

Podcasting FOR **DUMMIES®**

Tee Morris and Evo Terra

Foreword by Dawn Miceli and Drew Domkus



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About the Authors

Tee Morris: Tee Morris is an instructor at EEI Communications, based out of the Washington DC/Virginia/Maryland metro area, and teaches various applications in graphic design and video editing; he also teaches Podcasting for Government and Corporate Business. When he is not working as a freelance artist and instructor, Tee writes science fiction and fantasy; his writing career began with his 2002 historical epic fantasy, *MOREVI The Chronicles of Rafe & Askana*, published by Dragon Moon Press. His other works include *MOREVI's* highly anticipated sequel *Legacy of MOREVI: Book One of the Arathellean Wars* and *Billibub Baddings and The Case of The Singing Sword*, a spoof of both fantasy and hard-boiled detective novels that received an Honorable Mention for *ForeWord Magazine's* Book of the Year and was a finalist for the Independent Publisher's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy book. It was the podcast of his debut novel that led to this team-up with Evo Terra in *Podcasting For Dummies*.

Find out more about Tee Morris at www.teemorris.com.

Evo Terra: Evo is the poster child for Type A personalities the world over. Washed-up musician, tree-hugging herbalist, heretical-but-ordained minister, talk-radio personality, advertising executive and technology innovator, all wrapped up in one single-serving package. In the podcasting world, Evo tends to infect others with the podcasting bug, from budding show hosts to the people behind the scenes finding new uses for podcast technologies.

He hosts three different podcasts, *Slice of Scifi* (sliceofscifi.com), the *Dragon Page Cover to Cover*, and *Wingin' It!* (dragonpage.com) and is helping authors podcast their works to the masses at Podiobooks.com.

He currently resides in Cottonwood, Arizona, with his wife Sheila and his son NJ. Neither of which have a podcast. Yet.

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Foreword

A year ago we were just like you . . . and then we became podcasting superstars!

Drew came home in August of 2004 in a full-blown nerd frenzy, raving about how audio blogs and RSS were going to change communication as we know it. I pretended to understand and feigned interest as he spoke on and on, but when I listened to his first audio blog post, it finally clicked — he was onto something. I quickly jumped on board to prevent him from nerding it up too much and thus the *Dawn and Drew Show!* was born.

The term “podcasting” wasn’t coined until a short while later, but the idea remains the same: If you have a message, record it using simple software and inexpensive equipment and then publish it to the Web for the world to hear. We have listeners on every continent and get feedback from around the globe, and we do it all from the living room of our Wisconsin farmhouse — sometimes in our pajamas. We’re still using the same \$20 USB microphone and GarageBand software from Apple, so we’re a perfect example that you don’t need a lot of money to get started in podcasting. But the very best thing about podcasting is that anyone can do it! When we started, there weren’t any how-to books on the subject, but now *Podcasting For Dummies* has made it easy for you to get your own podcast started. There is no censorship, no FCC, and no radio executives to tell you what to say — there are no rules. Podcasting is all about self-expression. So start podcasting now — fame and fortune may await you.

We’ve always had a great time making the *Dawn and Drew Show!* and now we’re able to do it full time. It’s the great podcasting dream come true, and if we can do it, so can you!

Dawn Miceli and Drew Domkus

www.dawnanddrew.com

Introduction

Maybe you've been casually surfing the Web or perusing your newspaper when the word "podcasting" has popped up. Steadily, like a building wave that would make champion surfers salivate with delight, the term has popped up again and again — and your curiosity continues to pique as the word "podcasting" echoes in your ears and remains in the back of your mind as a riddle wrapped in an enigma, super-sized with a side of fries and a diet soda to go.

Podcasting For Dummies is the answer to that super-sized riddle-enigma combo, and it even comes complete with a special prize. Beginning with the question at the forefront of your mind — *What is podcasting?* — this book takes you through the fastest-growing technological movement on the Internet. By the time you reach the end of this book, the basics will be in place to get you, your voice, and your message heard around the world — and you can even have a bit of fun along the way.

About This Book

"So what are you up to, Tee?"

