

Community Media Skills Development

Module 4 – Audio



HACKS

Harnessing the Power of Community Media
to Combat Disinformation

● Introduction

In this module you will learn what a podcast is and how to create one from scratch. It will introduce you to podcasting, show you what it takes to create a podcast and show you the basics of editing it and how to broadcast it on the main digital platforms.

Throughout the four lessons of the module, you will be introduced to the different types of podcasts, guided through important decisions such as the subject matter, the target audience, the format (length, structure) and to define the identity of your podcast. You will be able to create a script and plan your content effectively and consistently.

The module also explains what tools are necessary to create a podcast, from a microphone, a computer or even a smart phone, to audio editing software. You will learn how to make your content more attractive using audio resources that give your podcast its identity.

Finally, you will learn how to share and disseminate your content, and what are the main hosting, podcasting platforms and social networks where to do it. All of this will be covered in the following parts:

- Thematic, planning and identity
- Basic tools: hardware and software
- Editing
- Publishing and dissemination

Welcome to the exciting world of the new digital radio!

In this module, you will learn the following:

Learning Outcomes		
Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge of the basic principles of acoustics ● Factual knowledge of the existing podcasting platforms ● Knowledge of the existing tools for capturing audio ● Knowledge of how to create quality audio ● Basic knowledge of how to edit audio ● Factual knowledge of existing audio editing tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create high-quality audio content using basic production techniques ● Gather the conditions to produce high-quality audio, both indoors and outdoors ● Operate basic audio-capturing equipment ● Choose the most adequate audio format and convert audio formats ● Plan content for a podcast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand how the environment can affect the audio ● Understand how to choose the content format according to the platform where it will be published ● Understand the importance of planning the content ● Come up with creative topics to approach in a podcast

1. Thematic, planning and identity

The podcast is an edited audio file available in digital format (online), transmitted over the internet, which comes from radio but, unlike this one, can be downloaded and listened to at any time (it has a timeless character).

We could equate the podcast to a specific radio programme on a radio station in the sense that it has continuity over time; each programme would be an episode of the podcast. Podcasts usually have a target audience defined by their theme. So, the first thing we are going to do is to define the subject matter and, afterwards, plan the whole content strategy. Let's get started!

CHOOSE A TOPIC

Did you know that there are 2,789,050 podcasts and 127,476,912 episodes in the world (as of January 2022)? That's quite a few, isn't it? So, when creating your own podcast, the first question to ask yourself is **why** I'm doing it, what is my **goal** and **what** am I going to tell? Because you don't want to be offering the same thing that already exists out there.

To do this, think about what you have to tell and offer. Analyse other programmes with similar themes, and think about what form or content you can give them to create added value for the podcaster market. It is important to bear in mind that a podcast will be maintained over time and should revolve around the same theme, e.g., history, politics, cinema, literature, current affairs, motherhood/parenthood, etc... if the theme is too specific or narrow, you may run out of ideas after two or three episodes. So, choose a broad topic that you are comfortable with and that can be sustained over time.

Choose also what you intend to achieve with the podcast i.e., entertain, amuse, inform, ... these initial reflections will help you in the initial definition of your podcast.

FORMAT

Duration: There are 15-minute and two-hour podcasts. There is no predetermined length. However, it is possible that listeners may lose their attention span after more than an hour at the most. So a length of 30 to 45 minutes is recommended.

Style: Here we will differentiate between two different approaches.

- Improvisation: If improvisation and spontaneity are your thing, you probably need another co-presenter with whom you can at least maintain a dialogue and give it dynamism. Even if you improvise, this does not mean that you don't need a skeleton script around which to structure your speech.
- Strict script: If you like to have everything under control and have a script written from A to Z, a drama podcast is probably your style.

Between one extreme and the other there is a grey scale. It is always advisable to have a script that outlines the structure and the different parts of your programme. If you want dynamic audio, having everything written down, unless it is a news programme or a theatrical audio performance, will not be the best option because your podcast will not sound natural.

Modality: Depending on the type of dynamics the podcasts can be:

- Monologue: a single person in front of a microphone. This modality requires a great deal of preparation and research beforehand, as well as a good script.
- Group: This involves two or more people. Here the important thing is to have good preparation beforehand to coordinate times and avoid the different hosts stepping on each other's toes so that the dialogue is fluid and without interruptions. Giving each person a role or function helps to structure the programme.
- Interview: The interview can be done by one or more hosts, but the important thing is to have a guest to ask a series of questions. Depending on the style of your podcast, the interview can be formal or more relaxed.
- Round table: In this format, several hosts or guests debate and exchange views on a specific topic. This format is thought-provoking.

