



PODCAST PRODUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM

A 3-Week Project Unit for Grades 5–10

Episode Planning | Scriptwriting | Interview Techniques
Recording Basics | Editing Workflow | Publishing

No Special Equipment Needed — Any Device Works

UM Printables

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INTRODUCTION & UNIT OVERVIEW

Welcome! This comprehensive 3-week unit transforms your classroom into a podcast production studio. Students will learn the complete podcast creation process — from initial concept to published episode — using devices and free software already available at your school.

Why Podcast Production?

Podcasting combines essential 21st-century skills: research, writing, speaking, listening, collaboration, and digital literacy. It naturally differentiates instruction by allowing students to engage through multiple modalities and provides authentic audiences for student work. Research shows that when students create for real audiences, engagement and quality of work increase significantly.

Unit at a Glance

Component	Details
Grade Level	5–10 (adaptable)
Duration	3 weeks (15 lessons, 45–60 min each)
Grouping	Small groups of 2–4 students
Equipment	Any device with recording capability (tablet, laptop, phone, or Chromebook)
Software	Audacity (PC/Mac/Linux), GarageBand (Mac/iPad), or Soundtrap (browser-based)
Final Product	A published 5–10 minute podcast episode

Week-by-Week Overview

Week	Theme	Focus
1	Foundations	Explore podcasts, identify formats, determine audience and purpose, plan episodes, begin scriptwriting
2	Production	Refine scripts, learn and practice interview techniques, record audio
3	Post-Production	Edit audio, add music and effects, publish, reflect and celebrate

What You Will Need

Essential:

- A device with a built-in microphone (laptop, tablet, smartphone, or Chromebook)
- Free audio editing software: Audacity, GarageBand, or Soundtrap
- Headphones or earbuds (one pair per group is ideal)
- Internet access for research and optional publishing
- Printed copies of templates from this resource

Helpful but Not Required:

- External USB microphone (even an inexpensive one significantly improves quality)
- Pop filter or windscreen
- Quiet recording space (closet, corner with soft furnishings, etc.)
- Royalty-free music and sound effect library

Teacher Tip

Before starting the unit, download and test your chosen audio editing software on student devices. Familiarize yourself with the Teacher Technical Guide at the end of this resource for step-by-step setup instructions.

Differentiation

Support: For younger students (Grades 5–6), consider shorter episodes (3–5 minutes) and more scaffolded templates. **Challenge:** For older students (Grades 9–10), encourage longer episodes (10–15 minutes), more complex formats (e.g., panel discussions), and deeper research requirements.

WEEK 1: FOUNDATIONS OF PODCASTING

In Week 1, students explore the podcast medium, discover different formats, identify their audience, plan their episodes, and begin writing scripts. By the end of this week, each group will have a completed episode plan and script outline ready for production.

Lesson 1: What Is a Podcast? — Exploring the Medium

Duration:	45–60 minutes
Objectives:	• Define what a podcast is and identify key characteristics of the medium • Listen to and analyze sample podcast episodes across different genres • Explain how podcasts differ from other media forms (radio, video, articles)
Materials:	• Device with internet access (teacher or student) • Speakers or headphones for audio playback • Chart paper or whiteboard • Student notebooks or journals

Opening (10 minutes)

Hook: Play a 2–3 minute clip from an age-appropriate podcast (see recommendations below). Ask students: "What did you just hear? How is this different from watching a video or reading an article?"

Class Discussion: Create a KWL chart on the board — What do you **Know** about podcasts? What do you **Want** to know? (Return to the **Learned** column at lesson end.) Guide students toward understanding that podcasts are episodic audio programs available on demand.

Recommended Podcast Samples

Grades 5–6: Brains On!, Wow in the World, The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian

Grades 7–8: Short & Curly, Six Minutes, The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel

Grades 9–10: Stuff You Should Know, Radiolab (select episodes), TED Talks Daily

Note: Always preview episodes before sharing with students.

Main Activity — Podcast Exploration Stations (25–30 minutes)

Set up 3–4 listening stations around the room (or have students listen at their own devices). Each station features a different podcast genre. Students spend 5–7 minutes at each station and record observations in their journals.

- **Station 1 — Narrative/Storytelling:** A fiction or narrative nonfiction clip
- **Station 2 — Interview/Conversational:** A host interviewing a guest
- **Station 3 — Educational/Informational:** A podcast teaching something new
- **Station 4 — News/Current Events:** (optional) A news-style podcast clip

Student Recording Focus: For each station, students note: (1) What is the topic? (2) Who is speaking? (3) How would you describe the style and tone? (4) What sounds, music, or editing choices did you notice?

Closing (10 minutes)

Return to the KWL chart. Have students share observations from stations. Add items to the "Learned" column. Introduce key vocabulary:

Term	Definition
Podcast	A digital audio series, typically episodic, that listeners can subscribe to and download or stream on demand
Episode	A single installment of a podcast series
Host	The person (or people) who leads and presents the podcast
Segment	A distinct section within an episode (e.g., intro, interview, closing)
Sound Bed	Background music or ambient sound that plays under narration or dialogue

Teacher Tip

If technology is limited, play 3–4 different clips for the whole class instead of using stations. Pause between clips for quick partner discussions using a Think-Pair-Share routine.

