GoalTodo

Start a podcast: launch with three episodes ready, then keep a rhythm

Start a podcast

12 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 21

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Pick your show idea and who it's for

Idea

- [ ] Listen to three episodes of three different podcasts close to your idea, and note what you'd keep and what you'd do differently
  about 3 hours in all
- [ ] Write your show in one sentence: what it's about, who it's for, and why they'd press play
  30 min
- [ ] List 12 episode ideas. If you can't reach 12, try a wider idea or a different one
  45 min

Done when: You have a one-sentence description of your show and a list of 12 episode ideas

Sticking point: Worried your idea has been done? Most have. What's new is you: your angle, your guests, your voice. Pick the idea you could still talk about after 12 episodes.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Choose a format, a name and a rhythm

Idea

- [ ] Pick a format: on your own, with a co-host, interviews with guests, or a story told in parts. Decide whether listeners can start anywhere (episodic) or must start at episode 1 (serial)
  30 min
- [ ] Choose a length and how often you'll publish, such as 25 minutes every two weeks. Pick what you could keep up in a busy month, not a good one
  20 min
- [ ] Write five possible names, search each one in two podcast apps, and keep one that's clear, easy to say and not already taken
  45 min
- [ ] Put your launch date in your calendar, and every release date for the three months after it
  15 min

Done when: You've written down your format, episode length, release rhythm and show name, and your release dates are in your calendar

Sticking point: If you can't decide between weekly and every two weeks, choose every two weeks. You can speed up later; slowing down is harder.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Find your microphone and your quiet room

Kit and room

- [ ] Gather your kit: a phone or your earbuds' microphone is fine to start, or a USB microphone if you want one; wired headphones; and free audio editing software installed on your computer
  1 hour
- [ ] Find your recording spot: the smallest, quietest room you have, with soft things in it (carpet, curtains, a sofa, a wardrobe full of clothes). Turn off fans, ticking clocks and anything that hums
  30 min
- [ ] Record a minute of silence in that spot, then listen back on headphones for noises you've stopped noticing
  15 min
- [ ] Record yourself reading a page of a book aloud, about 8 inches (20 cm) from the microphone, and listen back
  20 min

Done when: You've recorded a minute of silence and two short readings in your spot, and listened back to them on headphones

Sticking point: Hearing your own voice for the first time is strange for nearly everyone. It sounds different to you because you usually hear it through your own head. Keep going; it passes.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Three practice recordings

Practise

- [ ] Pick one episode idea and talk about it for five minutes from a few notes, without stopping
  5 min recording, then listen back
- [ ] After each one, write down one thing to keep and one thing to change: pace, ums, distance from the microphone, noise
  10 min

Done when: You've made three five-minute practice recordings and can hear a difference between the first and the third

Sticking point: These are for no one but you. Nobody else needs to hear them, so say it badly and keep going.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Learn the basics of editing

Practise

- [ ] Open one of your recordings in your editing software and learn to cut: remove a false start, a long pause and a cough
  45 min
- [ ] Learn to set the volume so your voice is steady and never hits the red, and to fade the start and end
  45 min
- [ ] Export the edited recording as an MP3 and play it on your phone, through earbuds and through a speaker
  30 min

Done when: You've cut, levelled and exported one practice recording, and it plays properly on your phone

Sticking point: Don't cut every um and breath. Take out what distracts, leave what sounds like you. Over-edited speech sounds strange.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Make a pilot episode that no one has to hear

Practise

- [ ] Outline a full-length episode: an opening line, three main points or questions, and how you'll end
  30 min
- [ ] Record it at full length in your spot
  the length you chose
- [ ] Edit it and play it to two people you trust. Ask where they got bored and what they'd want more of
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: Your pilot episode is recorded and edited, and two people have told you where it dragged

Sticking point: Your pilot is a rehearsal, not your first episode. If it's good, you can use it later, but the plan doesn't count on it.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Plan episodes 1, 2 and 3

First three episodes

- [ ] Choose your first three episodes from your list. Episode 1 should tell a new listener what the show is and why it's for them
  30 min
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Write an outline for each: an opening, three to five points or questions, and an ending that points to the next episode
  45 min each
- [ ] If you'll have guests, invite them now with the date, the topic, roughly how long it takes, and that you'll edit the recording. Book each recording slot
  30 min

Done when: You have an outline for each of the first three episodes, and every guest has a recording slot booked

