

## How to Create a Netcast

There is no one “correct way” to create and distribute a netcast. Depending on the intent, structure, length, and audience of your content, you may want to use a different methodology for the creation and distribution of the information you are presenting. This may require a variety of approaches. The steps outlined below are intended as a general guideline, and are not a structure which has to be followed verbatim. For the purpose of simplicity of presentation, we will be covering Computer-based Digital Audio Workstations as opposed to more traditional methods of audio production (Integrated Digital Audio Workstations).

### 1. Conceptualize

What is your purpose? What information do you want to convey? Who is your audience - is it anyone with an internet connection or British bird watchers, for instance? Are you going to narrate yourself, repackage pre-existing audio, or organize a roundtable discussion? Figure the answers to these questions out and keep them in mind during your production.

### 2. Create

#### a. Record

How are you going to record your content? If you are just packaging audio already recorded, you don't have to worry about this. However, if you are recording your own audio, you'll need to have a recording device set up. The best method is a sound-board connected microphone or mixing deck, but a simple handheld recorder or computer-integrated microphone may suffice. You can record directly into your editing software, or record with an independent device and then import the audio into your editing software.

#### b. Edit

##### i. Choose Your Software

There is a variety of multitrack recording software available to edit your audio with. “Multitrack” refers to the concept of placing each set of sounds in a separate “track”; for instance, your voice could be placed in one track, a song you are talking about in another, a co-host in a third, and a sound effect in the last. Your choice of software will probably be based on a mixture of cost and function. For netcasting, Apple's GarageBand is the de-facto standard due to the company's integral role in the development of the netcast. GarageBand is very simple and comes pre-installed on Apple systems, but is not compatible with Windows. Other more professional software, varying in price, includes Logic, Audition, Pro Tools, and Sonar. A free software alternative is Audacity, a cross-platform editor. However, it is strongly recommended that unexperienced producers use GarageBand for the high level of simplicity and features specifically designed for netcasting.

##### ii. Add your audio

As previously mentioned (in Record), you can import your audio or record it directly in the software. In addition, you can add music and sound effects to new tracks. With GarageBand, this can be done with drag-and-drop functionality under the media browser toolbar. To create a new track go to Track > New Track > Real Instrument Track, and select the track type under the Track Info toolbar. With Audacity, audio can be added under Project > Add Audio and then shifted using the timeshift tool. New tracks are created under Project > New Audio Track.

##### iii. Make Changes

There are a number of things which may need to be changed. Mistakes may need to be cut out or the transitions between elements smoothed. Ultimately, the style of editing you choose will define many of the qualities of a netcast. In GarageBand, these functions can be performed with the selector tool in the track editor and the mixing tools in the track viewer. In Audacity, this is done with a combination of the select tool and the edit and effects menu.

##### iv. Chapters, Etc.

One of the features that GarageBand supports is the addition of images and chapter markers

to your netcast, allowing the listener to realize visual items and skip through elements. This is done in the track editor bar and placed in the podcast track.

#### c. Encode

Encode and compress your edited audio file. This is typically but not necessarily done within your editing software though an export function. Are you going to use MP3, AAC, or WMA? Generally, MP3 is the most portable, but provides the poorest sound quality. AAC is the usually best sound quality, but can only be played on an Apple iPod and a few other media players or through Apple iTunes/Quicktime. Finally, encoding bitrate needs to be taken in to account. A higher bitrate means higher quality sound but also larger files and slower distribution speed. A hypothetical but normal encoding might be 192kbit/s Stereo MP3.

### 3. Distribute

#### a. Website

Now that you have a finished product, you need to do something with it. The choice way of getting content to the consumer in the 21st Century is the Internet; netcasting takes advantage of this innovation. First you probably need a webhost that is okay with you transferring the large amounts of data required for distributing a netcast. Then, you need a website, developed with PHP, XHTML, and CSS, or run by a preexisting content engine. At this point, you are almost ready to share your netcast with the world.

#### b. Upload

You have a spiffy website and server. Now you need to put your netcast on the server. This is typically done with a FTP client such as Transmit or Filezilla. If you have an idea of how many people will download your netcast, make sure you have enough bandwidth on your webserver. Multiply the number of downloads per netcast by the size of the netcast by the number of netcasts per month to get a rough estimate of the total transfer required. Announce the netcast's existence on your website, and you are almost done.

#### c. Syndicate

Finally, your netcast is on the internet, free for anyone to get. They could just wait for you to publish it, visit your website, then download it, but this is horribly inefficient for someone following any more than a few netcasts. As such, a technology called RSS was developed so that media consumers can get their fix of data with minimal effort. Add the netcast to an RSS feed so that users with RSS-capable clients such as iTunes can download your netcast automatically.