"I'm currently podcasting my first novel, a swashbuckling tale that carries our heroes . . ."

"Uh . . . what is a podcast?"

Asked by best friends and lifetime technologists, this question continues to crop up over and over again, immediately after the word "podcast" lands in a casual conversation. Just the word "podcasting" carries an air of geekiness about it — and behold, the habitual technophobes suddenly clasp their hands to their ears and run away screaming in horror lest they confront yet another technical matter. Too bad. If they only knew how technical it really isn't. When you peel back the covers and fancy-schmancy tech-talk, it's a pretty simple process to make your own podcast. You just need someone pointing the way and illuminating your path.

This is why we are here: to be that candle in the dark, helping you navigate a world where anyone can do anything, provided they have the tools, the drive,

and the passion. You don't need to be a techno-wizard or a super-geek — you need no wad of tape holding your glasses together; your shirt tail need not stick out from your fly. Anyone can do what we show you in this book. Anyone can take a thought or an opinion, make an audio file expressing that opinion, and distribute this idea worldwide. Anyone can capture the attention of a few hundred — or a few thousand — people around the world through MP3 players hiding in computers, strapped around biceps, jouncing in pockets, or hooked up to car stereos.

Anyone can podcast.

Podcasting, from recording to online hosting, can be done on a variety of budgets, ranging from frugal to Fortune 500. You can podcast about literally anything — including podcasting for its own sake. As blogging gave the anonymous, the famous, the “almost-famous,” and the “used-to-be famous” a voice in politics, religion, and everyday life, podcasting adds volume and tone to that voice. Words on a page are often misconstrued because it's difficult to catch the subtle meanings and innuendos hidden within text. But when those words are actually spoken aloud, the sender's interpretation is clear, concise, and leaves little room for doubt when the message is delivered.

Podcasting is many things to many people — but at its most basic, it's a surprisingly simple and powerful technology. What it means boils down to a single person: you. Some liken it to radio (at least online radio), but it can do — and be — so much more. Podcasting is a new method of communication, transmitting your voice and its message around the world without using public airwaves, connecting the Global Village in ways that the creators of the Internet, RSS, and MP3 compression would probably never have dreamed. It is the unique and the hard-to-find content that can't find a place on commercial, college, or public access radio.

You are about to embark on an exciting adventure into undiscovered territory, and here you will find out that podcasting is all these things, and so much more.

How to Use This Book

Podcasting For Dummies should be these things to all who pick up and read it (whether straight through or by jumping around in the chapters):

- ✓ A user-friendly guide in how to listen, produce, and distribute podcasts
- ✓ A terrific reference for choosing the right hardware and software to put together a sharp-sounding podcast

- ✓ The starting point for the person who knows nothing about audio editing, recording, creating RSS feeds, hosting blogs, or turning a computer into a recording studio
- ✓ A handy go-to “think tank” for any beginning podcaster who’s hungry for new ideas on what goes into a good podcast and fresh points of view
- ✓ A really fun read

There will be plenty of answers in these pages, and if you find our answers too elementary, we give you plenty of points-of-reference to research on your own time. We don’t claim to have all the solutions, quick fixes, and resolutions to all possible podcasting queries, but we do present to you the basic building blocks and first steps for beginning a podcast. As with any *For Dummies* book, our responsibility is to give you the foundation on which to build. That’s what we have done our level best to accomplish: Bestow upon you the enchanted stuff that makes a podcast happen.

This book was written as a linear path from the conceptualization stages to the final publication of your work. However, not everyone needs to read the book from page one. If you’ve already gotten your feet wet with the various aspects of podcasting, jump around from section to section and read the parts that you need. We provide plenty of guides back to other relevant chapters for when the going gets murky.

Conventions Used in This Book

When you go through this book, you’re going to see a few  symbols, the occasional ⇨, and even a few things typed in a completely different style.

There is a method to this madness, and those methods are conventions found throughout this book and other *For Dummies* titles.