Differentiation

Support: Provide a pre-written vocabulary sheet with definitions. Allow students to draw their observations instead of writing them. **Challenge:** Have students independently research and add 2–3 additional podcast terms (e.g., RSS feed, show notes, cold open) to their notes.

Assessment: Exit ticket — Students write a one-sentence definition of a podcast and name one genre they found interesting and why.

Lesson 2: Podcast Formats & Genres — Finding Your Style

Duration:	45–60 minutes
Objectives:	• Identify and describe at least four common podcast formats • Compare the strengths and challenges of each format • Begin selecting a format for their own podcast project
Materials:	• Student journals from Lesson 1 • Whiteboard or chart paper • Podcast Format Comparison Chart (created in class) • Devices for optional additional listening

Opening (8 minutes)

Review: Ask students to recall the different types of podcasts they heard in Lesson 1. List their observations on the board. Introduce the idea that most podcasts fit into one of several common **formats** — the structural blueprint for how an episode is organized.

Main Activity — Format Exploration (25 minutes)

Present the five major podcast formats. For each, play a short clip (30–60 seconds) and discuss characteristics:

Format	Description	Best For
Solo Host	One person speaks directly to the audience	Opinion pieces, storytelling, how-to guides
Co-Hosted	Two or more hosts converse and share perspectives	Debate, humor, complementary viewpoints
Interview	Host asks questions of a guest expert or storyteller	Expert insights, personal stories, deep dives
Narrative	Scripted story with narration, clips, and sound design	Fiction, documentary, investigative pieces
Panel/Round Table	Multiple guests discuss a topic with a moderator	Current events, debate, multiple perspectives

Group Discussion: After reviewing formats, have students discuss in their podcast groups: "Which format fits our topic and team best? Why?" Each group shares their preliminary format choice with the class and explains their reasoning.

Activity — Format Pros & Cons (12 minutes)

In groups, students create a quick Pros and Cons T-chart for their chosen format. Consider: What does this format do well? What might be challenging? Do we have the right number of people for this format? Groups post their charts for a brief gallery walk.

Closing (5 minutes)

EPISODE PLANNING TEMPLATE

Complete this template before you begin writing your script. It serves as the blueprint for your episode.

Podcast Name:	_____	Episode Title:	_____
	_____		_____
Target Audience:	_____	Target Length:	_____
	_____		_____
Purpose:	<i>Circle one: Inform / Entertain / Persuade / Inspire</i>	Host(s):	_____

Segment Breakdown

Seg #	Segment Name	Time	Key Content & Notes	Speaker(s)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Transition Ideas: How will you connect each segment smoothly?

PODCAST SCRIPT TEMPLATE

Use the Hybrid Approach: Write your intro and outro word-for-word. Use bullet points for middle segments. Mark production cues like [PAUSE], [SFX], and [MUSIC] in the Audio Cues column.

Podcast Name:	_____	Episode # & Title:	_____
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Segment	Audio Cues (Music / SFX)	Script / Dialogue
Intro	[MUSIC: Intro theme plays, fades under voice]	<i>[Hook: Ask a question or share a surprising fact]</i> "Welcome to [Podcast Name]! I'm [Host Name], and this is Episode [Number]: [Episode Title]. Today, we're talking about [brief topic overview]. Let's dive in!"
Segment 1 Name: _____ _____		
Segment 2 Name: _____ _____		
Segment 3 Name: _____ _____		
Outro	[MUSIC: Outro theme fades in]	<i>[Summary: Briefly recap the main takeaway]</i> "Thanks for listening to [Podcast Name]! If you enjoyed this episode, [Call to Action: e.g., tell a friend, subscribe]. Join us next time when we [tease next episode]. I'm [Host Name] — see you soon!"

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Reflect on your work throughout this unit. Read the descriptions for each level and circle the one that best describes your performance. Be honest — this is about recognizing your growth and identifying areas to improve.