Sticking point: Guests often take a week or more to reply. Have a solo episode outlined in case one falls through.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Record and edit episode 1

First three episodes

- [ ] Record episode 1 from its outline. If you stumble, pause, take a breath and say the sentence again, so it's easy to cut later
  the length you chose, plus 15 minutes to set up
- [ ] Edit episode 1: cut the stumbles and long pauses, level the volume, add your intro and outro if you have them
  2 to 3 hours
- [ ] Listen back to the whole episode the next day with fresh ears, and note anything to fix
  the episode's length

Done when: Episode 1 is recorded and edited, and you've listened to it all the way through

Sticking point: The first episode takes the longest to edit. Note how long it took, so you can plan the next two, and expect it to get quicker.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Artwork, description and music

Get ready to publish

- [ ] Make your show cover: a square image 3000 by 3000 pixels, saved as a JPG or PNG with a solid background, with the show name large enough to read when it's tiny
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Write your show description: what it's about, who it's for and how often new episodes come out, in a few plain sentences
  30 min
- [ ] Make or find intro music you have the right to use: your own, music the composer gave you permission for in writing, or music under a licence that allows podcasts. Save a copy of the licence
  1 hour
- [ ] Add the intro and outro to episode 1, if you're using them, and listen to the finished episode all the way through
  45 min

Done when: Your show cover, description and intro are done, you have proof you're allowed to use the music, and episode 1 is finished

Sticking point: No music is fine. Lots of shows open with a voice and nothing else. Never use a song you like just because you bought it: buying a track doesn't give you the right to put it in a podcast.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

Record and edit episode 2

First three episodes

- [ ] Record episode 2 from its outline. If you stumble, pause, take a breath and say the sentence again, so it's easy to cut later
  the length you chose, plus 15 minutes to set up
- [ ] Edit episode 2: cut the stumbles and long pauses, level the volume, add your intro and outro if you have them
  2 to 3 hours
- [ ] If a guest is on this episode, send them a thank-you and tell them roughly when it comes out
  10 min

Done when: Episode 2 is recorded and edited

Sticking point: If a guest cancels, record the solo episode you outlined and move the interview to episode 4.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Record and edit episode 3

First three episodes

- [ ] Record episode 3 from its outline. If you stumble, pause, take a breath and say the sentence again, so it's easy to cut later
  the length you chose, plus 15 minutes to set up
- [ ] Edit episode 3: cut the stumbles and long pauses, level the volume, add your intro and outro if you have them
  2 to 3 hours
- [ ] Sign up with a podcast host that makes an RSS feed (many have a free plan), add your show name, description, cover and category, and upload your three episodes as drafts or scheduled for launch day
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Publish a short trailer, a minute or two cut from episode 1 saying what the show is and when it launches, marked as a trailer if your host offers that, so your feed has one live episode. Then copy your RSS feed address and submit it to the main podcast directories, each through its own creator page, so they have time to review it before launch day
  1 hour 30 min

Done when: Episode 3 is recorded and edited, all three episodes are uploaded to your host, your trailer is live, and your feed is submitted to the directories

Sticking point: This is the busiest week. If it won't all fit, do the upload and directory submission first, and finish editing episode 3 early next week.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

Launch day

Launch

- [ ] Check that each directory has approved your show. Listen to the start of each episode in two podcast apps
  30 min
- [ ] Publish your three episodes on your launch date, or check that the scheduled ones went live
  15 min
- [ ] Tell people: send the link to friends who'd like it, and post it where people who'd enjoy the topic will see it. Ask them to follow the show
  30 min
- [ ] Write the outline for episode 4 and book its recording slot for your next release date
  30 min

Done when: Your show is live with three episodes, you've shared the link, and episode 4 is outlined and booked

Sticking point: A directory still reviewing your show on launch day isn't a failed launch. Launch where it's live, and share the other links when they arrive.

How to start a podcast

Starting a podcast comes down to seven steps. This plan takes you through them in order, one week at a time.

1. Pick an idea and who it's for. Write it in one sentence and list 12 episode ideas. If you can't reach 12, the idea is too narrow.

2. Choose a format and a rhythm. On your own, with a co-host, interviews, or a story told in parts. Then a length and how often you'll publish.

3. Find a quiet room and a microphone. Your phone or earbuds will do to start. A small room with soft furnishings matters more than expensive kit.

