

Podcast Basics

Finding and Receiving

So what is a podcast?

A podcast is **multimedia file** (audio, video, or both) that is created in **episodes** (like a radio broadcast or TV show) on a **continuing basis** by a person (or persons) and distributed **over the Internet** in a format that users can **subscribe to** and **receive automatically** (through a program like iTunes or Juice). A podcast can cover any subject from education to entertainment to news and more. Once an episode of a podcast has been received the user can listen to it right on their computer, or they can transfer it to a portable media player such as an iPod or any MP3 player. Some podcasts are created professionally by media companies, but the majority are made by amateurs using free or low-cost equipment and software.

Note: Although the name “podcast” is closely related to the Apple iPod, you do not need an Apple computer or an iPod to receive and listen to podcasts. Podcasts can be received on any type of computer (Apple, PC, Linux, etc.) and can be played back in a large variety of methods (on the computer itself or on most any MP3 player).

Why should you get podcasts?

There are several benefits to receiving podcasts:

- Podcasts are **informative** – Although the quality of podcasts will vary (just like the quality of TV, movies, and radio shows) there are many excellent podcasts with relevant and useful information.
- Podcasts are **abundant** – There are thousands of podcasts available, and the number just keeps growing. No matter what your interests are, you will be able to find one or more podcasts that address your needs.
- Most podcasts are **free** – Although a few charge money to get them, by far the majority are free. The podcasts are free because either the creator sells ad time in each episode (like radio and TV do) or the creator is simply doing the podcast as a hobby.
- Podcasts come to you **automatically** – Using a program such as iTunes or Juice, you subscribe to the podcasts of your choice. Then whenever any new episode comes out, the podcast is downloaded automatically to your computer. In a busy world, this makes it easy to stay informed without having to continually search for information.
- Podcasts are **convenient** to listen to – Because you can transfer your podcast episodes to an MP3 player, you can listen to them when and where is convenient for you. You can listen to them while traveling, mowing the yard, exercising, and such.

What software do you need?

To automatically receive podcasts you need a program. There are many programs that can do this for you, such as iTunes and Juice. Below is information on these two particular options:

- **iTunes** – <http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>
By far this is the most popular choice for receiving podcasts ... and for good reasons. iTunes is free and very easy to use. iTunes excels at helping you find podcasts, with well organized directories, powerful search tools, good descriptions, and user reviews. Note: iTunes is not just a podcast receiver, but also a full-service program for purchasing music, TV shows, and movies, as well as serving as an organizer for all the media on your computer. Because the program is more powerful, it also uses up more memory on your computer. Still though, this is the program of choice by most people and is the one I recommend. Instructions in this guide will refer to iTunes.

- **Juice** – <http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/index.php>

Juice is also a free podcast receiver and is easy to use as well. It is not as powerful as iTunes and does not have as good of search tools. However, since all it does is receive podcasts, it is a smaller program with less demands on your computer system. This program is a decent alternative to iTunes if all you need is a podcast receiver.

How do you find podcasts?

With thousands of podcasts out there it can be difficult to wade through the options and find what you want. The two best ways to locate potential podcasts are (1) use the built-in search features in your podcasting program, and (2) go to podcast directory websites. Both are explained below:

Option #1 – Searching for podcasts with iTunes

There are several ways to locate podcasts with iTunes. In all cases begin by starting up iTunes and clicking on the “**iTunes Store**” link. This will take you to the iTunes web site where you can begin searching for podcasts.

