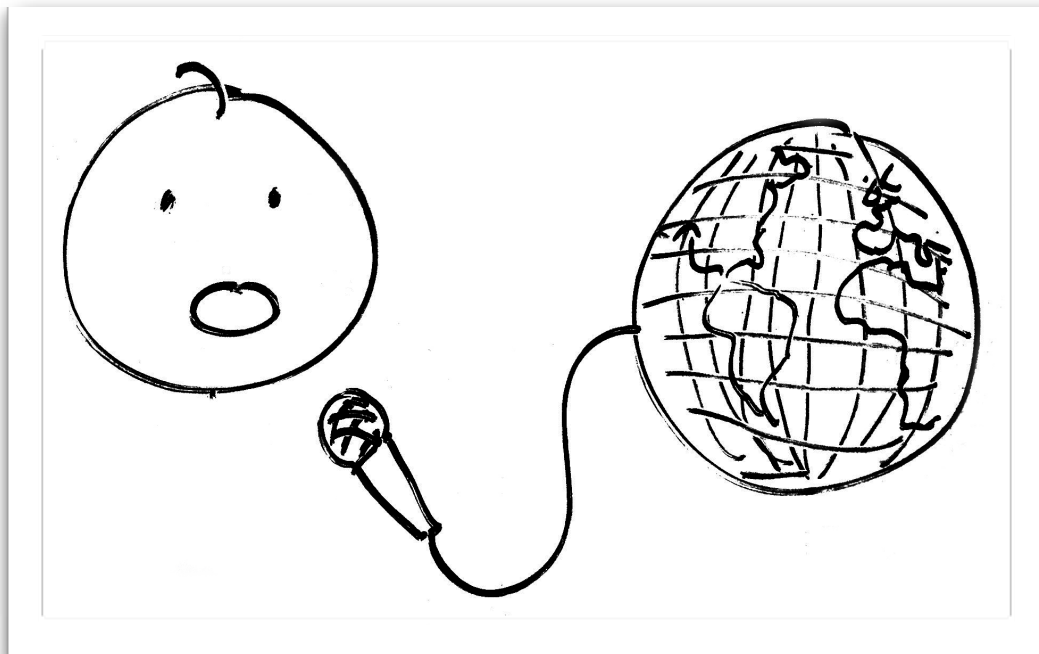


Podcasting Unleashed:

**Turning your passion into an
audio podcast**



Andy White
Draft 5 (July 2010)

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This book is under construction, it is incomplete. Author's notes appear in yellow like this:

This is an author's note...

The more yellow you see, the more incomplete the section is :)

Dedication

For my wife, Sarah and my children, Trilby & Bailey

Foreword

Looking for someone to write this later ;-)

Preface

If you have a passion, and you want to create, or are creating your own podcast, whether for business or pleasure, you should read this book. If you produce podcasts for others, either as a business or for the sheer joy of it, then I freely give away my knowledge for what it's worth, safe in my unerring, selfish belief that any loaves I cast upon the waters will come back buttered, and in some cases even packed with tuna, sweet corn, lettuce and a smidgin of low calorie mayonnaise.

What I aim to do in this book is get you thinking in such a way, that you will be able to work out the best way forward in most situations; to teach you how to fish, as it were, rather than give you the proverbial fish.

How to use this book

This book is arranged in four sections. The first section is designed to get you up and running quickly. If you've never before made a podcast, start here, in fact go straight to the *Podcast in 30 minutes* chapter and have a go at making your first podcast.

The second section is intended to fill in the gaps and get you up to speed with producing a full blown, proper podcast series. Feel free to either read this sequentially or dip into it as a reference from time to time.

The third section covers the important subject of promotion, getting your podcast known. As Dave Jackson [\cite{website:schoolofpodcasting}](http://website:schoolofpodcasting) said, "If content is king, then promotion is queen."

The final section covers a few ideas, loose ends and musings from yours truly that wouldn't really fit anywhere else. Feel free to treat these as a collection of essays around the podcasting arena, to perhaps, evoke a few ideas.

I've put some useful checklists, work flows and other list-like nuggets of information in the appendices.

Enjoy! Be inspired! Be encouraged! Be successful!

Acknowledgments

For the initial inspiration to start podcasting I raise a glass to four gentlemen in particular, Leo Laporte, Jason Van Orden, Benjamin Grundy and Cliff Ravenscraft, masters of the mic and purveyors of entertainment and knowledge.

