

PODCASTING

Podcasts are multimedia files (usually audio in the MP3 format, but they can be other types as well) that are distributed via RSS feeds. In other words, you can subscribe to a podcast and new episodes will be downloaded to your computer when you open your "podcatcher." (iTunes is one "podcatcher.") You don't need an iPod—or even an MP3 player—to access podcasts.

A new form of mass communication, podcasts are created by both media professionals and "ordinary" people. The range of topics and speakers makes them a rich source of materials for language learners; creating podcasts encourages students to develop their oral communication skills.

Applications and Sites to Explore

- iTunes (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>)
- Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>)
- Feedburner (<http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/podcasts>)
- PodOmatic (<http://www.podomatic.com/>)
- GarageBand (included in Mac OS X)
- Podcast Maker (<http://www.potionfactory.com/podcastmaker/>) (Mac)
- ProfCast (<http://www.profcast.com/public/index.php>) (Mac)
- Podifier (<http://www.podifier.com/>) (Mac and Windows)
- WebPod Studio (<http://www.lionhardt.ca/wps/>) (Windows)

Find and Subscribe to Podcasts Using iTunes

There are a number of podcast directories to help you find interesting podcasts. Commercial media (radio, tv, newspapers) also produce podcasts; you can find links on their sites. The iTunes podcast directory is a good place to start. Open the iTunes Music Store, click on podcasts, and look for the podcast directory. Search for your desired language to see what's available. **Quick hint: from the menu at the bottom of the US iTunes Music Store home page, choose the store for your target language and use that podcast directory.**

If you are interested in finding podcasts in Spanish, iTunes is probably not the best place to start. Better choices are podcast directories in Spanish, e.g.:

- <http://podcastellano.com>
- <http://podcast.com.ar>
- <http://podsonoro.com>
- <http://apodo.com.mx>

Creating Podcasts

All one needs to create a podcast is a way to create an MP3 and a way to distribute the file through RSS.

Applications like **Audacity** (installed on all the MMLL PCs) allow you to record and edit audio on your own computer. Services like **Odeo** and **Podomatic** provide both the ability to record and to distribute your files.

Applications like ProfCast, Podcast Maker, Podifier and WebPod Studio exist to facilitate the creation and distribution of podcasts.

Audio podcasts are particularly useful for language learners because they emphasize spoken language. "Enhanced" podcasts combine still images and links with audio. Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to create an "enhanced" podcast on a Windows computer. An approximation can be created by using Windows Movie Maker to create a video file that combines still images and audio; the .wmv file can then be converted to an iTunes compatible video format using one of many available free or low-cost video converters.