



## Teaching Podcasting: A Curriculum Guide for Educators

Whether you're leading your class or advising an extracurricular group, we hope this guide will make the podcasting process easier.

Here, you'll find a breakdown of the process and a series of sample lesson plans to ensure that students have the skills and background knowledge to start making a podcast.

For our contest, teachers must submit entries to NPR, but we expect that students themselves are the ones creating them.

### Planning Instruction

We recommend dividing the project into stages, listed below. Of course, you and your students are the best judges of what works in your classroom.

### Learning About Podcasting

- *Lesson: Podcasting overview (p. 2)*

### Planning Your Podcast

- *Lesson: Choosing a topic (p. 4)*
- *Lesson: Planning the story (p. 6)*
- *Lesson: Brainstorming sounds (p. 8)*

### Podcast Production

- *Lesson: Recording practice (p. 10)*
- *Lesson: Interview practice (p. 12)*
- *Resource: Checklist for field recording (p. 15)*

### Submission

Entry forms for teachers will be available on starting on January 1. Entries will close on March 31.

## Podcasting overview, 60 minutes

**Objective:** Students will learn the difference between scripted and Q&A podcasts and familiarize themselves with a wide range of podcast topics.

**What you need:** A computer with speakers and an internet connection

**What students need:** A pencil and paper

This can be completed as a class activity or by breaking into groups, if students have access to computers or laptops.

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### Part 1: Gauging Student Knowledge

**Start by spending five minutes in a class discussion about podcasts. Gauge what students know or don't know about podcasts by asking a few questions.**

- What's a podcast?
- What are podcasts about?
- Where can you hear podcasts?
- Why would YOU listen to a podcast?
- What's makes a podcaster different from a YouTuber?
- How does it change the way you tell a story when you're on the phone? How does it change the way you listen when you can't see someone?

### Part 2: Listening

**Have students listen to a few examples of podcasts and radio stories.**

**Kind World, [So Chocolate Bar \(7 mins, 23 sec.\)](#)**

In this episode of Kind World, host Erika Lantz uses sounds and interviews with multiple people to tell a story about a friendship.

Have students start by listening to the episode, then start a group conversation. Do they like it? Who did they hear talking in it? What sorts of sounds does it use, besides interviews?

**Hidden Brain, [The Haunting Effects of Going Days Without Sleep \(7 mins, 2 sec.\)](#)**

Play this story twice. The first time, ask students to make a note of all the sounds they hear and people that speak on tape. Afterwards, have students break into partners or small groups and compare notes.

Then, play the story through a second time — having students follow along with [the transcript](#) to check their work. Talk briefly about the sounds that they missed the first time.

**How I Built This**, [Instagram: Kevin Systrom & Mike Krieger \(33 mins, 32 sec.\)](#)

This is a long one, so perhaps just listen to a few minutes at the beginning. (A good place to start is about 30 seconds in.) Have the class discuss what makes this podcast similar or different from ones they've heard.

After this discussion, the class should understand that this podcast follows the structure of a Q & A/conversation. Unlike the past two podcasts, this doesn't weave in and out of scripted narration. That's one type of podcast that students can choose to make for the Student Podcast Challenge.

### **Part 3: Debrief**

**Before wrapping up, have students spend 5 minutes talking as a class about podcasts. Have them consider:**

- What types of sounds do podcasts include?
  - Students should understand that podcasts vary greatly — but most include a host and can include sounds from interviews, audio from events, audio from movies or TV, and sounds from the world around them.
- What are some ways that podcasts are structured?
  - Students should walk away from this discussion understanding that there isn't one right way to tell a story. Some podcasts use narration from a host or a reporter, others feature a conversation between a group, others might be a one-on-one interview between two people. The structure of a podcast fits its content.

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### **Additional resources:**

If your students are still looking for podcast examples, here are some we recommend:

#### **Kind World**

[A Different Window \(7 mins, 2 sec.\)](#)

#### **Hidden Brain**

[How Labels Can Affect People's Personalities and Potential \(6 mins, 35 sec.\)](#)

## Choosing a Topic, 60 minutes

**Objective:** Students will choose a topic for their podcast.

\*Skip this stage if you're assigning the class a prompt or idea for the podcast. Alternately, use this time as an opportunity for students to brainstorm for that prompt.

**What you need:** N/A

**What students need:** Pencil and paper

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### **Part 1: Small-group brainstorming,** 30 minutes

\*If your class is creating their podcasts in small groups, have them split into those small groups now and spend the entire class period completing this activity.

**Distribute copies of the following prompts to students as they work in small groups of 3–5.**

Directions for students: Pick three of these prompts that you think would be fun to make a podcast about. Come up with an idea for each of these three prompts. How would you structure it? (A conversation as a group? An interview with one person? A story with clips of interviews and sounds, narrated by a host?)

