

Podcasting Tips

1. Online resources

You can find many podcasting help resources online. My favorites include:

- Podcast Alley: <http://www.podcastalley.com>
- Propaganda software help > Quick Start: <http://www.makepropaganda.com/onlinehelp/propaganda110/propaganda.htm>
- CNET Podcasting 101: <http://podcasting-101.workshops.help.com>

2. What is a podcast?

Podcasts are digital audio recordings of voice commentary and/or music that are encoded in the MP3 format and are compatible with all MP3 players and PCs.

Podcasts are distributed across the Internet as downloadable MP3 files. You can listen to them using podcast playing software on your computer or using MP3 players.

Podcasts are unique because of subscriptions and time-shifting. You can subscribe to a specific podcast through Real Simple Streaming (RSS) and every new episode will automatically be downloaded; then you can listen any time you choose.

If you are not familiar with podcasts, listen to some of the free podcasts available at these web sites. You will get a feel for how the content is directed to the interest different audiences:

- iTunes, <http://www.apple.com/itunes/>. You can download the iTunes software and listen on your computer if you don't have an iTunes player.
- Podcast Alley, <http://www.podcastalley.com>. You will find podcast downloads, lots of online help, and forums.
- Podcast.net, <http://www.podcast.net/>. Podcasts are organized by category. You can listen online or download podcasts. Example: <http://www.podcast.net/show/69479>

3. What you will need to record and publish your podcast

High-end recording hardware and software is not necessary to produce a fairly decent podcast. It's recommended that you have:

- A home computer (even an older Mac or PC should have plenty of processing power)
- A headset with a noise-canceling microphone
- A portable MP3 voice recorder
- Audio recording/podcasting software (such as Audacity, Propaganda, or iPodcast Producer)

- **Sony Vaio T2400 laptop**



- The **Logitech Premium USB Headset 350** includes a noise-canceling microphone that filters out some background noise and connects to a PC or Mac via USB



- The Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS100 has a USB direct plug in to the computer – no cable is needed!



- **Audacity**, <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/about/>, is free, open source software for recording and editing sounds in Win, Linux, Mac OS X, and other operating systems. There are online and downloadable help files, but the interface is not as user-friendly as that of Propaganda. Check out this tutorial: <http://breeze.chemeketa.edu/p46092630/> .
- **Propaganda**, <http://www.makepropaganda.com/>, podcasting software has a good user interface, built-in MP3 encoder, and XML file generator needed for RSS feeds. However, I prefer the recording quality control found in Audacity.

