

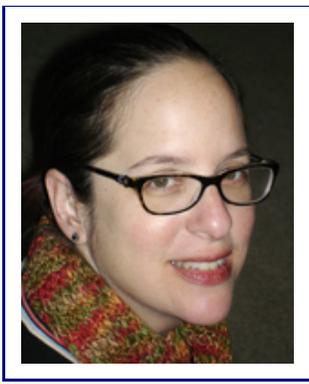


November 24, 2015 by Joan Stewart<<https://publicityhound.com/blog/author/jstewart>>

## Podcasting for Beginners, Part 1: Equipment That Will Make You Sound Like a Million Bucks

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By Margaret Larkin

I've been podcasting for a while, and have learned a lot...good and bad. I've had thousands of listeners and several thousand hits (some podcast episodes have reached 10,000 hits).

But I've also made many mistakes, and could easily write an entire article just about that! But let's keep it positive. Here some basic tips about podcasting—lessons I've learned “in the trenches.”

## What is Your Podcast About?

Have a niche, goal and focus. That will make it easier to create content and define your audience.

Do research to see if there's a need for the information or entertainment that you have to offer, and where your potential fans are so you know how to promote your podcast to them. Ask yourself:

- Why am I doing the podcast?
- What do I want to achieve?
- Can I offer something to listeners that they haven't heard before?
- How does it fit with my professional and personal goals?
- Who is my target audience?

Then come up with a name and logo. The more professional you are, the more credibility and listeners you'll have. Here's mine:



Next, you'll need to gather your tools. In addition to a computer that has a sound card, ports, and enough power and storage to handle audio recording, editing, sessions and files, you'll need the following:

## Microphones

There are many kinds of microphones, and better quality mics are expensive. However, you don't have to spend a lot of money if you know what kind to buy. Sweetwater has a helpful Studio Microphone Buying Guide<<http://www.sweetwater.com/insync/studio-microphone-buying-guide/>> to get you started. You can also call them, visit Guitar Center<<http://www.guitarcenter.com/>>, or your preferred specialty audio store to ask questions. Many pros who work in the business are passionate, helpful and know a lot!

Important: Don't use headset microphones that are commonly used for online meetings and games. And don't use your computer's built-in mic because the quality isn't good enough for podcasting.

There are two kinds of mics: USB and Analog.

### USB

These mics are easy to use. You just plug them into your computer, and that's it. The only problem is that they aren't as good quality as dynamic mics, but they might be sufficient for your needs. Some commonly used mics are the Snowball<<http://www.bluemic.com/snowball/>>, Yeti Pro<<http://www.bluemic.com/yetipro/>>, Apogee Mic <<http://www.apogeedigital.com/products/mic>>(for Macs, iPhones, iPads), Audio-Technica AT2020 <[http://www.audio-technica.com/cms/wired\\_mics/c75c5918ed57a8d0/](http://www.audio-technica.com/cms/wired_mics/c75c5918ed57a8d0/)> and Samson Meteor<<http://www.samsontech.com/samson/products/microphones/usb-microphones/metormic/>>. It's best to try out different USB mics to see which one has the sound you want, and which is best for your voice.



## Analog

These mics require an XLR<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XLR\\_connector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XLR_connector)> connector, so you can't plug the mics directly into your computer. You'll need to plug the analog mic into a mixer, preamp, or audio interface. There are "traditional" types, which have a variety of required connections. Here's a simple explanation of how to connect a mixer to a PC.

<[https://www.soundonsound.com/sos/apr08/articles/qa0408\\_3.htm](https://www.soundonsound.com/sos/apr08/articles/qa0408_3.htm)> There's also the USB type, which means you can plug the USB cable directly into your computer's USB port.

Since you're doing a podcast, a USB "audio box" would probably be easier for you. I use an AudioBox USB Recording System<<https://www.presonus.com/products/AudioBox-USB>>, but there are many others from which to choose. If you want to know more about which mixers are appropriate for your needs and skill level, ask the pros at Sweetwater,<<http://www.sweetwater.com>> B&H,<<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/browse/Professional-Audio/ci/12154/N/4294550705>> Guitar Center, or your preferred audio store.



For more information about mics and interfaces, see [Podcasting Basics, Part 1: Voice Recording Gear](http://transom.org/2015/podcasting-basics-part-1-voice-recording-gear/). For a comparison of microphones, see [The Ultimate Podcasting Mic Shootout](http://recordinghacks.com/2011/06/02/ultimate-podcast-mic-shootout/).

If you don't want to research and test a bunch of analog mics, but just want to get a good quality one that's not expensive, get the Shure SM58 <http://www.shure.com/americas/products/microphones/sm/sm58-vocal-microphone>. It's an industry standard—affordable and rugged—a go-to mic that many pros use.

You'll need to decide if you're going to podcast with just yourself, with one other person, or with a group of people. You'll need one mic for each person. Don't place a mic on a table in a room because the sound quality will be poor. You'll hear an echo as if you're talking in a cave because sound bounces more in large spaces.

The USB audio box that I have only supports two analog microphones. If you want the ability to record with more, get a mixer. The problem with that, however, is how to connect it to your computer because there are different ports and connection methods. Here's a tutorial on how to connect a mixer. [http://manual.audacityteam.org/o/man/tutorial\\_connecting\\_a\\_mixer.html](http://manual.audacityteam.org/o/man/tutorial_connecting_a_mixer.html)

There are other issues to consider with microphones, such as the direction of where the sound is coming from: omnidirectional, unidirectional, or bidirectional.

Omnidirectional means the sound comes from all directions. "Bi" means it's front and back. "Uni" is only the front. Here's a diagram of the three types of directional mics.