When we refer to keyboard shortcuts for Macintosh or Windows, we designate them with (Mac) or (Windows). For Macintosh shortcuts, instead of using that funky cloverleaf symbol, we use the Apple symbol (found on the Command key) and the corresponding letter. For Windows shortcuts, we use the abbreviation for the Control key and the corresponding letter. So the shortcut for Select All looks like this: +A (Mac) / Ctrl+A (Windows).

If keyboard shortcuts are not your thing and you want to know where the commands reside on menus, we use a command arrow (⇨) to help guide you through menus and submenus. So, going back to the earlier example, the command for Select All in the application’s menu is Edit⇨Select All.

When we offer up URLs (Web site addresses) of various podcasts, resources, and audio equipment vendors, or when we have you creating RSS feeds for podcatchers such as iTunes, iPodder, or iPodderX, we use `this particular typeface`.

Bold Assumptions

We assume that you have a computer, a lot of curiosity, and a desire to podcast. We could care less about whether you're using a Mac, a PC, Linux, Unix, or two Dixie cups connected with string. In podcasting, the operating system just makes the computer go. We're here to provide the tools for creating a podcast, regardless of what OS you're running.

Okay, maybe the two Dixie cups connected with string would be a challenge. We both recommend that if you don't have a computer for podcasting, get one. That's an essential.

If you know nothing about audio production, this book will also serve as a fine primer in how to record, edit, and produce audio on your computer, as well as accessorize your Mac or Windows PC with mixing boards, professional-grade microphones, and audio-engineering software that will give you a basic look at this creative field. You can hang on to this title as a handy reference, geared for audio *in podcasting*. Again, our book is a starting point, and (ahem) a fine starting point at that.

With everything that goes into podcasting, there are some things this book is not now, nor will ever be, about. Here's the short list:

- ✔ We're not out to make you into an übergeek in RSS or XML (but we give you all you need to make things work — even get you iTunes-ready).
- ✔ We figure that if you get ahold of Audacity, GarageBand, Audio Hijack Pro, Soundtrack, or Audition, you can take it from there (but we give you overviews of those programs and a few basic editing examples).
- ✔ We're not out to teach you how to use an MP3 player such as an iPod, an iRiver, or a Zen Micro product.

For that matter — to dispel one of the biggest misconceptions of podcasting — you will not be told to run out and get an iPod. *You do not need an iPod to podcast.*

If you are looking for a resource that will teach you RSS, take a look at *Syndicating Web Sites with RSS Feeds For Dummies* by Ellen Finkelstein (published by Wiley).

If you are looking for a resource that will teach you audio editing on your computer, take a look at *PC Recording Studios For Dummies* by Jeff Strong. While the title does refer to “PC” by name, the book opens with the statement “*Whether you use a Windows or Macintosh computer for your home recording studio, your system of choice employs much of the same basic technology . . .*” and carries on its dual-platform attitude from beginning to end. That’s our kind of approach.

If you are looking for a terrific start to the podcasting experience, then — in the words of the last knight guarding the Holy Grail in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* — “You have chosen wisely.”

How This Book Is Organized

Now that we’ve told exactly what this book is not, we give you a quick overview as to what this book exactly *is*. And yeah, we’re going to keep the overview brief because we figure you’re anxious to get started. But the fact that you’re reading this passage also tells us you don’t want to miss a detail, so here’s a quick bird’s-eye view of what we do in *Podcasting For Dummies*.

Part I: Podcasting on a Worldwide Frequency

This is a great part for both kinds of podcasters — those who want to participate, and those who just want to listen. We pay heed to the evolution of podcasting from the blogging movement, and then try to explain, in the simplest terms (as if to someone completely unfamiliar with all things technical), exactly what podcasting is.

In other words, we use pop-culture references.

Part I also goes into the bare-bones basics of how a podcast happens, how to get podcasts from the Internet to your computer, and how to host a podcast yourself — ending up with a few places online that offer podcast feeds you can visit to sample the experience — and (later on) let the world know “Hey, I’ve got a podcast, too!”