Aim: Depending on the subject matter and focus chosen, the following types of podcasts can be distinguished:

- Entertainment: the aim is to make the listener disconnect and be amused while listening to the episode. The style is relaxed, and the topics are infinite i.e., sports, politics, current affairs, reviews, music, video games, etc.
- Education: these are timeless and aim to teach the listener about something specific. This type of podcast is the one that generates the most engagement as it offers, in episode format, quality educational content on a multitude of subjects in the form of simple tutorials e.g., finance, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, etc.
- Informative: these programmes provide up-to-date information on different topics e.g., the latest in the video game market, local community news, news on renewable energies, latest technological innovation, etc.

TITLE

Some titles give a clear idea of the theme of the podcast, while others mean nothing or are named after their host. Once you have chosen a topic, register it on a domain name site.

SCHEDULE

Once you have defined the format, length, and theme of your podcast you need to create a calendar to help you:

- Define the day of publication
- Define the periodicity of your episodes e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, etc.

- Structure the preparation works overtime i.e., what day and how much time you spend on research and preparation, what day you record, what day you edit, when you publish, etc.

Having a calendar or schedule will help you to commit to your podcast and to organise your work well, giving it consistency and stability over time.

ARTWORK

Although the podcast is an audio format, it is essential to work on the visual identity with which the listener will identify you.

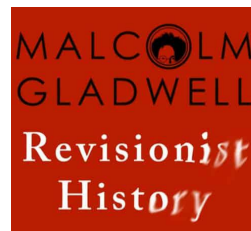
Examples of podcasts' Artwork



Deforme Semanal Ideal
Total podcast



Diana Uribe.fm
podcast



Revisionist History by
Malcolm Gladwell
podcast



Stuff you should know
podcast



Man in the window by LA
Times podcast



Noble Blood podcast

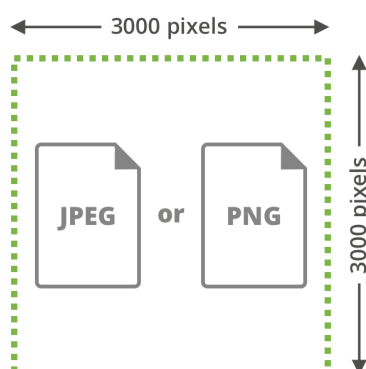


The Joe Rogan
Experience podcast



Geopolitica Pop
podcast

You can design your visual identity with any programme you use, from PowerPoint to Photoshop to online programmes such as Canva. The following graphic shows you some recommendations for the dimensions of your cover.



Technical Specifications

- ✓ 3000 x 3000 pixels
- ✓ Resolution of 72 dpi
- ✓ JPEG or PNG file type
- ✓ RGB Colorspace

* These are Buzzsprout's recommendations for the best compatibility across podcast apps & directories

Source: This artwork recommendation has been taken from buzzsprout

How to plan your podcast episodes the right way	
Description:	In this first part of the module, watch the first 6 minutes and 51 seconds of the following video (10 minutes long in total) where he presents you in a clear way how to plan your weekly and monthly content, as well as how to structure the thematic content of a podcast episode.
Link:	https://youtu.be/kYx9KpG3VTY

Planning podcast episodes Podcast preparation	
Description:	The following 6-minute video will guide you on how to plan your podcast episodes and, especially, how to structure each episode, from the initial documentation of the topic to the development of a script.
Link:	https://youtu.be/JD_Mp04bYzg

2. Technical aspects: hardware and software

When recording your podcast, participants should be in a quiet environment and as soundproof as possible. The better the acoustics of the room in which you record, the better the final result of the podcast will be (from an audio point of view) and the easier it will be to edit afterwards. What do we need, from a technical point of view, to record a podcast? Although this will depend in part on our budget and the scope of the podcast, i.e., it is not the same if one person is going to do the podcast at home or if it is a team with a recording studio at their disposal, there are some common basics for any beginner.

HARDWARE



Source: Author's own creation

Computer: The first thing you need is a computer. Nothing of the latest generation, but relatively up to date, with enough hard disk capacity to be able to store your edited audio files. It is also important to have a good internet connection to upload your episode once it has been recorded and edited.

Microphone: Audio quality is going to be one of the most important aspects of your podcast - no one will want to listen to audio that echoes or has unpleasant background noises such as the creaking of a chair. However, you don't have to invest a lot of money upfront to get a good quality microphone for podcasting, so what do you need to consider when buying a microphone?