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Finally I would like to thank my long suffering wife and soulmate, Sarah, for her patience while I kept disappearing when I should have been helping around the house and optimising the children. I salute Sarah, and the spouses of geeks the world over.

About the author



Andy White studied Zoology and Radiography, and continued to work as a postman, a programmer, a web designer, a waiter and an IT consultant, rather than as a zoologist or radiographer. Interests include science and technology, philosophy, astronomy, martial arts, the paranormal and natural history. When he was a kid he used to spend a long time on his belly, either studying ants or drawing internal

organs. Things that make him laugh include marching bands, Kryten from Red Dwarf, Marge Simpson's hair, and East European folk songs that suddenly stop for everyone to shout "Oy!", and then carry on again.

Andy has been regularly producing podcasts since 2006, for clients large and small, including Internet Marketing which is regularly in the featured list under the Management and Marketing categories in iTunes. The local people in Brighton often call him the "Podfather", even though he keeps telling them that the real Podfather is Adam Curry and if they don't stop it, Adam will probably come down to Brighton and beat him up. He much prefers to be called "Doctor Pod" because when he was younger, he wanted to be a doctor and he now sees himself as a kind of doctor for people who need help with podcasting and such things.

As well as writing, producing, presenting and marketing podcasts, Andy is also a podcasting coach, and can name every part of the anatomy of a spider.

You can reach Andy by email at andy@andywhite.org, and find him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/doctorpod>.

Part 1. The basics. Getting up and running quickly

Setting up your podcasting toolbox

When I was a kid, I remember when the TV repair man used to come to our house. Sadly, this was a frequent occurrence¹. I was always fascinated when he opened his big black case full of “stuff”. I used to gawp in awe at the rows of neatly arranged bits and bobs and wonder what they were all for. He wielded each tool with skill and knowledge, knowing exactly which one to use for the job at hand.

Like the TV repair man, you need to build up a toolbox of tools, get to know each one, know which ones you need for what, and learn to use them.

In this chapter, I intend to introduce you to the tools you'll need for podcasting. We'll get into process and workflows in the next chapter because you'll need these tools set up first. Some of the tools will be physical things, others will be software, and others will be knowledge, stuff you need to know or be aware of. Although much of the software is free, some items may come at a price but the investment at this stage should not be more than about £200.

If you're a regular listener to podcasts, you may find you have some of these tools in place already.

This is just a start; it's the minimum set to get us started - we will add some more tools later on as we progress through the book.

Your Computer - The main Tool

Your computer is so essential, being used for just about every technical aspect of podcast production, that it's almost the box itself. I recall being told by

¹ Yes, sadly I'm so old that I grew up in the days when it was *worth* fixing a TV

somebody years ago that to assume makes an ass out of you and me², nevertheless, I'm going to jolly well go ahead and make some. First, I'll assume you have a reasonable familiarity and experience with computers, you are comfortable with the computer environment, you can install and uninstall programs with relative ease. If you're a PC user, you've perhaps used Notepad, or if you're a Mac person, TextEdit, if you're an uber cool Linux dude, you may even have Vi, Vim or Emacs under your belt. I'm also going to assume that if you're a Linux user, you are comfortable venturing away from the desktop and using the command line and the various package managers that come bundled with it. You know which hole a microphone and a pair of headphones would slot into and you are happy using a browser and surfing the web. These things are important because many of more technical things we do as podcasters rely on this basic type of knowledge.

In this book, we will consider all three main types of operating system, Windows, Macintosh and Linux. I started my podcast production career using a PC running Windows XP Professional. Quite recently I have become a Mac fanboy, and now use a MacBook running Mac OS X Leopard. In an earlier life I did a lot with Red Hat Linux, then Ubuntu although it didn't include producing podcasts. The point I'm trying to make is that it doesn't matter which operating system you use - and I would encourage you to stick to what you are used to. It is entirely possible to produce podcasts on all three platforms. If you have a modern computer, you've probably already got most of what you need with computing hardware - so you can use this section more as a checklist.

What should I look for in a computer?

When considering a computer for podcasting work there are a few things to think about:

Memory

The more memory a computer has, the more things it can do at once. A symptom of insufficient memory is programs hanging and becoming unresponsive. It is quite common to have several programs open at a time when dealing with podcast production. My Windows PC has 1GB of memory and, as far as I can recall, I never had a problem. My MacBook sports 2GB of

² Ass-u-me, do you get it? I assumed you would.

memory it has a similarly adequate reputation. As a guide, I would be cautious of going below 1GB on any platform.