4. Practise recording and editing until you're comfortable hearing yourself.

5. Make three episodes before you launch, so new listeners have more than one to try and you have a head start on your rhythm.

6. Get a podcast host, which stores your audio and makes your RSS feed, and submit that feed to the podcast directories.

7. Launch on your date, then keep your rhythm. The plan ends on launch day with episode 4 already planned.

How the plan works

You choose a launch date and the plan counts back from it. Most weeks have three sessions, on a Tuesday, a Thursday and a Saturday, from a few minutes to about three hours. Move the days to suit you.

The plan has four parts:

- Idea: what the show is, its format, name and release rhythm.
- Kit and practice: your room, your microphone, practice recordings and basic editing. If you've never recorded before, there's a pilot episode that no one else has to hear.
- First three episodes: planned together, then recorded and edited one a week, with the artwork, description and music fitted in between.
- Launch: your host, your RSS feed, the directories, and launch day.

If your date is closer than the full plan, the plan leaves out the practice recordings and the pilot episode first, never the episodes themselves or launch week.

Which level to pick

- I've never recorded anything: 12 weeks. You've not made audio or video you'd share, or you've never edited a recording. The plan starts with practice recordings and teaches you to edit before your first episode.
- I've made audio or video before: 8 weeks. You've recorded and edited something, such as a video, a voice-over or music, and you know your way around an editing program. The plan goes straight to a test recording and a pilot.

If you're not sure, pick the first one. The practice weeks are quick if you already know how.

Before you start

Decide how much time you have. Recording takes the episode's length plus time to set up, and editing takes longer than recording, especially at first. Time your first edit, so you know what to plan for. If your week is full, choose a shorter episode or every two weeks, not both a long episode and a weekly rhythm.

Choose episodic or serial. Apple's own help pages describe the two show types: "Episodic shows can be listened to in any order while serialized shows are designed to be listened to in sequential order — from the first episode to the last." Most interview and chat shows are episodic. A story told in parts is serial.

Pick a rhythm you can keep. Podcast apps let you tell listeners how often new episodes come out, so choose a rhythm you can keep to. Every two weeks is easier to keep than weekly. Whatever you pick, put the release dates in your calendar now.

Plan for guests' permission. If anyone else's voice will be in the show, they need to know they're being recorded and agree to it. Recording laws differ between countries and states, so check the rules where you and each guest are.

What you need

You don't need to buy much to start. Free and cheap options first:

▪ A microphone. The microphone on your phone or wired earbuds is enough for your first recordings, and the UC Santa Cruz library guide (https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/DS/Resources/RecordingAudioAtHome) suggests earbuds over your computer's built-in microphone. A USB microphone, which plugs straight into a computer without any extra box, is the usual next step.

▪ Headphones, ideally wired, so you can hear what you're recording.

▪ Free audio editing software. Several free programs record, cut, level and export audio, and that's all you need.

▪ A podcast host. This is a service that stores your audio files and makes your RSS feed, the address podcast apps read to find your episodes. Some hosts have a free plan; read what it includes, and what happens to your feed if you move, before you choose.

▪ A quiet room (more on that below).

Remote guests can record over a video-call program that saves audio. Ask them to wear headphones, so your voice doesn't echo back through their microphone.

Recording somewhere quiet

The room matters more than the microphone. University library guides on podcasting agree on the basics:

▪ Small and soft is best. Find the smallest quiet room you have. Bare walls and hard floors bounce your voice back as echo. Carpet, curtains, a sofa, cushions and bookshelves soak it up. Some people record in a wardrobe full of clothes, or with a blanket over themselves and the microphone. It looks odd and sounds good.

▪ Listen to the silence first. Record a minute of your room with no one talking, then play it back on headphones. You'll hear the fridge, the fan and the traffic you've stopped noticing. Turn off what you can.

▪ Stay about 8 inches (20 cm) from the microphone, and keep that distance the same as you talk. Too close and you'll hear pops and breaths; too far and you'll sound distant.

▪ Check your levels. Do a short test and make sure the meter never reaches the red.

▪ Tell the people you live with when you're recording.

Echo is very hard to take out later, so fix it in the room, not in the edit.

Editing, simply

Keep your first edits simple. For each episode:

1. Cut the false starts and long pauses. When you stumble while recording, pause, breathe and say the sentence again. The gap makes it easy to find and cut.