If you are going to use a headset microphone, position it above or below the mouth to minimise blowing and noise during recording. But if you want higher quality, it's worth getting professional microphones. Choosing a microphone can be a bit overwhelming given the wide range of choices and types if you don't have much of an idea of what you're looking for. But there are two fundamental aspects to consider:

- **USB or XRL cable:** The connection of the microphone with the cable can be USB, which is connected directly to the computer and is the simplest option for beginners. The second connection option is XRL, which is connected to a sound box or mixing desk and from there, with another USB cable to the computer. It is both a USB microphone and has an XLR connection which allows you to upgrade your recording equipment without the need for a new microphone.
- **Use a pop filter:** these filters on your microphone will muffle the sound of your breathing, the sound of whistling "s's", and other sounds we make when we speak unconsciously.

Another aspect to consider when choosing a microphone is the number of participants in the podcast. If there is only one person, the USB option will be the easiest to record and edit. If there are up to 4, then you can choose to put a USB microphone in the middle (although the sound quality will be worse) or choose XRL microphones connected to a e.g., Focusrite Scarlett type transformer.



Example of a microphone with USB Plug and Pop filter.

Source: Amazon

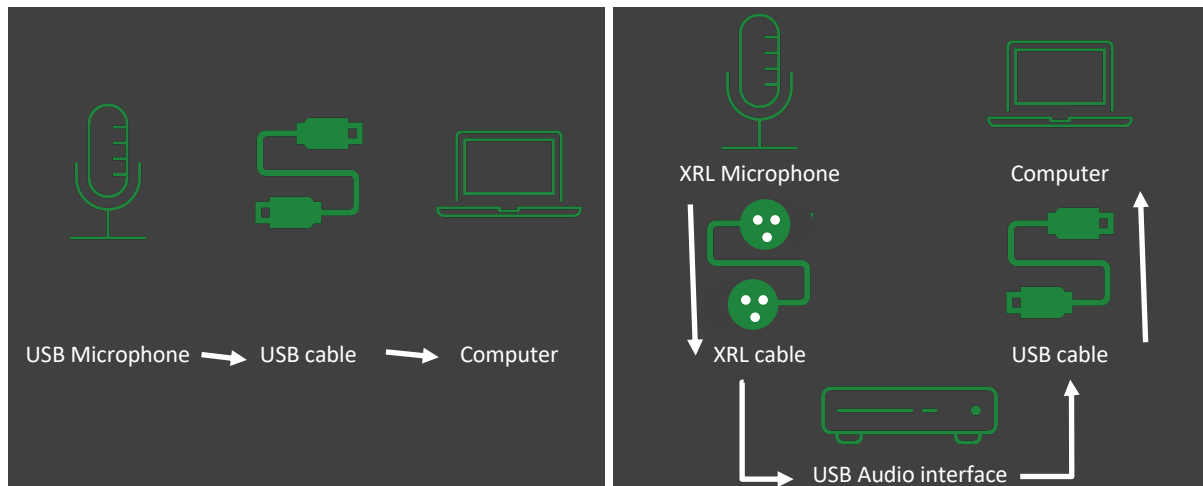


XRL Plug or analogue cable connection.

Source: Mika Baumeister from Unsplash

USB setup

XRL setup



Source: Author's own creation

Headphones: Some podcasters do without headphones at first, but they are highly recommended. Depending on the investment you want to make initially, the same headphones as your computer or Smart phone may work for you. However, if you want something more professional, we recommend ones with a good isolation system.

Audio interface: If the podcast involves 3-4 people, you will need to have a device where you can plug in the cables from each of the microphones separately and have each of those audios go into separate tracks. This will add extra quality to your audio. Some examples are Focusrite Scarlett or Zoom H6 6-Track Portable Recorder.

SOFTWARE

Once the recording material is ready, it's time to choose the software with which to edit the podcast. Below are a few options, most of them are free and have an optimal amount of features to edit your podcast like a pro:



Audacity is a free and open-source digital audio editor and recording application software, available for Windows, macOS, Linux, and other operating systems
<https://www.audacityteam.org/>



GarageBand

GarageBand is an app that comes installed on Mac computers. It is a simpler editing software than Audacity but it is not available on Windows computers or Android phones. It is free for Mac and IOs. [GarageBand on the App Store \(apple.com\)](https://www.apple.com/garageband/)



Alitu is a paid podcasting tool that automates some of the technical parts of podcasting, making it easy for beginners to edit. It works online and there is no need to download any software, so it works on any computer connected to the Internet.
<https://alitu.com/>