- 1) **Featured Podcasts** – These are high quality podcasts that are currently being highlighted
 - a) In the iTunes Store begin by clicking “**Podcasts**”
 - b) Next click the “**Category**” you want to explore, such as “**Education**”
 - c) Next click a **subcategory** if you wish to dig deeper, such as “**K-12**” or “**Educational Technology**”
 - d) Now you will see a group of podcasts in a section labeled “**Featured**”
 - e) You can scroll through those entries or click the “**See All**” link to see more
 - f) When you find a podcast that looks interesting you can click on its title for more information
- 2) **Top Podcasts** – These are the most popular podcasts as determined by recent subscriptions
 - a) In the iTunes Store begin by clicking “**Podcasts**”
 - b) Next click the “**Category**” you want to explore, such as “**Education**”
 - c) Next click a subcategory if you wish to dig deeper, such as “**K-12**” or “**Educational Technology**”
 - d) Now you will see a group of podcasts in a section labeled “**Top Podcasts**”
 - e) You can scroll through those entries or click the “**Top Podcasts**” link to see the top 100 in that category
 - f) When you find a podcast that looks interesting you can click on its title for more information
- 3) **Power Search** – You can also search by typing in a word of interest
 - a) Click “**Power Search**” in the “**Quick Links**” section
 - b) Now click the “**Podcasts**” link to narrow your search to podcasts
 - c) Type a search term in the “**Title**” box or “**Description**” box, such as “math” or “history” or “autism” or such. You should do the search once using the “**Title**” box and a second time using the “**Description**” box to get the most results.
 - d) You can now scroll through the results at the bottom or click the “**See All**” link to see them in thumbnail view
- 4) **Browse** – This feature will show you up to 3,000 podcasts in any category
 - a) Click “**Browse**” in the “**Quick Links**” section
 - b) Now click the “**Podcasts**” link to choose that category
 - c) Next click the “**Category**” you want to explore, such as “**Education**”
 - d) Next click a **subcategory** such as “**K-12**” or “**Educational Technology**”
 - e) You will now get a listing of the podcasts in that directory and can sort them by several options
 - f) If you find one you are interested in, click the arrow icon next to its name to get more information

- 5) **“Listeners Also Subscribed To” option** – Once you find a podcast you like. iTunes will show you similar podcasts that users have subscribed to
- Locate an interesting podcast using any method from above
 - Click on its title to bring up its detailed information
 - Note the section on the right labeled **“Listeners Also Subscribed To”**
 - Here you will find five other podcasts that are related to the first
 - Click on any title to get information

Option #2 – Searching for podcasts online

Another way to find podcasts is to go to web sites online. There are many sites that list directories of podcasts, often searchable and organized by category. Below are some good examples:

- Podcast.net - <http://www.podcast.net/>
- Podcast Alley - <http://www.podcastalley.com>
- The Education Podcast Network - <http://epnweb.org/index.php>
- Education Podcast Directory - http://www.podcastingnews.com/forum/link_6.htm
- Education Podcasts - http://www.podfeed.net/category_list.asp?id=30

How do you subscribe to a podcast?

Now that you have found a podcast, how do you subscribe to it? There are three common ways, going from easiest to most difficult.

- The **“Subscribe” button** in iTunes – By far the easiest method
 - Once you find a podcast you like in iTunes, just click the **“Subscribe”** button
 - The podcast will automatically be added to your list of subscriptions
 - iTunes will download the latest episode
- The **“iTunes” button** on a web site
 - If you come across a web site that offers a podcast, many times they will have an “iTunes” button on the web page
 - If so, simply click the **“iTunes”** button
 - This will launch iTunes and add the podcast to your subscriptions
- The **RSS Feed** option – By far the most difficult method. If you come across a web site that offers a podcast, sometimes they will not have the simple “iTunes” button. In these cases you need to locate the **RSS feed**, which stands for **Really Simple Syndication**. This is simply a fancy web address that tells your podcast receiving program where to get the episodes. A typical RSS feed for a podcast will look something like:
<http://feeds.feedburner.com/SmartboardLessonsPodcast>
To get and use the RSS feed, do the following:
 - On the web site find link or button that says something like **“RSS”** or **“XML”** or **“Subscribe”**
 - Sometimes you will need to click the link to see the RSS feed address. In that case just highlight and copy the address.
 - Other times you will just need to right-click on the button itself and choose **“Copy Shortcut”** to get the RSS feed address.
 - Once you have the address copied, go to iTunes
 - Now click **“Advanced”** in the top menu bar
 - Next click **“Subscribe to Podcast...”**

- g) Finally paste the RRS feed address into the box by typing ctrl-v (pressing both the “Ctrl” key and the “V” key on your keyboard at the same time)
- h) Click “**OK**” to accept the new subscription

How to you play podcasts?