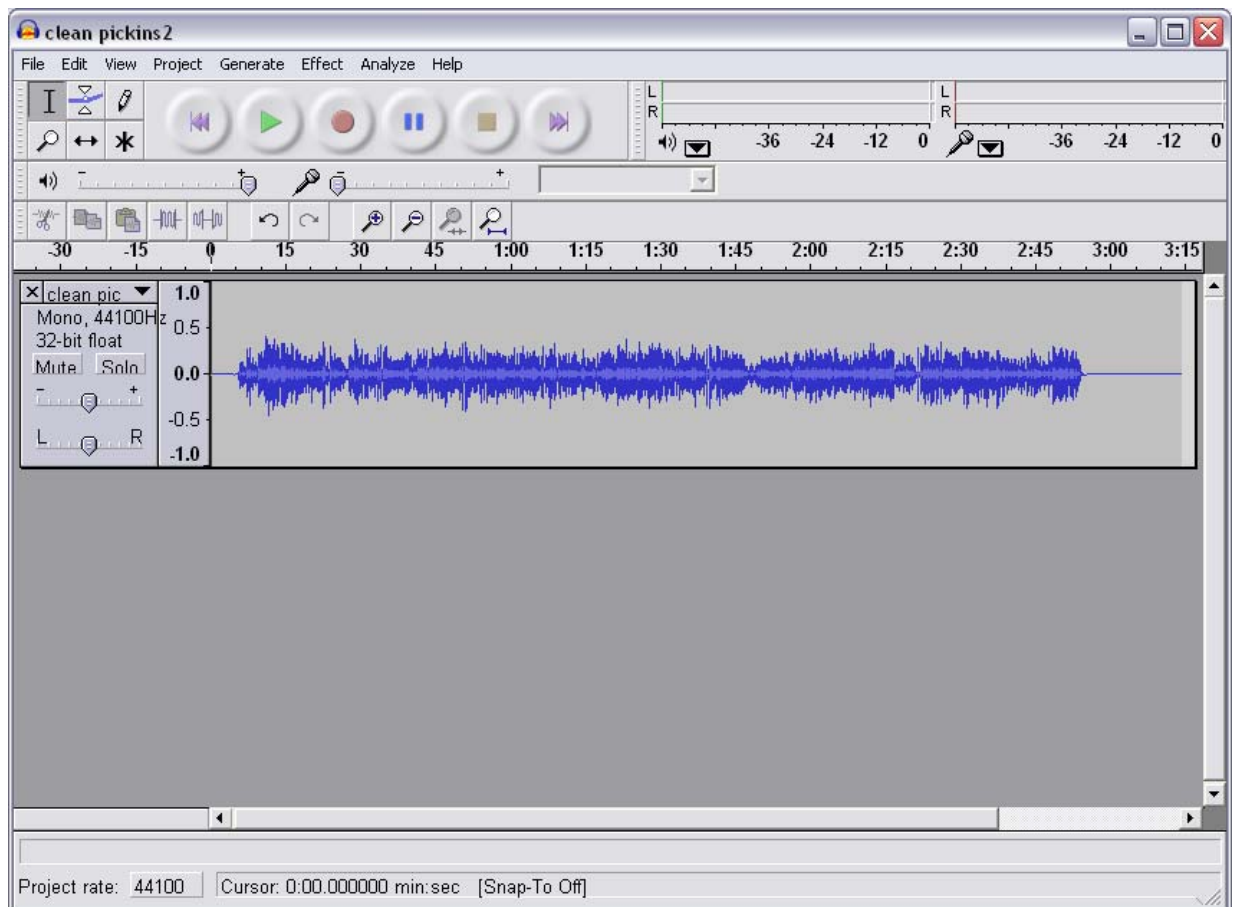
4. Plan your podcast

You want to create a recording that people will want to listen to. Match your content and presentation to your audience.

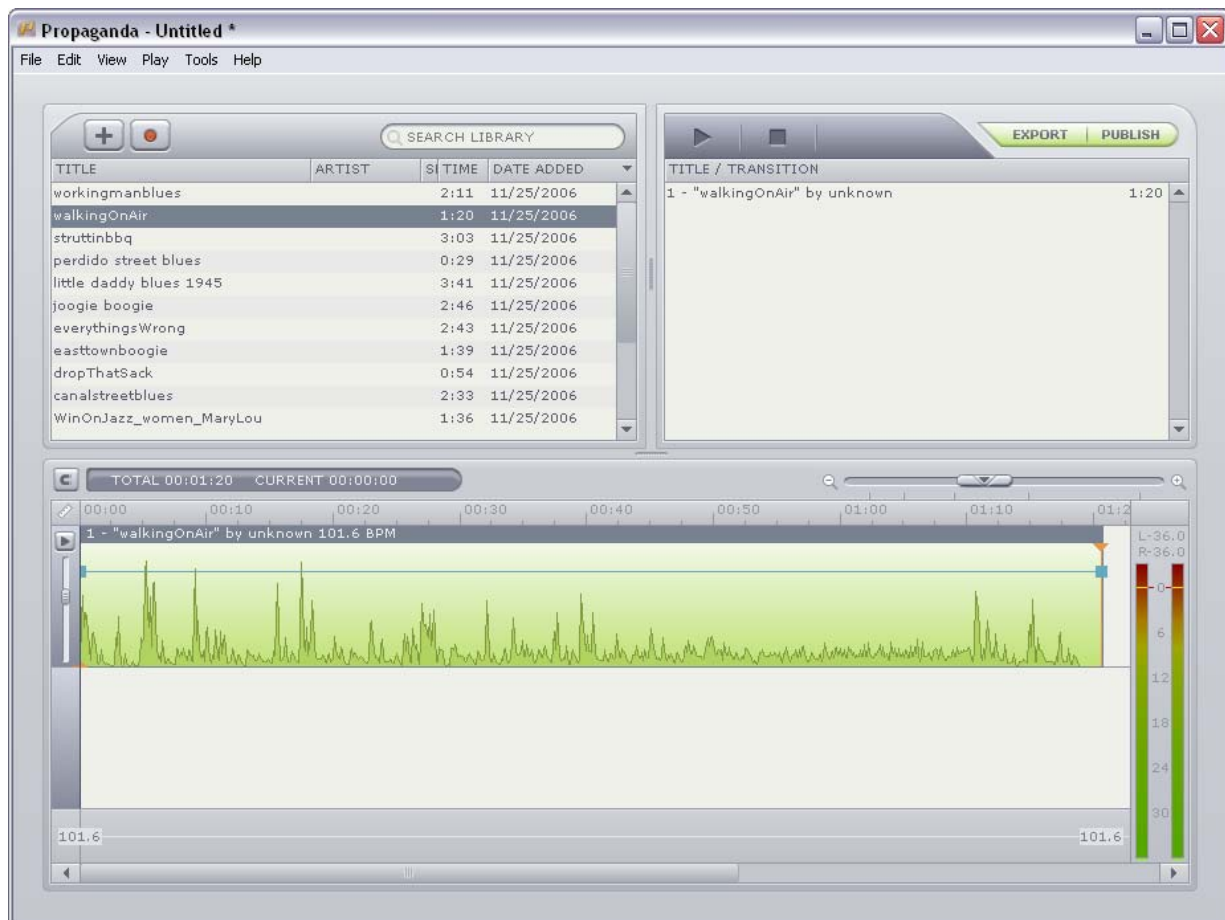
- Identify your audience and select a topic.
- Do your research and organize the content.
- Outline your presentation or write a script. Some high-end podcasting software includes a scripting feature, but a hand-written outline will do.
- Practice how you will speak to make your commentary interesting to listeners.