Part II: The Hills Are Alive with the Sound of Podcasting

Consider this section of the book part-*Inside the Actor’s Studio*, part-Tech TV, part-*WKRP* (with your host, Dr. Johnny Fever . . . booooouuugaar!!!). But

instead of (pod)casting you into the wilderness to stumble through personal rants and raves, verbally trip over yourself in interviews, and post podcasts so raw that your listeners' ears bleed, we offer up some techniques the pros use in broadcasting. Podcasting may be the grass-roots movement of home-spun telecommunications, but that doesn't mean it has to sound that way (unless, of course, you *want* it to sound that way). From preshow prep to setting your volume levels to the basics of audio editing, this is the part that polishes your podcast.

Part III: So You've Got This Great Recording of Your Voice. Now What?

The audio file you've just created is now silently staring back at you from your monitor (unless you're listening to it on your computer's music player, in which case it's just defiantly talking back at you!), and you haven't a clue what your next step is. We cover the last-minute details, and then walk you through the process of getting your podcast online, finding the right Web-hosting packages for podcasts, and getting a good working handle on the RSS and XML used in podcast feeds.

Part IV: Start Spreadin' the News about Your Podcast

*"I wanna beeee a part of it. Podcasting, babeeeee . . .
If I can get on Daily Source,
Then I'll have no remorse for pod—cast—in . . . podcasting . . ."*

Sorry. Sinatra moment.

Anyway, you've got the podcast recorded, edited, and online, now you need to let people know you've got this great podcast just waiting for them — and that is what we explore in Part IV. With the power of publicity — from free-of-charge word-of-mouth (arguably the most effective) to investment in Google Adwords (arguably the most coverage for your dollar), you have a wide array of options to choose from when you're ready to announce your presence to the podcasting community.

Part V: Pod-sibilities to Consider for Your Show

The question of *why* one should podcast is as important as *how* to podcast. We cover some basic rationales that many folks have for sitting behind a

microphone, pouring heart, soul, and pocket change into their craft each and every day, week, or month. These questions have no right or wrong answers, but our hope is that this section offers pointers to guide you safely through the thought process behind podcasting.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

Perhaps the toughest chapters to write were these: the *For Dummies* trademark Part of Tens chapters. So don't skip them because we'll be über-miffed if you fail to appreciate how hard we busted our humps to get these chapters done!

Right — so what do we give you in our Part of Tens? We give you a list of the ten people who made (and/or currently make) podcasting the hottest communications trend to come down the pike since the invention of the Internet. We also offer suggestions for the beginning podcaster — such as what kind of podcasts should be on your MP3 player, just to give you an idea of what's out there, how they sound, and how you can benefit from them. Finally, our Part of Tens closes with the great debate: Podcasting versus Radio. Is radio dead? Is podcasting just another fad? Read . . . and then *you* decide.

About the Companion Podcast

In some cases, a *For Dummies* book comes with a companion Web site hosted by the good people at www.dummies.com. *Podcasting For Dummies* is the first book in the *For Dummies* series (and could be the world's first do-it-yourself book) to come with a companion *podcast*. Go to your browser and surf to www.dummies.com/go/podcastingfd and follow the instructions there to get free weekly audio commentary from Tee Morris (and maybe Evo Terra, if time and podcasting schedules allow) about concepts in this book explored in greater detail, from the difference between good and bad edits, when too much reverb is too much, and the variety of methods you can use to record a podcast.

Icons Used in This Book

So you're trekking through the book, making some real progress with developing your podcast when suddenly these little icons leap out, grab you by the throat, and wrestle you to the ground. (Who would have thought podcasting was so action-packed, like a Connery-Bond movie, huh?) What do all these little drawings mean? Glad you asked . . .



When we're in the middle of a discussion and suddenly we have one of those "Say, that reminds me . . ." moments, we give you one of these tips. They're handy little extras that are good to know and might even make your podcast sound a little tighter than average.



If that "Say, that reminds me . . ." moment is more than a handy little nugget of information and closer to a "Seriously, you can't forget this part!" factoid, we mark it with a Remember icon. You're going to want to play close attention to these puppies. They will save you a lot of grief in the future.



Sometimes we interrupt our train of thought with a "Time out, Sparky . . ." moment — and this is where we ask for your completely undivided attention. The Warnings are exactly that: flashing lights, ah-ooga horns, dire portents. They're reminders not to try this at home, disclaimers that if you do this we can't be held responsible, and advice for avoiding situations where that earlier-mentioned knight from *The Last Crusade* looks at you and says, "You chose poorly."



