* Listeners will find you through things like iTunes and Stitcher. But before they can find you on their phone you need some kind of hosting service. Hosting services range from free to paid subscriptions. One of the things you are buying is the RSS feed. That RSS feed is basically an address that lets users and applications like iTunes have access to your recordings. The feed has the title, a description, and most importantly a link to your original content. Brain Junk uses WordPress as a website platform (we have a yearly subscription for that) and we pay $19 a month for a podcast hosting company called Castos to give us that RSS and have a landing place for people to find us.
* Services like Castos and Seriously Simple Podcasting require that you have a website that works with the hosting service to provide your podcast.
* Websites like Blubrry and SquareSpace are an all-in-one website and hosting option—and there are others popping up all the time where you pay them for your website and the RSS hosting. All-in-one is easier to use but can have less flexibility.
* AncorFM by Spotify hosts and distributes podcasts for free. Register and record your episode right on the platform or upload your edited podcasts. Hit publish and podcast is automatically on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher and others. You can even use an app on your phone.

**Socials for Promotion!**

Instagram for Lives and Reels to promote (think bookstagram, authorgram, there’s lots of subcategories)

TikTok for booktok. It’s huge!

Twitter and Facebook are options for promotion, but it depends on the genre of your podcast and don’t over promote. Twitter frowns on that sort of thing.

YouTube is where you can put video recordings of your podcast.

If you do decide to start a podcast, let me know!