2. Level the volume so every voice is about as loud as the others and nothing hits the red.

3. Add your intro and outro, if you have them.

4. Listen through once on headphones and once on a phone speaker, then export as an MP3 for your host.

Don't cut every um. Take out what distracts and leave what sounds like you. If you edit a guest's answer, keep its meaning: the University of Minnesota's podcasting guide (https://libguides.umn.edu/podcasting101/prep) suggests letting guests hear the recording before you publish, in case you've misunderstood something in the edit.

Music and other people's work

Only use music, clips and sound effects you have the right to use. Apple's guidelines for podcasters say: "Creators must ensure their podcasts only include content that they have the rights to use."

- Buying a song, or streaming it, doesn't let you put it in your podcast. It gives you the right to listen, not to publish. Giving the artist credit doesn't make it allowed either.
- Safe choices: music you made yourself; music a composer has given you written permission to use; or music under a licence that clearly allows podcasts, including any rules on credit and whether you can earn from the show. Keep a copy of every licence and permission.
- There's no safe number of seconds. The US Copyright Office says: "There are no legal rules permitting the use of a specific number of words, a certain number of musical notes, or percentage of a work." When in doubt, ask the owner for permission, or leave it out.
- Podcasts aren't for publishing music. Spotify's creator rules say podcasts shouldn't be used to distribute music tracks or DJ mixes, whatever the licence.

Copyright rules differ between countries. For anything unclear, check your national copyright office's guidance, or ask the copyright librarian if you're at a university.

Guests and consent

- Ask before you record. Tell each guest what the show is, roughly how long it takes, and that the episode will be published. Then, at the start of the recording, ask them again and keep their yes in the recording.
- Tell them you'll edit. Say you'll cut for time and to take out stumbles, and that you won't change what they meant.
- Let them hear it before it goes out, if you can. It catches mistakes and keeps guests happy to come back.
- Recording laws differ. In some places everyone on a call must agree to be recorded. Check the rules where you and each guest are, and when in doubt, get everyone's agreement.
- Take care with children, and with private people's names and stories. Get a parent's permission before recording a child, and ask before naming anyone who isn't on the show.

Getting into podcast apps

Podcasts reach listeners through an RSS feed: a web address, made by your podcast host, that lists your episodes. You give that address to each podcast directory once, and new episodes appear there whenever you publish.

- Submit to each directory through its own creator page. The big ones each have a free creator sign-up and help pages that explain their rules. Do this in the week before launch: Apple's help pages say every show must pass "technical validations and a review process" before it appears.
- Make your cover to the directories' size. Apple asks for a square show cover of 3000 by 3000 pixels and accepts 1400 by 1400 up to 3000 by 3000. It must be a JPG or PNG with no transparency, so use a solid background. Keep the title large and clear, because it will often be shown very small.
- Describe the show honestly. Directories expect your title and description to match what's in the episodes.
- Publish a short trailer in the week before launch. A feed needs at least one live episode before a directory can list it: Apple says "You must have at least one episode for your show to be available on Apple Podcasts", and suggests a trailer. Don't publish the trailer long before launch, though: Apple's guidelines say not to publish sample or trailer episodes for shows that won't be available shortly.
- Video platforms can take your feed too. In some countries, YouTube can turn each episode from your RSS feed into a video with your show art. It uploads them as private first, so you can check them before they go public.

Common mistakes

- Spending weeks choosing a microphone. The room matters more. Start with what you have.
- Launching with one episode. Three gives new listeners a reason to stay and gives you a head start.
- A rhythm that only works in a good month. Pick the one you could keep in a busy month.
- Using music you don't have the rights to. It can get episodes taken down. Use your own, ask permission, or go without.
- Editing for hours to sound perfect. Cut what distracts and publish. You'll get better by making the next one.
- Recording in a big, bare room. Echo can't really be fixed later. Move somewhere small and soft.
- Talking to no one in particular. Picture one listener from your one-sentence description and talk to them.

After launch: keeping your rhythm

Launch day is the start, not the finish. To keep going:

- Keep one episode ahead. Record each episode a week before its release date, so a busy week or a cancelled guest doesn't mean a missed episode.
- Use the same weekly slots for planning, recording and editing that you used in the plan.
- Batch when you can. Recording two episodes in one session buys you a free week later.
- Take planned breaks. If you need time off, call it a season break and tell listeners when you'll be back, rather than going quiet.
- Listen to your own episodes once they're out, and change one thing at a time.
- Count what you can control: episodes published on time. Nobody can promise you a number of listeners or any income, and this plan doesn't.