These icons can illuminate those "So how does this widget really work . . . ?" moments you may have as you read *Podcasting For Dummies*. You can regard them as cool trivia to impress friends with at parties, or surprise the techno-geeks at the Help Desk who believe they know everything already. The Technical Stuff icons can give you a deeper understanding of what the wizard is doing behind the curtain, making you all the more apt as a podcaster.

Where to Go from Here

At this point, many *For Dummies* authors say something snappy, clever, or even a bit snarky. We save our best tongue-and-cheek material for the pages inside, so let's take a more serious approach . . .

We suggest heading to where you're planning to record your podcast or just plant yourself in front of a computer where you plan to download podcasts for listening. Start with Chapter 1 where you're given a few links to check out, some suggestions on applications for downloading podcasts, and directories to look up where you can find Tee's podcast, Evo's (many) podcasts, and other podcasts that can educate, inspire, and enlighten your ears with original content.

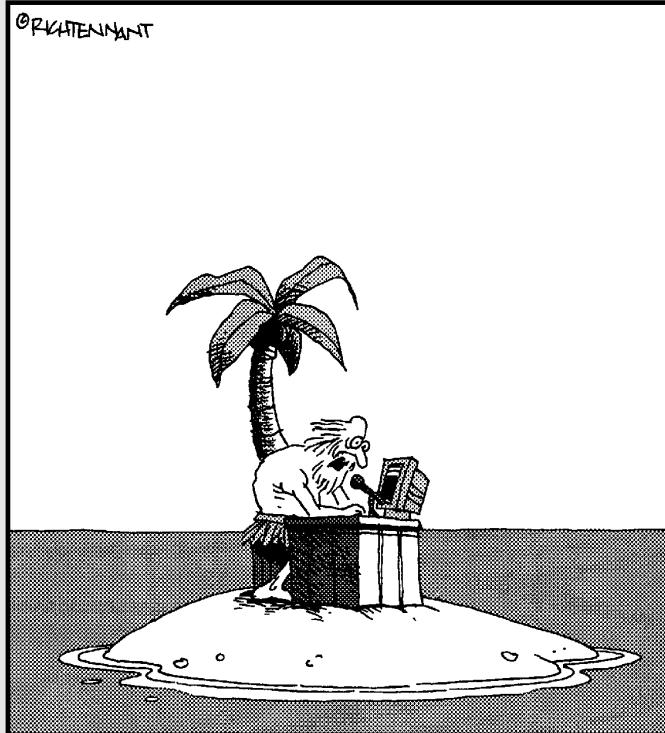
Where do we go from here? Up and out, my friends. Up and out . . .

Part I

Podcasting on a Worldwide Frequency

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"This is number 271 of the podcast show, 'Help!
Get Me Off This Stinking Island!' "

In this part . . .

podcasting is (depending on who's describing it) either taking the world by storm or providing an interesting diversion. If neither of those, it falls somewhere in between. Whatever it is, we like it, and we think you will too. In this first part, we peel back the covers and go beyond the hype to talk about what this technology is and exactly what you need to do to become involved with it — from soup to nuts.

Chapter 1

Getting the Scoop on Podcasting

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding out what podcasting is
 - ▶ Creating a podcast
 - ▶ Finding and subscribing to podcasts
-

Sometimes the invention that makes the biggest impact on our daily lives isn't an invention at all, but the convergence of existing technologies, processes, and ideas. Podcasting may be the perfect example of that principle — and it's changing the relationship people have with their radios, music collections, books, education, and more.

The podcasting movement is actually a spin-off of another communications boom: personal Weblogs, commonly referred to as *blogs*. Blogs sprang up right and left, providing non-programmers and designers a clean, elegant interface that left many on the technology side wondering why they hadn't thought of it sooner. Everyday people could now chronicle their lives, hopes, dreams, and fears, and show them to anyone who cared to read. And oddly enough, people did care to read — and still do.