1. Tell us a story about your school or community: about something that happened there -- recently or in the past -- that you want your audience to know about.
2. What is a moment in history that all students should learn about?
3. Show us both sides of a debate about an issue that's important to you.
4. What do you want to change about the world? What's a big change that you want to make in the future?
5. Explain something to us that kids understand and grownups don't.

**After 20 minutes, go around the room and have each group share their favorite idea with the class. Have students write these ideas on the board. (10 mins)**

### **Part 2: Class brainstorming,** 30 mins

**Students should narrow down the ideas written on the board down to one. Use these questions to help. They should be thinking about specific tasks — interviews, sound recording, or editing — that each podcast idea could involve.**

- What obstacles might come up as we create this podcast?

- If this podcast idea involves traveling somewhere far away or interviewing someone famous, it might be difficult.
- Does the timeline work?
  - Can students complete their interviews or record other sounds well before the podcasts are due -- so that they have time to edit the audio?

## Planning The Story, 60 mins

**Objective:** Students will determine how they'll structure the podcast.

**What you need:** Six large pieces of tear-off construction paper or easel pad paper.

**What students need:** A notebook and writing utensil.

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### **Before class:**

Place six pieces of large tear-off construction paper or easel pad paper in various places around the classroom. Two should be at the front of the room or the board. Label these two:

- *What is my story's driving question?*
- *What is the story not about?*

Label the others:

- *How will I ensure my story is fair to the people and ideas it represents?*
- *How will I engage my audience — and hold them?*
- *What are my dream ingredients?*
- *What will the audience remember when it's over?*

### **Part 1: Review Your Options,** 10 mins

Start by opening up a class discussion about what types of podcasts students have heard. What are some ways a podcast can be structured? Why might a podcast be a one-on-one conversation, instead of a story told with using clips of multiple interviews?

### **Part 2: What's the story?,** 25 mins

Spend 15 minutes working with students to craft responses to the two questions at the front of the room. Have them raise their hands and give ideas until the group settles on one driving question for their podcast. Then move on to the second: what is the story *not* about? The class should have lots of answers to this question and doesn't need to settle on one.

Then move on to the papers around the room. Students should get up and write a response to each question. If they like someone else's response, they should draw a star next to that response. Tell students to return to their desks after 10 minutes.

### **Part 3: Recap,** 20 mins

Once students have finished, have one classmate stand at each paper around the room and share the responses.

Then debrief: given the class's responses, what do students envision their podcast including? What will it NOT include? How will these ideas shape the structure of the podcast -- will it feature one long conversation or multiple short interviews? Pieces of tape from interviews and scenes?

**Keep these posters around to guide students through the podcasting process. When they've recorded interviews and other sounds, remind them to look: this is what they envisioned for the podcast.**

## Brainstorming Sounds, 60 mins

**Objective:** Students will come up with a list of sounds they'll record for their podcast.

**What you need:** A computer with speakers, a large tear-off piece of construction paper or easel pad paper

**What students need:** A notebook and writing utensil.

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### **Part 1: Listening to examples**, 20 mins

**Play the following radio stories for the class.**

**Directions for students:** As you listen, make a note of the sounds you hear — the ones that aren't people speaking — on paper.

[Listen to this "Radio Field Trip" from New Hampshire Public Radio.](#) (4 mins 12 s)

Ask students: Where is host Rick Ganley? How can you tell?

[And here's this one, from Radio Rookies, a series from WNYC.](#) (8 mins)

Ask students: Apart from sounds of Edward's narration — what sounds did you hear? How do these sounds help tell Edward's story?

### **Part 3: Brainstorming**, 20 mins

Label a large easel pad paper "sounds" and place it at the front of the classroom.

**Directions for students:** In small groups of 3-5 students, come up with a list of three to five sounds you think should be in your class' podcast. Talk about why you think it would help the audience to hear these sounds.

Then, have one representative from each group come to the front of the room and write their ideas onto the large paper.

Open the discussion up to the class. Have students shout out the sounds that are on the paper more than once. Circle those. Then have students underline those they think are especially unique or worth recording.

**Keep this paper — it should serve as a guide of the sounds that the class will gather to create the podcast.**

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**For additional help**

YR Media has a handy list of sounds that all podcasters should consider recording while planning their podcast. If students are having trouble Scroll down to “what sounds to gather” [on this page](#) to find that list.

## Recording practice, 90 mins

**Objective:** Students will familiarize themselves with their equipment, including their recording device.

**What you need:** N/A

**What students need:** One phone or voice recorder, one pair of headphones, one computer / per small group. Notebooks and writing utensils.

\*Before starting, we recommend identifying a) a voice recorder and b) a computer or laptop for each small group. Most smartphones, including iPhones, have built-in voice recorders which can be used for recording narration and interviews for podcasts.

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### Part 1: Recording, 1 hour

In groups of 3–5, have students practice recording themselves and each other.