Now that you have your podcast episodes, how do you listen to them. There are two main options:

- 1) Option #1 – **Play them on your computer**
 - a) Simply open iTunes
 - b) Click “**Podcasts**” in the “**Library**” section
 - c) Click the arrow icon next to a podcast to see all its episodes
 - d) Click on an episode of interest to select it
 - e) Click the play button (big arrow) at the top to play the file
- 2) Option #2 – **Transfer to an MP3 player** – The details of this will depend upon the model of your MP3 player. For example, your player may come with its own syncing software. Also, iTunes is able to sync automatically with iPods. However, if you have any other type of MP3 player, you may need to copy the podcast episodes manually as follows:
 - a) Open “**My Music**” and dig down through the subfolders to find your podcasts.
 - b) Now open “**My Computer**” in a new window and locate your MP3 player.
 - c) Drag and drop the podcast files from your computer to your player.

How to delete podcasts

There are several ways to get rid of episodes you have heard, or even unsubscribe to entire podcasts. Below are just a couple of the methods.

- 1) To delete a **single episode**:
 - a) Open iTunes and go to the podcasts in your library
 - b) Expand one of the podcasts to see all its episodes
 - c) Right-click on an episode you wish to delete
 - d) Choose “**Delete**” from the pop-up menu
- 2) To unsubscribe from a **podcast**:
 - a) Open iTunes and go to the podcasts in your library
 - b) Locate the podcast you wish to unsubscribe from
 - c) Right-click on that podcast title
 - d) Choose “**Delete**” from the pop-up menu

What are some good podcasts?

Below are a few examples of podcasts that I personally like. These examples all deal with education and/or technology. Of course there are many more podcasts out there that deal with topics that are more specific, more general, and just plain different than these. All of these examples can be found in iTunes.

- **The Treasure Chest - <http://www.ohiotreasurechest.org/>**
This is the podcast I create. It is the official podcast of the Ohio Treasure Chest. Each episode I open the treasure chest to see examples of the best K-12 educational web sites for math, science, social studies, and language arts, as well as cover technology integration ideas.

- **SMARTBoard Lessons - <http://pdtogo.com/smart/>**
Delivering fresh and engaging lesson ideas at least weekly! The purpose of this podcast is to focus on using SMART Boards in the classroom. Each episode will feature a lesson, a podcast, and user comments. The hosts of the podcast are teachers who have won awards for their use of SMARTBoard Interactive Whiteboards in the classroom, including being honoured as Exemplary Educators, and Microsoft Innovative Teachers.
- **Podcast for Teachers - <http://www.podcastforteachers.org/>**
Fordham University provides lively conversations about technology and education. Ed tech expert, Mark Gura and Fordham professor Dr. Kathy King, bring the latest resources, news, interviews and commentary on technology innovations' meaning for teachers, students, schools, teacher education, teaching and learning. From software applications, to intimate conversations with notable and experienced educators, ed techies, and authors.
- **GEEK!ED! - <http://coverpage.pcs.k12.mi.us/geeked/>**
Education and Technology talk, news, speculation, and fun.
- **Connected Learning - <http://davidwarlick.com/connectlearning/>**
Connect Learning is a nearly weekly podcast consisting mostly of casual interviews with speakers and attendees at educational technology conferences across the U.S. and beyond. The topic is education, teaching, learning, literacy, and 21st century classrooms.
- **Tech Chick Tips - <http://techchicktips.net/>**
Tips and tricks for gadgets and software for your digital life given by two Texas chicks obsessed with anything digital. The podcast is geared specifically to educators.
- **Bit By Bit - http://bobsprankle.com/bitbybit_wordpress/**
A podcast by a teacher, for teachers, talking and reflecting about the use of technology in instruction, and the changing classroom environment in the 21st Century.
- **Fusion Finds - <http://jgarton.edublogs.org/>**
Fusion Finds is published by Janetta Garton, Technology Curriculum Director for the Willard R-II School District in Willard, Missouri. It is designed to motivate teachers to integrate technology into their instructional practice, encourage teachers to use technology to efficiently and effectively manage their classrooms, and provide technology resources for professional development.

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