Podcasting combines the instant information exchange of blogging with audio files that can be played on a computer or MP3 player. When you make your podcast publicly available on the World Wide Web, you are exposing your craft to anyone with a personal computer and a broadband Internet connection. To put that in perspective, the Computer Industry Almanac predicts the global online population will top 1.2 billion users by 2006. In the United States, broadband connections are now more popular than dial-up. And to top it all off, portable players are surging in popularity, with over 22 million adult owners.

This chapter is for *podcasters* (those making the content) and *podcatchers* (those listening to the content) alike. We cover the basic steps to record a podcast and lay out the basics of what you need to do to tune in a podcast.

Deciding Whether Podcasting Is for You

Technically speaking, *podcasting* is the distribution of specially encoded multimedia content to subscribed personal computers via the RSS 2.0 protocol. Whew! Allow us to translate that into common-speak:

Podcasting allows you to listen to stuff you want to hear, whenever and wherever you want.

Podcasting turns the tables on broadcast schedules, allowing the listener to choose not only what to listen to, but also when. And because podcasts are transferred via the Internet, the power to create an audio program isn't limited to those with access to a radio transmitter. This section covers other reasons podcasting is probably for you.

You want to deliver audio content on a regular basis

Sure, you can post your audio content on a blog if you have one. Many bloggers who do that (called *audiobloggers*) record audio segments and insert them as links into the text of their blog posts. Readers of the blog then download the files at their leisure. However, audio blogs require the readers to manually select the content they wish to download. What sets podcasting apart from blogging is that podcasting automates that process. A listener who subscribes to your podcast is subscribed to all of your content, whenever it's available. No need to go back to the site to see what's new!

You want to reach beyond the boundaries of radio

In radio, the number of people who can listen to a show is limited by the power of the transmitter pumping out the signal. Podcasting doesn't use radio signals, transmitters, or receivers — at least not in the classic sense. Podcasts use the World Wide Web as a delivery system, opening up a potential audience that could extend to the entire planet.

No rules exist (yet, anyway) to regulate the creation of podcast content. In fact, neither the FCC nor any other regulatory body for any other government holds jurisdiction over podcasts. If that seems astounding, remember that podcasters are not using the public airwaves to deliver the message.

What's in a name, when the name is podcasting?

As with most items that make their way into the conventional lexicon of speech, the precise origins and meaning behind *podcasting* are somewhat clouded. While the domain *podcast.com* was originally registered back in 2002 (nothing was ever done with it, as far as we know), and Ben Hammersley suggested that and many other terms in February 2004 (www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,1145689,00.html), it's generally accepted in the podosphere that the first person to use the term as a reference to the activity we now know as podcasting was Dannie Gregoire on September 15, 2004 (groups.yahoo.com/group/ipodder-dev/message/41). While some assert the name has connotations to the popular iPod device created by Apple, Dannie didn't have that in mind when the phrase was

coined. Regardless of the intentions, the term has been *backronymed* (that is, treated like an acronym and applied to a variety of plausible existing meanings). Of all the possibilities, we prefer *Personal On-Demand narrowcasting* (not *broadcasting*), which shortens nicely to *podcasting*. But of course, you can choose whichever one makes sense to you.

Granted, the podcasting phenomenon was in part fueled by the wildly popular iPod portable audio device, but no evidence suggests that the two were related when the name was coined. And (as one of your authors, Evo, stoutly maintains), "Because I don't even own an iPod, yet am quite obviously a podcaster, I see no reason for the association to continue to be made." Harrumph.



Just because the FCC doesn't have jurisdiction, you're not exempt from the law or — perhaps more importantly — immune to lawsuits. *You're personally responsible for anything you say, do, or condone on your show.* Additionally, the rules concerning airplay of licensed music, the distribution of copyrighted material, and the legalities of recording telephone conversations all apply. Pay close attention to the relevant sections in Chapter 5 to avoid some serious consequences. When it comes to the legalities, ignorance is not bliss.



Narrowcasting (the practice of delivering content to a select group) distinguishes podcasting from traditional forms of broadcast communication, such as radio. Where a radio station *broadly* casts its signal to anyone who happens to be within the radius of the signal, podcasts *narrowly* cast content to people who have made the overt decision to listen.