Adobe Audition is a stand-alone audio editing and sound-mixing program that allows you to edit and apply effects to the audio from video footage. Audition includes multitrack, waveform, and spectral display for creating, mixing, editing, and restoring audio content. <https://www.adobe.com/products/audition.html>

9 Best Podcast Starter Kits in 2022 (On A Budget)	
Description:	This website provides you with fact-checked accurate information about different types of microphones, headphones and other hardware needed for a podcast. It also provides you with links to compare characteristics and prices (in USD)
Link:	https://www.hustlr.com/best-podcast-starter-kits/

The Complete Guide to Microphone Technique for Podcasters	
Description:	A guide with very practical and useful tips on how to position the microphone and how to use it to get the best sound quality.
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/mic-technique-podcasting

3. Editing

Once the podcast audio has been recorded, it needs to be edited for sound quality and shaped so that the final product is as professional and enjoyable to listen to as possible.

Even if the chosen recording environment is quiet, it is common for some unwanted sounds to appear in the recording or unevenness in the audio. In the editing phase, we will compensate for these details. The aim is that the sound and volume of the audio are stable throughout the episode so that there are no uncomfortable volume jumps, and everything is balanced.

During editing, we will cut unnecessary parts, long pauses, and moments when the host got confused or made a mistake in some information. When shaping it, we will add an entrance music or melody (which will identify each of the episodes of your podcast) and an exit or closing one, as well as we can include a commercial break (if you have a sponsor) and songs or sound effects throughout the recording.

In the links at the end of this section, you will find several video and written tutorials with illustrations on how to edit your podcast with Audacity and GarageBand. Here are some of the key things to consider when editing your podcast:



CREATE AN INTRO AND AN OUTRO

The intro of your podcast can be voice only or a mix of music and voice. This will be repeated in all your episodes and will be part of your identity. You can listen to some podcasts to get ideas and see what you like best.

The songs and tunes you normally listen to on the radio are copyrighted. You can't just play any song on your podcast if you don't have the necessary permissions. But don't worry! Did you know that there are plenty of databases on the internet with songs and tunes that you can use for free? Whether you want to create your own jingle or enter royalty-free songs, below is a list of some of these online song platforms:

Royalty-free music online databanks

	http://dig.ccmixer.org/
	https://www.bensound.com/
	https://freemusicarchive.org/
	Creator Studio (facebook.com)
	https://incompetech.com/
	http://www.openmusicarchive.org/
	https://pixabay.com/es/music/
	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCht8qITGkBvXKsR1ByIn-wA
	https://musopen.org/

SORT YOUR AUDIOS/TRACKS

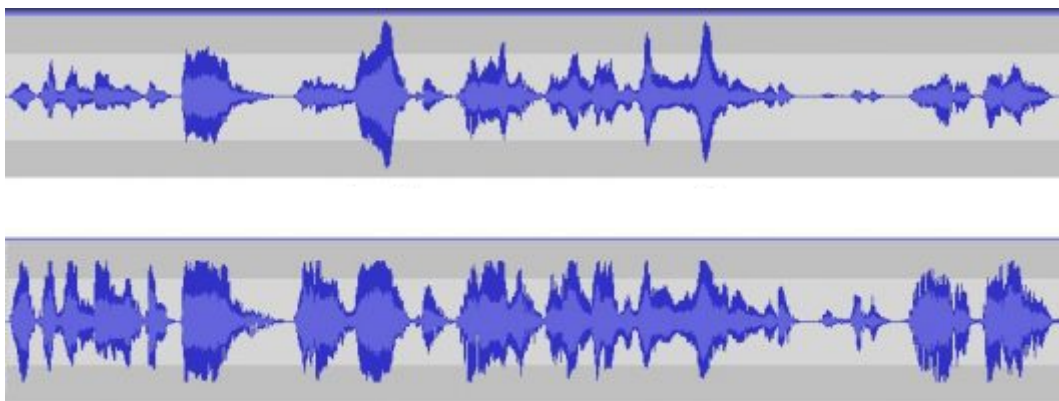
If you have recorded your podcast in parts or you are going to include songs, background music, adverts, jingles, calls to action (i.e., subscribe!), you need to have all these parts organised in your folder.

If you have recorded in the same application in which you will be editing, you already have all that material there. If you've recorded in another programme, the first thing you'll need to do is import the recorded material. In both cases, now is a good time to import everything else.

