

How to Start a Podcast

The Basics

The basic steps are: you record something, you upload it to a host / server, and then that host sends it out to most if not all of the places most of us listen to podcasts, like iTunes and whatnot. It's remarkably simple.

The host I use is LibSyn (short for liberated syndication), and costs about \$20 a month.

Recording

I record my own voice on Audacity, which is a free app. There are many of this kind of app — professional but not overly complicated recording apps; GarageBand is another — so just pick one and get to know it. My experience with Audacity was a decent learning curve, with quite a bit of trial and error and lots of googling. I think it's worth devoting a few hours to just learning the app you choose before you use it to record something you care about.

I record most of my interviews via Skype with an app called eCamm, \$30, that automatically launches when Skype launches. I sometimes choose to see my guests on the video while we talk, but mostly I just stick to audio only. I find it more intimate in many ways.

I've recorded a couple of interviews in person, and have yet to find a way to do that that I really like. I used a two way mic that didn't seem any better than the built-in mic on my iPhone.

(And yes, I import the recordings into Audacity and edit everything there — adding my intro and outro and whatnot — and then export as a 320 kbps constant bit rate mp3.)

Intro and Outro Music

I've used the same 45-sec riff for the whole show, which I was lucky enough to be gifted by a very talented friend Bill Mize. There are many places to find sound bites online for free for

the purpose of podcasting. One resource: <https://www.weeditpodcasts.com/11-resources-for-royalty-free-music/>

Audio Quality and Mics

The audio quality I go for is: it should be easy to listen to, i.e. audible, and have the feel that I as the host cared enough to make it decently listenable. I don't go for pristine. I do go for as best as I can within reason.

The mic I use now is the Amazon Basics Condenser Mic: \$89

For the first two years (all of season one and most of season two) I used a Shure MV5: \$99

For any mic, you'll want a pop guard (protects the listener from hearing the shrill of hard "p" sounds). Any one will do. (I used a paper napkin for the very first episode!)

(Why I switched mics: I liked the sound quality of the Shure. But every once in awhile it would get really buzz-y, this electronic hum I could hear in my headset. So I bought the amazon mic, thinking my Shure had bit the dust. What I found out since was that the Shure was responding to things being plugged in nearby, namely my phone and computer. Without things plugged in near it, it's fine every time. I'd just already made the switch and like them both just fine so have been using the Amazon one lately.)

A Few More Thoughts

If you're interviewing, before your first one, do a mock interview with a friend to test all the equipment, volume levels, recording apps, etc. Listen back on it to make sure you've got all the knobs and dials figured out. I wish I'd done that.

If you're reaching out to potential guests: be clear, kind and generous. I often begin by thanking them for the work they're doing (fill in the blank here on whatever it is you're actually thankful for), saying here's why I'd like you on the show, and what do you think? If they say "not right now" I say "thanks and got it; can I check back in a few months?" and if

they say yes to that, I do. (My longest back-and-forth doing this is just over two years with Peter Levine's office before, finally, they / he said yes.)

I think it's worth appreciating how intimate a podcast is. For many people, you'll be listened to with headphones which is so, so intimate: you're right there, next to their brain. Speaking the way you speak to a good friend is as good an orientation I can think of. Don't speak to a huge audience, speak like you would if you were right in the ears of someone you really cared about.

Don't wait. Consider it a nearly-free life school class: Creating Something You Care About 301.

Reach out anytime.

Love, LB