

What is a podcast, and what is podcasting?

pod•cast \päd•kast\ *n* English-Apple Inc. late 2002 A Web-based audio broadcast via an RSS feed, accessed by subscription over the Internet (Dictionary.com)
pod•cast, pod•casting *v* English-Apple Inc. late 2002 To create and publish a podcast

Ok, I know you're asking, "What does that mean?" A podcast is a very easy way to transmit to the virtual world an audio, video or text based message (a computer video, audio, or text file) you wish to make public. If you have something you think is important and you want to share it with others, it's fun, the virtual world is huge, technically it's free, but honestly it's a little complex.

Do I need to create a podcast to use a podcast? Absolutely, NO! There are podcast consumers, and there are podcast producers. This document is about how to produce a podcast. Being a podcast consumer is actually much, much easier, all you need is a computer with Mac OS X 10.3.9 or newer or a PC with Windows 2000 or newer, and the latest version of iTunes and QuickTime software (both are free from Apple, see links below).

Can anyone put his or her own message in a virtual world podcast? Absolutely, YES!

Do I need an iPod to podcast? Absolutely, NO! But if you do, you can download your podcast, or others' podcasts and play them when you're traveling around the world (or your neighborhood), anytime!

How many podcasts are there in the virtual world? Well, this number changes daily, but one source stated over 20 million as of September 2006.

Do I need a computer to podcast? Technically, No, but really, it depends on how much you want you want to get involved in doing this. It's possible to simply take a tape (video or audio) or a text file (such as PDF, MS Word, or Simple Text) and send it to someone who can set it all up for you.

Do I need the Apple Software iTunes to podcast? Technically NO, but you'll want to see your podcast once it's published in the virtual world, won't you?!

It sounds like I don't need anything to podcast, but seriously what do I need? You need videos, audio, or text, and someone who's comfortable with putting this content in a podcast for you. For people who know how to do this, it's pretty easy. The most difficult part is converting the content you have to a valid format that Apple allows in a podcast. The other tricky part is setting up something called an RSS feed or just a feed. The feed is nothing more than a text file written in a language called XML that has the settings, configuration, basic text content outline, and location of your podcast file(s). etc.

I have several videos, audios or text files I'd like to share, can I do this? Absolutely, YES! You can have an unlimited number of things in your podcast, you can even have mixed content, audio, video and text based.

Is my podcast I have published free to anyone and everyone to see? Yes, by default it will be. It is possible to put a fee on it, but this has to be setup through Apple, and honestly I have not done this before. I'd say more than 99% of all podcasts are free and open to everyone.

Do I have to go through Apple to podcast? Well, no, but if you don't you'll be reaching so small a market it won't be worth it. Apple is so far head and shoulders ahead of everything and everyone you'd be foolish not to go through Apple. It's as if you may reach two people as compared to 350 million people, this is not an exaggeration. And remember if you can setup the podcast yourself, then the whole podcasting process is free!

I'm still afraid of this new technology and don't understand it and what all it can do! Don't worry, no one knows everything! Even Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple Inc. doesn't know how to do all this. In fact I'd be a bit surprised if he's ever created a podcast.

Podcasting is evolving and is a moving target. It was originally established before Apple even directly supported it. It was really just some renegade technophiles that saw an opportunity and had the knowledge. Since then it has been significantly simplified, and Apple's direct support has helped.

Because podcasting is a moving target it's not important to really know what it is, it's better to understand the basics, and perhaps the best way to do this is through an example. To truly understand it you have to use it, but I'll do my best here to explain.

Let's say you had a huge family get-together, say 300 people (or maybe a small one with 15 people), and you took some videos during it. You have people you interviewed, there were a couple of speeches about the family tree, and perhaps you have some photos, and even a physical family tree that you painstakingly drew by hand (I'll have to teach you how to do this much easier, quicker and more professionally on a computer some time).

You find some nice music you have for the background. You put the videos you have on your computer. You put the pictures you have on your computer. You scan that family tree you spent hours creating (and perhaps days or weeks on, if you did this on the computer it could be cut down to minutes) to your computer. You put all this together in iMovie or QuickTime Pro and you get yourself the file(s) to post in a podcast. You setup your feed file (see above), and put this and your podcast file(s) and some artwork (a graphic file) on a web site. You open iTunes and tell them you have a new podcast you would like Apple to publish, to do this you give them the URL (uniform resource locator) of the feed file you put on a web site. Wait one to two weeks, and voila, you have a

podcast the world can see, download in iTunes, share, use, put on their iPods, connect to a projector and do a presentation, etc.!

Yes, I did skip some of the complexities of this, but you just wanted to know the overall process. It is a bit time consuming for anyone to make a nice presentation using iMovie or the like, and the feed file will take some time, as it has to be debugged (it's a sort of computer programming language), but it's relatively easy for someone who knows how to do it.

And you may have a business need for something like this, perhaps you have videos that you'd like to have short samples published. At the beginning, end and perhaps in subtitles you can put in a web site to go to buy the full video, or offer a full download version for a price. Or maybe you want to do a presentation for hundreds of people, but they're not all in one room. You can put your podcast on iTunes, give people a link to it in an email so they can go to it. You can update your presentation up to the minute before you want to start it, and others can come see the presentation after it has been made available, anytime, day or nite, PJ's or suit and tie.

My best way to define a podcast is to say, think of what you want to share, and how can you best share it. Think that there are absolutely no limitations in podcasting, and do not come with any preconceived notions about podcasting. Technically podcasting is free as long as you already have the basics, a computer with OS X 10.3.9 or Windows 2000 or newer, an Internet connection and web space (most ISPs give you free web space). That's really it!

Other sources for very good in-depth information

WikiPedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>

Apple Podcasting FAQ: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcastsfaq.html>

Apple iTunes Software: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcastsfaq.html>

Apple QuickTime Software: <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>

How to Podcast: <http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/00-podcast-tutorial-four-ps.htm>