5. Use the appropriate hardware and software to record and edit all your music and voiceover.

- **Audacity** is free, but its user interface is not as intuitive as commercial 'out-of-the-box' products. There is the MP3 licensing issue, so you will have to download the MP3 encoder separately before you can export your files to MP3 format.



- **Propaganda** is a reasonably-priced software that has a nice user interface and includes, recording, editing, exporting, and XML file features. However, I prefer the recording quality of Audacity.



6. Record your podcast

Make some sample recordings to see which hardware and software audio settings produce the best results.

- If you are sampling sound from different web sites, the sound may not be the same, and you will also need to make adjustments when switching to voice recording.
- Use a relaxed, conversational tone and record the entire voiceover at one time. This avoids having to edit the wave forms to correct for differences in volume levels between different recordings.
- Set your sample rates. 44.1KHz and 16-bit is sufficient for voice. If you select higher rates for music, your file sizes will be larger.
- Sound effects and intro/outro music can be added real-time in Propaganda. When using Audacity, you will have to 1) record the podcast; 2) locate sound effects on your hard drive; and 3) import into your project.

7. Copyright considerations

There are legal issues involved in creating and distributing podcasts:

- Using music and video;
- Fair use;
- Rules for teachers and librarians;
- Copyrights and trademarks;
- Using interviews;
- Licensing.

The **Creative Commons Podcasting Legal Guide**, (Berkman Center Clinical Program in Cyberlaw, Harvard Law School. March 2006), http://mirrors.creativecommons.org/Podcasting_Legal_Guide.pdf, covers the legalities of podcasting, provides an overview of podcasting, and lists additional podcasting resources.

8. Edit your podcast

Use the edit features of your software to remove stretches of silence or to fix mistakes you made during recording (Audacity and Propaganda work the same way):

- Identify the parts that you'd like to edit. A flat wave form line indicates silence.
- Use your cursor to highlight the part you want to delete. Hit the play button to preview the selection before you delete.
- Listen to the edited track. You can undo and edit again if you're not satisfied.

9. Mix your podcast

Before you start making adjustments to your tracks, be sure you understand what features your software provides and what the results will be. It's a good idea to make a backup copy of your project file.

- Audacity has a mixer toolbar with three controls, and a Quick Mix feature (Project >Quick Mix) that combines everything into a single stereo track.
- Propaganda allows you to adjust track overlaps, tempo ranges, intro/outro ranges, and has specific mixing features under 'transitions' for each track.
- Save your mix as an uncompressed WAV or AIFF file so you have a master file to work from.

NOTE: Be sure you are happy with the balance between your voice and other audio tracks before mixing to a single stereo track.

10. Covert to MP3 and publish your podcast

You are now ready to export your final mix to MP3 format. Use a 32- 64Kbps bit rate, name the file, and save to a location on your computer.

- In Audacity you will add ID3-tag information at this step, so listeners will be able to find your podcast on their MP3 players.
- If using Audacity, you will need to download the MP3 encoder code separately.
- Propaganda has the MP3 encoder built in.

Move your MP3 file to your FTP host server and use RSS to allow listeners to subscribe to regular downloads of your podcast. You will need to create an XML file (RSS feed) that tells people where your podcast is hosted. Ourmedia is a good resource to learn about RSS, <http://www.ourmedia.org/node/255193>.

- Propaganda creates the RSS feed file for you.
- If you use Audacity, you can use a free podcast RSS-feed generator at Ourmedia.
- Use the W3C RSS feed validation service to test the syntax of your RSS feed before you announce the link: <http://validator.w3.org/feed/>. If you find errors, correct the RSS file and upload again.

Now you are ready to share the RSS link with your friends, or submit your link to podcast directories such as iPodder.org or iTunes.

You can also put your podcasts on iTunes. Go to the iTunes Music Store customer service page and follow the instructions for adding a podcast to their catalog.