LISTENING AND INITIAL EDITING

- **Equalisation (EQ):** This is the regulation of volume in specific frequency ranges. On simpler equipment, the options may be just general bass/treble control. However, there is a type of equaliser (EQ), called parametric, which allows you to make more refined controls. We advise you to use it if your software offers this option. If the recording materials have been properly chosen, you may not need to modify this parameter very much, however, as a reference you can cut the lower frequencies, below 80 Hz, for example.
- **Noise reduction:** this automatic function offered by some software is good for eliminating constant background sounds such as air conditioning, etc. but can slightly deteriorate the overall audio quality.
- **Compression:** The audio compressor serves to level the volume of the sound, making it more homogeneous, and avoiding unwanted peaks. The value we set as the maximum is called threshold. In the image of the sound you can see how in the first image the peaks are higher while in the second image, with the compressed audio, the peaks are lower. Here a limit has been set above which the sound should not exceed. The audio waveform is more homogeneous in the second image, once compressed. The **limiter** is a type of sound compressor.

In the link "How to Edit a Podcast: The Step-by-Step Guide" you will find recommendations common to all audio editing software and will give you a basic understanding of the main tools.



Source: Hotmart blog

FINALISE AND EXPORT

Once you have finished editing your audio, it is not enough to save it; you must "export" it. The traditional format for podcasts is **mp3**. The export settings will determine the quality and the weight (how much space the final file will take in your computer's memory). Abismo.fm recommends the following settings:

- Channels: Mono/Stereo
- Sampling Rate: 44.1 kHz

- Bit Depth: 128 kbps
- Bit Rate: Constant (CBR)

Regarding channels, if your podcast is mostly spoken, it is recommended that you export in mono. If, on the other hand, your podcast has a lot of music and sound effects, it is recommended that you export in stereo.

How To Create a Podcast Intro Your Listeners Will Love	
Description:	Step-by-step description of how to create your intro from a technical and creative point of view.
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/podcast-introduction?referrer_id=52989

How to Edit a Podcast: The Step-by-Step Guide	
Description:	Step-by-step guide on how to start editing your podcast.
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/how-to-edit-a-podcast

Audacity Tutorial for Podcasters: How to Setup, Record, and Edit a Podcast	
Description:	Written tutorial from Buzzsprout on how to edit with Audacity
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/audacity-podcast-tutorial

How to Edit a Podcast in Audacity [2020]	
Description:	Video tutorial from Buzzsprout on how to edit with Audacity
Link:	https://youtu.be/Zw9nkEHQ5B8

GarageBand Tutorial for Podcasters: How to Setup, Record, and Edit a Podcast on a Mac	
Description:	Written tutorial from Buzzsprout on how to edit with GarageBand
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/garageband-podcast-tutorial

How to Edit a Podcast in GarageBand	
Description:	Video tutorial from Buzzsprout on how to edit with GarageBand
Link:	https://youtu.be/mATGO5ayrzc

4. Publishing and dissemination

CHOOSE A PODCAST HOSTING

The (almost) final step! Once you have done all the hard work, it is time to upload your podcast to the hosting you have chosen and incorporate the RSS Feed to the platforms you want. Some of the most important ones are: iVoox, iTunes, Spotify or SoundCloud. Some are free but have a time limit, for example they allow you to upload three hours of content per

month or force you to include advertising in your episodes. Paid options do not have these limitations. Other highly recommended paid platforms are Apple Podcasts or Buzzprout.



DESCRIPTION AND KEYWORDS

The short description of your podcast will be key to its success as the listener will not know if your content interests them just by the cover and the name. Also, when uploading your podcast to any platform you should choose the category it belongs to e.g., entertainment, politics, etc.

DISSEMINATE

And now it's time to let the world of podcasters know about your little creation! Obviously, social media will be a useful platform to promote your podcast, but you might not reach the desired target audience through your profiles, i.e., people who are really interested in your content. So, let's start with what's easy and close to you:

- Share your podcast among family and friends.
- Contact the administrators of some Facebook groups related to the topic of your podcast to spread it in those groups.
- Contact relevant blogs.
- Create your own blog! This will be a great way to give your podcast a reference point for anyone who wants to follow your content.

The Definitive Podcast Directory List (2021)	
Description:	This link provides you with a list of podcast hosting and a guide to upload them in different platforms.
Link:	https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog/podcast-directories

Podcast Marketing: How to Promote a Podcast In 2022 [Guide]	
Description:	What is Podcast Marketing and Why is it Important?
Link:	https://respona.com/blog/podcast-marketing/

5. Useful links

No additional links to those already provided in each part of the module.



6. Bibliography

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MEDIA

HACKS



INSTITUTO
PARA EL FOMENTO
DEL DESARROLLO
Y LA FORMACIÓN



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