**Directions for students:**

**1. Record your own voice**

- a. Say your name, grade, and age into the microphone, and then listen back to the recording on the phone or recording device.
- b. This is called “ID-ing” or identifying yourself on the recording.

**2. Record another person’s voice**

- a. Come up with one interview question for a group member. Make sure you record YOUR question and the other person’s answer. Then, listen back on the phone or recording device.

**3. Record a conversation between two people**

- a. One group member should come up with two interview questions for another. While one person interviews the other, a third group member should record them. Then listen back. Take turns so that each person has a chance to record using the phone or recording device.

**4. Record sounds from around the classroom**

- a. Each group member should record TWO sounds that last approximately 10 seconds from around the classroom. As a group, listen back to the recordings on the phone or recording device.

### Part 2: Uploading, 30 mins

In the same groups, students should turn to their computers.

**1. Identify a sound-editing software.**

- a. If your school already uses a sound editing software — like ProTools or Adobe Audition — feel free to keep that and use it. You could also download Audacity, a free audio editing software that students can use to “mix” their podcasts once they’ve recorded interviews and sounds.

**2. Upload recordings onto a computer or laptop**

- a. Have students practice saving their recordings into the computer or a drive in a place they can find.

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**Additional resource:**

[Here's a guide from YR Media](#) about the best ways to record audio on your phone.

If your students are conducting interviews for the podcast, they'll need to practice before heading out and recording these. Head over to Radio Rookies' [Guide to Teaching Interviewing Skills](#) for help.

## **Interview Practice, 60 mins**

**Objective:** Students will practice asking engaging interview questions while recording.

**What you need:** A computer with sound.

**What students need:** One phone or voice recorder, one pair of headphones, one computer / per pair of partners. Notebooks and writing utensils.

\*If recording devices are scarce, this is a good time for students to split into smaller groups to plan various aspects of the podcast. While some students practice interviewing, others could research for the podcast or begin drafting a script.

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### **Part 1: Review, 5 mins**

Take five minutes to review what student learned in the “recording practice” lesson. Student should remember to 1) ask others to introduce themselves and 2) record their own questions while interviewing.

### **Part 2: Practicing in Partners, 30 mins**

Assign students partners. Designate a Partner 1 and Partner 2 in each set. Set a timer for 15 mins.

#### **Directions for students:**

Partner 1: Ask your partner about the one thing they are most PROUD of. It could be something at home, it could be something at school, it could be something athletic -- it doesn't matter.

Once they've answered, keep asking questions about their response until the timer goes off. Why are they proud? How did they achieve this?

When the timer goes off, turn off the recording and switch.

Partner 2, now start recording again -- and ask Partner 1 the thing they're most proud of. Don't stop asking questions until the timer goes off.

When the timer goes off, turn off the recording.

### **Part 3: Class debrief, 10 mins**

Ask students to raise their hands and share (with their partner's permission) what they learned and what questions they asked in order to learn what they didn't know about their classmates before.

**Part 4: Uploading, 15 mins**

Students should use any remaining class time to upload their recordings onto a computer and listen back to as much as they can. They should make notes about parts of the recording that sound clear and strong and those that don't.

## It's Go Time

At this point in the podcasting process, your students should be ready to get out there and record sound.

Before they record interviews or sounds, students should set aside time to:

- Contact and reserve time to interview guests
- Write out possible interview questions
- Write a list of sounds to record using the large construction paper from the Brainstorming Sounds lesson

**Students should check (and double-check) that they're ready to record before heading to interviews or to record at events. Find our checklist for field recording, which students can take with them, below.**

## Checklist For Field Recording

Before you head out for an interview or sounds for your podcast, make sure you've got everything you need. That should include:

- A phone or recording device
  - If you're using a microphone that requires batteries, bring extras.
  - If you're recording sounds on your phone, bring a charger.
- Headphones
  - You'll want to be wearing these as you record.
- Interview questions
- List of sounds to record
  - It's okay if you don't get all of these sounds and great if you get even more. This list should help guide you.
- Notebook and writing utensil
  - You or a teammate should quietly take brief notes during an interview or while recording sound, to remember specific moments or points you'd like to return to later.
- Contact information for your interviewee
  - If you're interviewing someone, make sure you bring their phone number to your meeting place. You should be able to contact them if just in case something comes up.

## Additional Resources

Sign up for KQED Teach to access [this set of guides to teaching podcasting](#), from the very beginning.

[NPR Training](#) is a site full of helpful guides about radio and podcasting.

[Guides for creating radio and podcasts, from YR Media, are here.](#)

[This Radio Rookies site](#) lists examples of stories that may be useful to play as examples in the classroom.

[Transom.org](#) is the go-to site for podcasting hopefuls in public media.

If students are looking for help with tools or learning to use sound editing software, this site likely has what they're looking for. Here's Transom's [Kid's Guide To Recording Stories](#).

StoryCorps provides a [series of lessons](#) on storytelling and interviewing here.