

Podcasts and Podcasting

- Podcasts are digital audio files that are usually distributed in MP3 format (a compressed audio format).
- Podcasting is a way of putting both digital audio and visual files (videocasts) on a website for anyone to download to a computer, MP3 player, or any other device that plays digital audio files.
- Podcasting is a spin-off of blogging and started sometime the middle of 2001.
- Most podcasts are free even the ones listed and downloaded from the iTunes Store.
- You do not need a MP3 player to find and listen to podcasts!
- All you need to listen to a podcast is:
 1. A computer with an Internet connection.
 2. A web browser (Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc.) or a “podcatcher” (iTunes, Juice, iPodderX).
 3. Headphones or speakers.
- After downloading podcast files, you can also listen to podcasts by:
 1. Using an MP3 player with headphones or an FM transmitter and a radio.
 2. Burning the podcasts as an audio (AIFF-uncompressed audio format) CD and then playing it on any CD player. (On one CD you can store 650 MB, about 74 minutes, or about 20 songs.)
 3. Burning the podcasts as an MP3 CD and then playing it on any device that can play MP3 CD's. (On one CD you can store 650 MB, 12 hours, or about 150 songs.)
- Podcasts are posted regularly and displayed in reverse chronological order much like a magazine subscription.
- You can download podcasts one at a time or subscribe (or unsubscribe) to a particular set using a podcatcher such as iTunes or Juice. The podcatchers will automatically download future podcasts and keep track of them for you.
- Podcasts cover a wide range of topics and formats such as radio programs, news programs, music videos, classroom exercises or lectures, and much more. There are educational podcasts available for all levels of education and many subject areas.
- There are podcasts for professional development.
- Educators are creating podcasts for their students and other educators. Students are creating podcasts as class assignments.
- Presently there is much free educational material available with few copyright restrictions for teachers and students.

Finding Podcasts to Listen To

You can find podcasts to listen to in a couple of different ways.

1. One way is to do a web search using a search engine.
2. Another way is through podcasting directories. Podcatchers such as iTunes and Juice have directories where you can find more podcasts on a particular subject. There are also other directories besides those found in the different podcatchers such as Podcast Alley and LearnOutLoud.com (an educational directory).

Most directories make it easy for you to audition and listen to entire podcasts directly from their listings. They are very competitive and want you to come back time and again to their site and have special features to entice you. Several have their own audio players built in that will load and stream the entire back catalog of a podcast. They are free and you don't necessarily have to do anything more than click and listen. (See my website for directory links.)

Listening and Subscribing to Podcasts

Once you find a podcast to listen to you can simply download the file (usually right click the icon) to get that individual file. Using your browser and/or software such as QuickTime Player, Real Audio Player or Windows Media Player, the files will play on your computer as streaming media.

On the other hand, if you want more than this, you will need a podcatcher and there are several places to download free podcatchers:

1. iTunes (For Mac and Windows - I use this one.)
<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>
2. Juice (For Mac, Windows, Linux)
<http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/index.php>

Using podcatcher software you can download MP3 files for use on your computer at a later time, move files to your MP3 player to use in your classroom, or burn an audio CD or a MP3 CD. In addition podcatchers have directories where you can find more podcasts including ESL and news podcasts to use in your classroom.

After you have found several podcasts to use in your classroom or to enjoy for yourself, you will need to automate the process by subscribing to a podcast by subscribing to the RSS feed that points to the MP3 files for that podcast. This does not cost you anything and is fairly simple using one of the free podcatchers.

The podcatcher that I use is iTunes. There is a Mac and a Windows version. To learn how to download, install and use iTunes you can go to the Apple site at:

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/itunes/index.html>

Here you will find a multimedia tutorial with step by step written directions and streaming video that will guide you through creating and using playlists, subscribing and listening to podcasts, transferring files to an MP3 player and burning music (or podcasts) to a CD.