Student Name:		Podcast Name:	
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Criteria	4 — Exceeds Expectations	3 — Meets Expectations	2 — Approaching Expectations	1 — Below Expectations
Planning & Organization	Episode plan is detailed, logical, and perfectly timed. All segments clearly connect to the stated purpose.	Episode plan is clear and logical. Most segments connect to the purpose. Timing is reasonable.	Episode plan is incomplete or unclear. Some segments do not connect to the purpose. Timing is unrealistic.	Episode plan is missing or highly disorganized. No clear connection to the purpose.
Scriptwriting & Content	Script is engaging, conversational, and well-organized. Transitions are smooth. Content is highly relevant and thoroughly researched.	Script is clear and mostly conversational. Transitions work. Content is relevant and adequately researched.	Script is somewhat stiff or disorganized. Transitions are abrupt. Content is sometimes off-topic or lacks depth.	Script is hard to follow or read aloud. Missing transitions. Content is frequently off-topic or missing key information.
Audio Production & Editing	Audio is crystal clear with no background noise. Editing is seamless (no awkward cuts). Music/SFX enhance the episode perfectly.	Audio is mostly clear with minor background noise. Editing is smooth with 1–2 minor rough cuts. Music/SFX are used appropriately.	Audio has noticeable noise or volume issues. Editing has several rough cuts. Music/SFX are missing or slightly distracting.	Audio is very hard to hear due to noise or volume. No noticeable editing. No music/SFX used, or they severely distract.
Collaboration & Teamwork	Contributed significantly to all stages. Encouraged teammates, resolved conflicts positively, and stayed on task at all times.	Contributed fairly to most stages. Worked well with the group and stayed on task most of the time.	Contributed minimally or only to one stage. Needed frequent reminders to stay on task or work with the group.	Did not contribute meaningfully to the group. Was distracting or off-task frequently.
Reflection & Growth	Provided thoughtful, detailed reflection on strengths and areas for growth. Connected the project to real-world skills with specific examples.	Provided clear reflection on strengths and areas for growth with some examples. Recognized the real-world value of the project.	Provided vague or generic reflection without specific examples. Limited understanding of areas for growth.	Provided no meaningful reflection, or reflection shows no effort to evaluate own work.

My Reflections

What I am most proud of in this project:
One thing I would do differently next time:

TEACHER TECHNICAL GUIDE

This guide provides quick-start instructions for the three recommended free audio tools. Print the relevant section for your chosen software or display it for students during editing lessons.

Audacity (PC, Mac, Linux) — Free Download

Audacity is a powerful, open-source audio editor. It has a steeper learning curve than GarageBand but offers precise control and works on all operating systems.

Setup & Import

- Download from **audacityteam.org** (always use the official site).
- To import audio: **File > Import > Audio**, or simply drag and drop the file into the timeline.
- If prompted to install the LAME MP3 encoder (for exporting MP3s), follow the on-screen instructions or find the guide at audacityteam.org.

Key Editing Tools

- **Selection Tool (F1)**: The cursor icon. Click and drag to highlight audio for editing.
- **Time Shift Tool (F5)**: The double-arrow icon. Click and drag clips left or right on the timeline to reposition them.
- **Split**: Place cursor at the split point, then **Edit > Clip Boundaries > Split** (Ctrl+I / Cmd+I).
- **Delete**: Select the region and press the **Delete** key.
- **Fade In / Fade Out**: Select the region, then **Effect > Fade In** (or Fade Out).
- **Adjust Volume**: Use the volume slider on the left side of each track.
- **Zoom**: Use the magnifying glass icons or Ctrl+Mouse Wheel / Cmd+Mouse Wheel.

Exporting

- Go to **File > Export > Export as MP3**.
- Name the file and choose a save location.
- Fill in metadata (Title, Artist) if desired, then click OK.

GarageBand (Mac, iPad) — Pre-installed on Apple Devices

GarageBand is user-friendly and excellent for beginners. It is only available on Apple devices.

Setup & Import

- Open GarageBand and select **New Project > Voice**.
- To import audio: Drag and drop audio files directly into the timeline, or use **File > Import > Audio File**.

Key Editing Tools

- **Playhead**: The vertical line. Click anywhere on the timeline to move it.
- **Split**: Select the track, place the playhead at the split point, then **Edit > Split Regions at Playhead** (Cmd+T).

PARENT SHARING PERMISSION TEMPLATE

PODCAST PRODUCTION: PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Our class is completing a 3-week Podcast Production unit. Students are learning valuable skills in research, writing, public speaking, collaboration, and digital media production. As part of this project, each student group has created an original podcast episode.

We would love to share your child's work! Publishing student podcasts to a real audience is a powerful motivator and an authentic learning experience. However, your child's privacy and safety are our top priorities.

Please review the information below and indicate your preferences regarding how your child's work and identity may be shared.

Project Details:

Teacher: _____

Class/Period: _____

Podcast Topic: _____

Privacy Protections in Place:

- Students will **not** use their full names in the podcast (first names or pseudonyms only).
- No personal information (address, phone number, school name, etc.) will be included in the audio.
- Podcasts will only be published on secure, school-approved platforms.

Please check ONE option below:

Option A: Public Sharing

- ☐ I give permission for my child's podcast (using first name or pseudonym only) to be published on a public platform (e.g., Spotify for Podcasters, class website) so that anyone can listen.

Option B: School Community Sharing

- ☐ I give permission for my child's podcast to be shared only within our school community (e.g., school LMS, internal network, or with other classes).

Option C: Classroom Only

- ☐ I only want my child's podcast to be shared within our own classroom. It will not be published online.

Option D: No Sharing

- ☐ I do not want my child's podcast to be shared or played for any audience. (Note: The student will still complete the project for a grade but will not participate in the listening premiere.)

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature:

Date:

Thank You for Downloading!

I truly appreciate your support and hope this resource brings value to your classroom.

Your feedback is incredibly important! If you found this resource helpful, please consider taking a moment to leave a review.

Ratings and reviews help other teachers find quality resources and allow me to continue creating materials that work for you.

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