You have something to say

Podcasters as a general rule produce content that likely holds appeal for only a select group of listeners. Podcasts start with an idea, something that you have the desire and knowledge, either real or imaginary, to talk about. Add to that a bit of drive, a do-it-yourself-ishness, and an inability to take no for an answer. The point is to say what you want to say, to those who want to hear it.

Podcasts can be about anything and be enjoyed by just about anyone. The topics covered don't have to be earth-shattering or life-changing. You have to follow a few rules, but even then you can break most of them.

Some of the most popular podcasts are created by everyday people who sit in front of their computers for a few nights a week and just speak their minds, hearts, and souls. Some are focused on niche topics; others are more broad-based. Quite a few are seemingly put together at random, perhaps moments before the recording started.

You want to hear from your listeners

I've heard more than one podcaster comment on the fact that they get, well . . . comments. For some reason (which we'll let the social anthropologists of the future puzzle out), podcast listeners are more likely to provide feedback to the podcasts they listen to than radio show listeners are likely to e-mail their thoughts to the show host. That's probably traceable to the personal nature of selecting a podcast. Podcasts offer their listeners — and makers — more control, options, and intimacy than traditional broadcast media can. Of course, the radio is much harder to talk back to than a computer with an Internet connection and e-mail (which remains the *killer app*).



When you ask for feedback, you're likely to get it — and from unusual places. Because geography doesn't limit the distance your podcast can travel, you may find yourself with listeners in faraway and exotic places. And this feedback isn't always going to be "Wow, great podcast!" Listeners will be honest with you when you invite feedback.

If you're starting to get the idea that podcasting is revolutionary, groundbreaking, and possibly a major component of social upheaval, great. But not all podcasts are so deep. In fact, many of them are just plain fun!

Creating a Podcast

There are two schools of thought when it comes to creating a podcast: The "*I need the latest and greatest equipment in order to capture that crisp, clear sound of the broadcasting industry*" school of thought, and the "*Hey, my computer came with a microphone, and I've got this cool recording software already installed*" school of thought. Both are equally valid positions, and there are a lot of secondary schools in-between. The question is how far you're willing to go.

But let's dispel something right off the bat about podcasting: You're not reprogramming your operating system, you're not hacking into the Internal Revenue Service's database, and you're not setting up a wireless computer

network with tinfoil from a chewing gum wrapper, a shoestring, and your belt — regardless if MacGyver showed you how. Podcasting, as mentioned earlier, is not rocket science. In fact, here's a quick rundown of how you podcast:

1. Record audio and convert it to a download-friendly format.
2. Create a simple but specialized text file that describes your audio file.
3. Upload everything to the Web.

Yes, yes, yes, if it were that simple, then why is this book so thick? Well, we admit that this list does gloss over a few details, but a podcast — in its most streamlined, raw presentation — *is* that simple. The details of putting together a podcast start in Chapter 2 and wrap up in Chapter 5; then Chapters 6 and 9 walk you through all the geek-speak you need to accomplish the podcast.

Looking for the bare necessities

You need a few things before starting your first podcast, many of which you can probably find on your own computer:

- ✓ **A microphone:** Take a look at your computer. Right now, regardless of whether you have a laptop or desktop model, Windows or Macintosh, your computer probably has a microphone built into it — or a jack for plugging in an external mic, and maybe even an included external mic packaged somewhere with the manuals, cables, and such.

Position the microphone to a comfortable spot on your desk or table. If you're using a laptop, position the laptop to a comfortable spot on your desk or table (make sure you know where the built-in microphone is in the laptop's housing).

Usually the built-in microphone in a laptop is located close to the edge of the keyboard or near the laptop's speakers. Some models tuck it in at the center point of the monitor's base. Consult your user's manual to find out where the microphone is hidden on your machine.

- ✓ **Recording software:** Check out the software that came with your computer. You know, all those extra CDs that you filed away, thinking, "I'll check those out sometime." Well, the time has arrived to flip through them. You probably have some sort of audio-recording software loaded on your computer, such as RecordIt (Windows) or iMovie (which comes pre-installed with many new Macs and can record voice as well as video).