CPU

The speed of the CPU (Central Processing Unit or Chip) is measured in MHz or GHz and determines the speed that the computer carries out instructions. One of the most CPU intensive operations is encoding to MP3. You may find this taking a very long time if you have a slow CPU. As a rule, try to avoid anything under 1GHz.

Disk Capacity

Podcasting takes up a lot of disk space over time - it tends to slowly build up and catch you out. A typical storage requirement per podcast project could be anywhere between 20MB to 1.5GB per episode depending on the complexity of your show structure, the file organisation and which software you are using. I have five episodes of our Internet Marketing podcast on my Macbook at the moment, taking up 5.7GB. Disks nowadays tend to be quite large but go for the maximum you can afford or be prepared to supplement using an external USB or firewire drive.

A built in microphone or socket

Most modern computers come with a 3.5 mm microphone and headphone jack - those little holes with microphone and headphone symbols next to them. Most modern laptops have a built in microphone although the quality can vary greatly.

USB Socket

This is the horizontal, rectangular slot about 10 mm wide. There can be more than one of these positioned in more than one place. USB sockets are useful if you decide to use a USB microphone and are a common way of connecting other external devices such as digital recorders. To be honest, it's rare these days to find a machine without USB ports.

A DVD RW

A built in writable DVD drive can be very useful for archiving³ files and creating compilations of podcast shows to send out.

³ See the *Some thoughts on backups and archives* chapter.

Desktop, Laptop or Netbook?

People often ask if it matters what type of computer they use for podcasting. My usual response is that it doesn't as long as the previously mentioned attributes are fulfilled. One thing I would watch out for though is screen size. Some of the programs you will use are easier to use on bigger screens. The other factor to be aware of is CPU speed. Many of the smaller laptops and netbooks have low powered CPUs which may struggle with some jobs - these are probably best avoided for podcast production. Finally, remember the disk space requirement.

In conclusion stick to your preferred platform but be aware of the other options with hardware and operating systems.

A Microphone (if it's not already built in)

Because we are in a sort of “getting started quickly” mode in this chapter, I'm not going to dwell too much on the ins and outs of microphones. We'll take a closer look at these later. Rather, I shall lead you gently into the world of microphones and concentrate on just one or two to get you started. Also, I don't want you to spend lots of money on microphones at this stage. Indeed, you may even joyously skip this section if your computer has a decent built-in microphone.

Lets quickly familiarise ourselves with the role of the microphone. Its job is to convert the analogue sound waves from our voice into an analogue or digital signal that we can record. Forgive me for using the technical “analogue” and “digital” words - we will shortly become aware of what they mean.

There are two main types of microphone, dynamic and condenser. Dynamic microphones have a lightweight diaphragm connected to a coil of wire in a magnetic field. When the sound waves from your voice vibrate the diaphragm, and hence the coil, an electric current is induced which oscillates back and forth in time to the vibrations. Thus a low power signal is created. The output from dynamic microphones is usually very small so a preamplifier is sometimes required before anything useful can be done with the signal.

Condenser microphones, on the other hand, use a capacitor. The front flat plate of this capacitor forms the diaphragm. When the sound waves cause this to vibrate, the capacitance oscillates up and down in time to the sound wave, and a signal is produced. Condenser microphones require a voltage to be applied across the capacitor to work and this usually requires either an internal battery, or an external power supply - often referred to as phantom power.

Microphones can have one of three types of connectors, 3.5 mm jack, XLR or USB. We're all familiar with the 3.5 mm jack, it's that little plug that you have on the end of your Walkman or MP3 player headphones. Microphones with this connector will plug straight into your computer. Professional microphones have XLR connectors. These are much larger plugs with three pins which have to plug into an adapter, mixer or some sort of interface before they can be used with a computer. Microphones with these two types of connector produce an analogue signal. This means the signal is composed of an electric current and voltage, oscillating rapidly to and fro in time to the original sound wave.

USB microphones however, convert the sound wave into a digital signal internally, and feed this digital signal as a stream of zeros and ones into the computer via a USB connector.

So, assuming we have no built in microphone in our computer, what sort of external mic should we start with for our toolbox? If you need to buy a mic I would recommend, at this early stage to go for either a cheap dynamic mic with a 3.5 mm connector, or a USB mic such as the Blue Snowball or Samson C01U, and to avoid getting a mic with an XLR connector unless you want to invest in an XLR to USB interface up front. See the list of recommended microphones in the *Recommended microphones* Appendix.