[http://www.yamahaproaudio.com/global/en/Images/pa\\_beginners\\_mic\\_6-4.jpg](http://www.yamahaproaudio.com/global/en/Images/pa_beginners_mic_6-4.jpg) It's best to use a unidirectional mic for podcasting, though if you're interviewing someone, you might be able to use a bidirectional mic. Still, best practice is for each person to use a mic.

Another aspect to consider is the pickup pattern. Cardioid is typical for unidirectional mics. See this [diagram and explanation](http://blog.matbury.com/2009/04/23/good-quality-audio/).

You can get more information about the basic aspects of sound and microphones here [http://www.yamahaproaudio.com/global/en/training\\_support/selftraining/pa\\_guide\\_beginner/microphone/](http://www.yamahaproaudio.com/global/en/training_support/selftraining/pa_guide_beginner/microphone/).

## A Pop Filter

This is important to have because it will prevent harsh "p" sounds (also called "popping p's"). It goes

in front of the mic, and looks like a metal screen<[http://www.sweetwater.com/c394--Pop\\_Filters](http://www.sweetwater.com/c394--Pop_Filters)>. Some people think a pop filter is optional. I think it's essential. You'll sound better and won't have to fix as much when editing your podcast.



## Headphones

Always wear headphones when recording. It will prevent feedback, and you'll also be able to monitor the sound. You don't need expensive ones since a podcast doesn't have layers of sound that music has, so use whatever type you prefer.

## Digital Recording Device

I use a Roland<<http://www.roland.com/products/r-05/>>. Other podcasters use a Zoom<<https://www.zoom.co.jp/products/handy-recorder/h2n-handy-recorder>>, Olympus<<http://www.getolympus.com/us/en/audio/digital-recorders.html>> or another recorder (ask your favorite audio outlet) You can also use a handheld recorder although you'll probably have to edit out the pauses because you're moving the recorder back and forth between the participants. I've done this with several interviews.

Whatever you decide, make sure it can record a .wav file or mp3 at a bitrate of 128 kbps or 96 kbps, at 44.1 kHz (that's a general standard). Here's a good explanation of bitrates<<http://www.richardfarrar.com/what-are-bit-rates/>> and how they affect sound quality and size. A

.wav file is bigger, so eventually you won't be publishing your podcast in that format. But I'd recommend recording in it for the best quality. The standard is 44.1khz, 16-bit.



## Other Interview Options

You can also record interviews through Skype or a digital/computer phone. I use Google Voice through my computer, which has become Google Hangouts. I also use Audio Hijack<<https://www.rogueamoeba.com/audiohijack/>> (only for Macs) to record from the computer and download it as an mp3 file. You'll find a variety of programs for recording Skype. Here's a list of options for PC and Mac.<<http://www.technorms.com/43571/record-skype-calls-on-pc-mac>>

Learn the Equipment That Will Make You Sound Like a Million Bucks When You #Podcast

<<https://twitter.com/share?comment=Equipment+That+Will+Make+You+Sound+Like+a+Million+Bucks+When+You+%23Podcast&url=https://publicityhound.com/blog/podcasting-equipment-that-will-make-you-sound-like-a-million-bucks>>



## A Soundproof Space

If you place a microphone on a table in an open room, it won't sound tight or solid. Think about how it sounds when you talk to someone in a gym or large garage. Some podcasters put sound-dampening curtains over their windows, or record in a closed space, such as a closet. Books are also effective for making a room more soundproof.

Record a few samples to determine which is the most soundproof space in your home or office. You can also buy padding to put on the walls of your room to absorb excess noise.

Even if you think there are no extraneous noises, listen to your sample with your headphones on. You might hear the hum of the computer, vents or even electricity. That happens when your microphone is too close to your computer, or your system isn't grounded. You can read more technical information about that issue at Audioholics.com<<http://www.audioholics.com/home-theater-connection/ground-loops-eliminating-system-hum-and-buzz>>.

## Audio Software

You will need audio software to record and edit your podcast. If you don't want to spend any money on software, use GarageBand on your Mac or download Audacity<<http://audacityteam.org/>> for Mac or PC. I like Audacity more than GarageBand. If you're already working with Adobe Creative Suite, you can use Adobe Audition<<http://www.adobe.com/products/audition.html>> that's included in the group (this is my favorite program).

There are other software programs you can buy. The industry standard is Pro Tools<<https://www.avid.com/US/products/pro-tools-software>>. I took a class on this and got the free, simple version, but for some people, it's too complicated to use for a podcast. Other podcasters like Cubase<<https://www.steinberg.net/en/shop/cubase.html>>, Studio One<<http://studioone.presonus.com/>> (I have this program and sometimes use it), Logic Pro<<http://www.apple.com/logic-pro/>>, and many others.

First test the software. Free trials are usually available at the companies' websites. Then use what you feel most comfortable with. Learning audio programs is fun and can also come in handy when you do videos!

What equipment do you prefer? What problems did you run into when you started recording? If you have questions about podcasting, ask in the Comments and I'll be happy to help.

**Tomorrow:** How to Produce Your Podcast and Publish It Online.

<https://publicityhound.com/blog/podcasting-for-beginners-part-2>

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## ABOUT JOAN STEWART

Publicity expert Joan Stewart, a PR mentor aka The Publicity Hound, works with small business owners who need free publicity to promote their expertise. She shows you how to establish your credibility, enhance your reputation, position yourself as an expert, and sell more products and services. To receive her free DIY publicity tips twice a week, subscribe here.<http://www.PublicityHound.com/tips> See all the ways you can work with Joan<http://publicityhound.com/consulting>. Or contact her<mailto:JStewart@PublicityHound.com?subject=Question for You, Joan> and ask a burning question about PR, self-promotion or social media.

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