

PODCASTING

While “Podcasting” may sound cool and appealing, the name is misleading. Podcasting is really just downloading MP3s to your computer. It emulates radio broadcasting in the way it provides new episodes in a series of shows. But regular radio shows are broadcast at a certain time of day, and you have to be there at the right time to hear them. Podcasts are ‘on demand’, because you can call up the file anytime to listen to it, after it’s been downloaded.

Podcasts can be speech-based (like audio books) or a mixture of music and speech. You could do a reggae podcast, or a podcast about your band. Or you could podcast a radio drama, complete with sound effects and music.

It’s actually pretty easy to produce a Podcast. You just have to create the audio file, and then use software (iTunes is one) that uploads the file, and wraps it in a shell that contains date and other information. Others can then subscribe to your podcast if you give them the URL.

If you subscribe to a Podcast, your computer checks online to see if a new episode of the Podcast has been uploaded. Many Podcasts are in the form of MP3 files.

The software you use to download and play the file is called a *podcatcher*. iTunes is probably the most famous podcatcher. When iTunes detects a new episode, it will automatically download it to your computer. You can listen to it when you’re ready. You can also listen to it again and again, because it stays on your hard drive.

Podcasting is not a streaming format, like YouTube. When you watch YouTube, you’re downloading AS YOU WATCH. When you listen to a Podcast, you’ve already downloaded the file.