Internet Access

Podcasting, by its very nature, requires us to publish files to the Internet - so a good connection is vital. ADSL (Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line) broadband is becoming common and cheap these days so finding a good supplier should not be a problem. The upstream speed is particularly important when podcasting because we spend a lot of time uploading

episodes. In classic ADSL, the upstream is fixed at 256 KBits/sec but with the arrival of ADSL2, we are starting to see upstream speeds at around 1.4 MBits/sec and downstream speeds, theoretically of up to 24 MBits/sec.

A Hosting Account

Now let us take a look at two tools that are so intertwined they're almost the same tool, a hosting account and an FTP program.

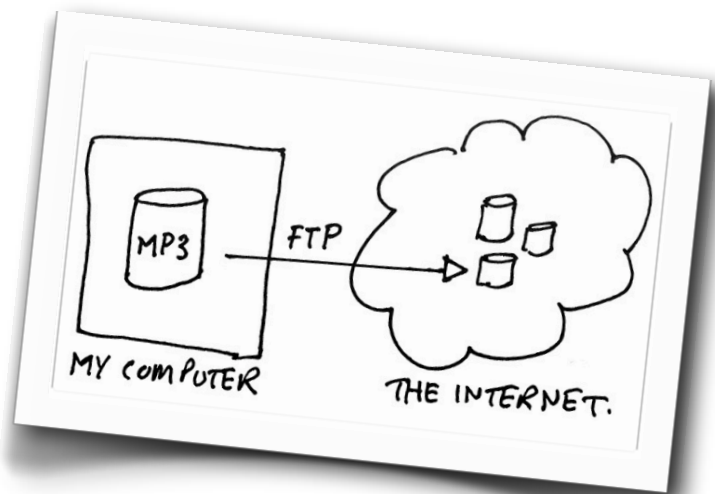
Imagine you have some files that you want the world to have access to. If you kept them on your personal computer, then unless you did some clever stuff with routers and firewalls, no one could see them⁴. The idea of hosting refers to a computer, somewhere on the Internet, being a place for your files to live, such that they are accessible by anyone. In other words, the computer, or server as they are often called, “hosts” your files on your behalf, and makes them publicly accessible. So a hosting account is where your files, blog, website or podcasting site live if you don't have your own server (which most folks don't).

There are literally thousands of companies out there who offer hosting. Far too many to mention. The usual deal is that you get access to part of a server, but for more money you can have a whole server just to yourself. We'll drill into this topic of hosting later, and there's a list of hosting companies in the appendices.

⁴ That's probably a very good thing from a security standpoint.

An FTP Program

We now need a simple way of copying files from our computer to our hosting account. To do this we use a protocol called FTP which stands for File Transfer Protocol. There are a number of free software programs available that make FTP easy with a simple drag and drop interface. Here are a few in no particular order:



- ▶ **FileZilla** (Windows and Mac) This is my favorite - <http://filezilla-project.org> (free);
- ▶ **Cyberduck** (Mac only) - <http://cyberduck.ch> (free);
- ▶ **Transmit** (Mac only) - <http://www.panic.com/transmit> is my chosen weapon (about \$30)
- ▶ **Command line FTP** (all platforms) If you're a geek, there's always the command prompt on Windows, Mac and Linux;
- ▶ **Fire FTP Firefox addon** (all platforms) - <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/684> this free FTP program runs in the Firefox browser.

When you set up a hosting account, you'll be given the following information to put into your FTP program:

- ▶ **An FTP user name**
- ▶ **An FTP password**
- ▶ **A host domain name** - This is the name or domain of the actual host machine. It does not necessarily match the public domain name that you type into your browser to see your files. Quite often, the host domain name will begin with ftp., for example ftp.example.com. This notion of the server name and the public URL being different throws a lot of people.
- ▶ **A directory path** to copy your files to - this is the directory on the host machine in which to put your files such that they are publicly visible on the public domain name

- ▶ A **public domain name** - A domain name is that string you enter into your browser that usually ends in *.com*, or *.co.uk*, or *.net*. You'll usually be told a domain name when you sign up for a hosting account. It refers to where you need to point your browser to in order to see any web pages you upload to your account. Remember, the public domain name and the host domain name can often be different, for example, the public domain name could be *www.example.com*, and the host domain name could be *ftp.example.com* as mentioned above.