If the show isn't working for you after a season, it's fine to change the format, the rhythm or the idea. That's what season two is for.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Carry on with this week's sessions and fit last week's in where you can. If you're on the episode weeks, record the missed episode first: the artwork and description can wait a few days, the episodes can't.

Missed 2 weeks: Pick up where you stopped, not where the calendar says. If you're in the practice weeks, skip the pilot episode. If you're in the episode weeks, enter your launch date on the plan page to see if it still works.

Missed 3 weeks: Move your launch date back by three weeks, so you still launch with three episodes. A later launch with episodes ready is better than an early one you can't keep up.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Listen to what you've already recorded, then choose the level that matches where you are now and set a new launch date. Anything you've made still counts.

Sources

Apple Podcasts for Creators
`https://podcasters.apple.com/support/5514-show-cover-template`
“If submitting a Show Cover via RSS feed, Apple Podcasts accepts Show Cover artwork ranging from 1400 x 1400 to 3000 x 3000 pixels.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/5514-show-cover-template
“Show Covers cannot contain transparency and should not contain an alpha channel.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/5514-show-cover-template
“Your title will appear in various sizes and on different devices, so keep it legible and recognizable at scale and limit additional text or logos.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/891-content-and-subscription-guidelines
“Creators must ensure their podcasts only include content that they have the rights to use.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/891-content-and-subscription-guidelines
“Don’t provide incomplete content, including sample or trailer episodes for podcasts which are not or will not be shortly available in Apple Podcasts.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/891-content-and-subscription-guidelines
“Podcast metadata (for example, titles, descriptions, language, etc.) must always accurately represent the corresponding content that is distributed.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/897-submit-a-show
“All shows must pass technical validations and a review process before they’re made available on Apple Podcasts.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/897-submit-a-show
“Episodic shows can be listened to in any order while serialized shows are designed to be listened to in sequential order — from the first episode to the last.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/897-submit-a-show
“This appears in Apple Podcasts and lets your listeners know how often you plan to update your show with new episodes.”

YouTube Help
https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/13525207?hl=en
“When you submit your RSS feed to YouTube, YouTube will create videos for each podcast episode that you choose to upload.”

YouTube Help
https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/13525207?hl=en
“When you first submit your RSS feed to YouTube, the episodes you select will be uploaded as private videos.”

YouTube Help
https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/13525207?hl=en
“Once your episodes are uploaded, browse your video tab for monetization or copyright issues.”

Spotify for Creators Support
https://support.spotify.com/us/creators/article/policy-on-submitting-music-via-spotify-for-creators/
“Podcasts, including those submitted via Spotify for Creators, should not be used to distribute music tracks, DJ mixes, or similar musical content.”

U.S. Copyright Office
https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html
“There are no legal rules permitting the use of a specific number of words, a certain number of musical notes, or percentage of a work.”

U.S. Copyright Office
https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html
“However, in cases of doubt, the Copyright Office recommends that permission be obtained.”

U.S. Copyright Office
https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html
“If you know who the copyright owner is, you may contact the owner directly.”

University of California, Santa Cruz Library
https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/DS/Resources/RecordingAudioAtHome
“Find a quiet room with minimal echo, the smaller the better.”

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“If you can’t get a USB mic, use the mic on your earbuds.”

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https://libguides.umn.edu/podcasting101/prep
“Microphone should be about 8 inches away from your mouth.”

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https://libguides.umn.edu/podcasting101/prep
“Do a test recording of the silence in your room before you record audio, so you can hear what noises are there that you may just be used to.”

University of Minnesota Libraries
https://libguides.umn.edu/podcasting101/prep
“Allow your guests to hear the recording before publication in case you misinterpret something they said in your editing process.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
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“You must have at least one episode for your show to be available on Apple Podcasts.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/5570-get-started-with-apple-podcasts
“We suggest that at least a trailer is uploaded.”

Apple Podcasts for Creators
https://podcasters.apple.com/support/829-validate-your-podcast
“No episodes exist in your feed.”

This plan online	https://goaltodo.com/start-a-podcast
Reach it with others on Welang	https://welang.com/goals
Reach it on your own in HourLife	https://www.hourlife.com