If you don't already have the appropriate software, here's a fast way to get it: Download the version of Audacity that fits your operating system (at audacity.sourceforge.net), shown in Figure 1-1. (Oh, yeah . . . it's free.)





- ✓ **An audio card:** Make sure your computer has the hardware it needs to handle audio recording and the drivers to run the hardware.

Some desktop computers come with a very elementary audio card built into the motherboard. Before you run out to your local computer vendor and spring for an audio card, check your computer to see whether it can already handle basic voice recording.

For tips on choosing the right mic, software, and audio card, be sure to check out Chapter 2.

Getting and setting up the hardware and software needed to record is a start. The next step is using it.

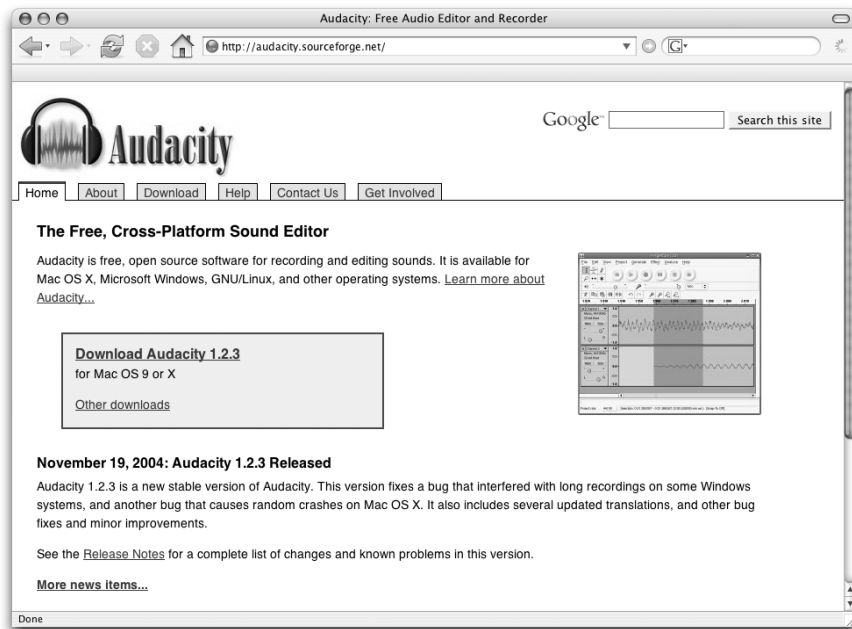


Figure 1-1:
Audacity
allows you
to edit audio
and create
MP3 files.

Recording your first podcast

When you have your computer set up and your microphone working, it's time to start recording. Take a deep breath and then follow these steps:

1. Jot down a few notes on what you want to talk about.

Nothing too fancy — just make an outline that includes remarks about who you are and what you want to talk about. Use these notes to keep yourself on track.

All this — the checking of your computer, jotting down notes, and setting up your recording area — is called *preshow prep*, discussed in depth in Chapter 3 by other podcasters who have their own ways of approaching pre-show prep (all of which can give you some starting points).



2. Click the Record button in your recording software and go for as long as it takes for you to get through your notes.

We recommend keeping your first recording to no more than 20 minutes. That may seem like a lot of time, but it *will* fly by.

3. Give a nice little sign-off (like “Take care of yourselves! See you next month.”) and click the Stop button.
4. Choose File⇧Save As and give your project a name.

Now bask in the warmth of creative accomplishment.

Compressing your audio files

If you're using an application other than Audacity, you may need to make your recording into an MP3 file. Many audio players that come with computers offer the capability to create MP3 files, but if your audio player doesn't read or compress audio recordings to MP3 files, you can keep it fed by downloading iTunes from www.apple.com/itunes. Check out iTunes in Figure 1-2. (Even though it's an Apple product, a Windows version is available as well.)

Figure 1-2:
Apple
iTunes,
available
for both
Mac and
Windows
platforms,
can create
MP3 files
from a
variety of
audio
formats.