Once you put these into your FTP program, it should remember them, making future access to your hosting account a simple drag and drop affair.

On a quick footnote, some hosting providers give you an FTP program that runs in your browser, negating the need for a separate FTP program. In this case you usually just visit a special page on your provider's website to access it.

A text editor

A text editor you say, what possible use could the lowly text editor have? OK I'll come clean, you'll only really use it in these early days while you ascend the obligatory learning curve. You'll be using a text editor to create the RSS feed file and web page. Do not confuse a text editor with a word processor such as Microsoft Word. These do not write plain text. Instead they write in a proprietary binary format that is useless for our needs.

Lets look at a few examples for each of the main operating systems:

- ▶ Notepad (Windows only) This comes as standard with Windows and is perfectly adequate for our needs.
- ▶ Textedit (Mac only) This comes included with the Mac operating system.
- ▶ TextMate (Mac only) I love this editor. It's not free at €49, but it's the best editor I've ever used.
- ▶ Vi and Vim (Linux, Windows). If you use these, you're probably a power user and just frolicking in this chapter for an amusing diversion.
- ▶ Emacs (Linux only) Same here. I've never understood Emacs users. They seem to be a very religious group that probably have strange initiation

ceremonies involving dark, windy wooded hills, ceremonial goat horns and nubile virgins. Emacs is an amazing editor though apparently.

An audio recorder, editor and mixer

Audacity

Audacity is a free, software audio recorder and file editor that runs on Windows, Mac and Linux. You will need to edit your audio files if you want to remove those annoying *ums* and *ahs*, long silences and that embarrassing bit where you unexpectedly broke wind 3 minutes and 16 seconds into the interview.

We will be using Audacity for:

- ▶ recording
- ▶ basic sound editing
- ▶ basic sound processing
- ▶ mixing
- ▶ encoding to MP3

You can find Audacity at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. One thing to remember is to also get the LAME MP3 encoder so that you can encode your podcasts to MP3. Go to the help section at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&i=lame-mp3> for instructions on how to download and install this. One little tip for Mac users, when the LAME library is installed on your system, it claims to install the file in the folder `/usr/local/lib`, but it actually puts it in the folder `/usr/local/lib/audacity`. The first time you try to save a file as an MP3 in Audacity, it will ask you to locate the LAME library file, remember to drill down to the *audacity* folder at this time.

I really like Audacity, for a free program it has a ton of features. Be aware though, that it can have some stability issues and in the past I have lost work due to sudden crashes. I would advise regular saving to avoid this - I have a strip of paper attached to my PC monitor which states, *In Audacity - Save every minute!*

Myna

Myna is an online, browser based sound recorder, editor and mixer available at <http://aviary.com/tools/myna>.

```
TODO expand - play with - looks good
```

An audio file tag editor

You'll need this to write important information into your podcast files such as the title, podcast name, artist and so on.

If you're using Windows or Mac, get iTunes which covers, in addition to its arsenal of other features, audio file tagging and podcast receiving. iTunes runs on the Windows and Mac platforms and can be freely downloaded from Apple at <http://www.apple.com/itunes/download>.

If you're using Linux take a look at:

- ▶ EasyTAG - <http://easytag.sourceforge.net>
- ▶ eyeD3 a command line utility - <http://eyed3.nicfit.net>

A podcast receiver/catcher

When we create podcast feeds, they need to be tested using a podcast receiver or podcatcher.

If you're on Windows or Mac, you've probably taken my advice and installed iTunes. If for some reason you don't want to use iTunes or you're running on Linux, take a look at:

- ▶ Miro (all platforms) - <http://www.getmiro.com>, or
- ▶ Juice (all platforms) - <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net>, or
- ▶ gPodder (Linux) - <http://gpodder.org>

Conclusion

You now have your toolbox, or at least your first incarnation of it set up. Lets see what's in your metaphorical big black case full of stuff:

- ▶ Computer
- ▶ Microphone (unless it's built into the computer)
- ▶ Internet access
- ▶ Hosting account
- ▶ FTP program
- ▶ Text editor
- ▶ Audio file recorder, editor and mixer
- ▶ Audio file tag editor (this might be iTunes)
- ▶ Podcast receiver (this also might be iTunes)

You now have enough tools to continue to the next step - lets get into the workflow of making your first podcast.