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FREE Podcasting Quick-Start Guide

By Garritt Hampton

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INTRODUCTION

I published my first podcast episode in 2010. It was a weekly sermon podcast for a church that we helped plant, and it really seemed easier then. As the weeks rolled by the audience grew and the quality of each episode got better. In the following years I recorded and published many sermons from that church and others, shot, edited, and posted hundreds of hours of video, from vlogs to instructional content, from movie trailers to short films. Even with my deeply technical background I always feel like I have to learn new skills and tools to stay on top of changing trends in the industry.



In July of 2018, I launched [*the Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast*](#). Hosted by my extraordinarily talented wife, Three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday), *the Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast* offers Biblical parenting resources and encouragement, aimed at the homeschool community. Even though I had done this many times before, in many ways it felt like I was starting from scratch. So, I began learning and improving again, and since then, *The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast* has seen steady growth, a committed audience, high rankings in podcast charts, and even the holy grail of podcasting – paid ads booked a year in advance! As of this revision, we have published out 275 episodes and hit [#14 on the Apple Podcasts chart in the Parenting category](#) where we consistently stay in the top 75.

Over the years, I have had several people ask for my help in starting their own podcasts. I am always happy to help, because I really believe in podcasting as a fantastic way to impact culture. It is also a powerful way to connect with an audience and even *make some real money*, but you have to start out on the right foot, or you will spend unnecessary time and effort fixing costly mistakes and possibly losing your opportunity to build an audience. With that in mind, I have developed this **FREE Podcasting Quick-Start Guide** to help many more people start well and avoid those mistakes.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This guide contains affiliate links. If you appreciate the information here, please consider supporting our work by using these affiliate links to purchase equipment and services, or support us directly by [making a tax-deductible donation here](#).

Just as there are many ways to skin a cat, there are many ways to publish a podcast. This is not the definitive guide to publishing every type of podcast on every platform, this is a quick guide to get you up and running with a podcast that can grow. It is my way, not the only way.



Photo by Clark Tibbs on Unsplash

The equipment I recommend in this guide is appropriate for a single host or for an interview style podcast with either in-house or remote guests. Whether you plan to have guests or not, I would encourage you to buy equipment that will enable you to have guests in the future.

Over time, this guide will change. I will add and remove equipment and I will change some of the advice, based on current trends in technology and the market. Check the copyright date. If has been a while since the copy you are reading has been published [click here for the most recent version](#). While you may find this guide many other places, I will always keep the most up-to-date version published [here](#).

I REALLY like **simple and reliable** equipment and systems. Sometimes there may be a less expensive piece of equipment or technology available, but I have suggested systems and equipment that I believe are rock-solid and simple to operate (as simple as any technology can be). There are several different ways to do this, and many are very good. These are just my suggestions for getting started with a podcasting system that will grow with you and provide many years of faithful service – without being unnecessarily difficult to learn to use.

I have also made suggestions based on the belief that **sound quality and production quality really matter**. While it is absolutely true that you can produce and upload a podcast all from your iPhone or iPad, there are several significant limitations with that system, and they will severely limit your ability to produce a professional sounding show over time. Listeners have a basic expectation of quality. Even listeners who are new to podcasts have been listening to radio and television their whole lives, so they have been trained to expect a certain level of audio and production quality. For example, radio listeners have been hearing call-in guests for decades, so they understand that sometimes guest audio isn't perfect, but the host's audio should be. They will put up with relatively poor audio from your remote guests if your audio is loud and clear.



Photo by Adi Goldstein on Unsplash

That said, you have to understand, you *must* do some level of audio production on your podcast. While it is technically possible to record an episode on your phone and upload it instantly, you **ABSOLUTELY SHOULD NOT DO THIS!** One of the cardinal sins of podcasting is to publish audio that has not been compressed to bring it up to a listenable volume level. At the

very least, I recommend capturing great sounding audio (see the notes below), then adding intro and outro music, a bit of EQ (equalization), and compression to the audio to get it to sound clear and be loud enough to hear on the small speaker of a cell phone (exactly how I have listened to hundreds of hours of podcasts). Your goal should be to have your audio be loud enough and clear enough to be listened to on anything from ear buds, to headphones, to phone speakers, to Amazon Alexas, to smart TVs, to car stereos. This simply can't be done without some minimal editing and processing. ([note: The industry has settled on a standard loudness level of -16 LUFS](#))

Finally, **you must have a budget.** While it is technically possible to publish a podcast for free, it is not reasonable, nor does it provide a long-term solution or allow for a large audience. At the very least, you have to budget for ongoing podcast hosting (\$9-\$25 per month) and some equipment to get started (\$300-\$1,000). Over time, you will need to budget significantly more than that if you want to build a successful and growing podcast, but there's good news. Even a small podcast can easily pay for itself, and as it grows it should provide a reasonable income, if that is your goal. You don't have to buy every piece of equipment I recommend in this guide, but you will have to spend some money on equipment, software, and hosting.



Photo by Gia Oris on Unsplash

I know this is a lot to take in, and everyone begins with a different level of technical expertise, so I have structured this guide almost as a checklist. Here's a summary of the first few steps.

- 1) Gather the necessary gear and software to record and edit your show.
- 2) Record and edit a test episode or two.
- 3) Record and edit 5-10 actual episodes.
- 4) Set up your [podcast hosting account](#).
- 5) Publish your first 5 episodes.
- 6) Once your first episodes are published, submit your podcast to [iTunes](#) and [the other podcast platforms and directories](#). (you never have to do this again).

GETTING STARTED

The Basics:

Whether you do interviews or not, YOUR audio REALLY matters. You must sound great or people will tune out. This is especially true if you do interviews over the phone, Skype, Zoom, or Streamyard. When you do remote interviews the interviewee's sound will almost always be pretty bad and there's only so much you can do to fix it. People are used to hearing call-in guests on the radio, so they will put up with bad guest sound, but they expect the host to sound great.

Getting great host sound relies on a several factors, only a few of which have anything to do with your microphone or recorder.

- **Always wear headphones** or earbuds. This serves two purposes. First, you need to be able to hear yourself to make sure you are recording good quality audio of your own voice. Second, If you don't use headphones your remote guest's audio will be picked up by your microphone and will sound echoey and will likely feed back (that's the terrible squeal you hear right before radio hosts tell their guests to turn their speakers down!).
- **YOUR GUEST HAVE TO WEAR HEADPHONES TOO!** This is a non-negotiable. We send our guests a quick "best practices" guide and ask that all of them use headphones.
- Do everything you can to **record in a quiet, dead room** (one with very little reverb). If you have tile floors, put down a big, thick area rug. Consider putting a bit of acoustic treatment on your walls (this can decorative or purely functional). Even hanging tapestries or decorative rugs on the walls can really help. Here are some examples, from purely functional to decorative -
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/2WqnuRC>
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/321tUYP>
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/2JAekg6>
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/2WqxQky>
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/2pic7iO>
 - ❑ <https://amzn.to/2oxH2qX>
- Don't forget your ceiling and desk - both are very reflective surfaces. I use a low-pile carpet on the desk that we record [***the Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast***](#) on. This helps with keeping the reflections down (acoustic reflections - reverb and echo), and also keeps the sound of our computer fan from coming through the microphone stand (which was a problem in the first few episodes of our show).

- **Get close to your microphone**, but don't talk straight into it. Your microphone should be about 3-4 inches from your mouth, but just off-axis, so popped P's and B's aren't too prominent.

If you are going to do remote interviews, you need an excellent internet connection. You need fast, reliable internet service and really need to use a wired connection to your computer (don't rely on Wi-Fi). Even if you have fast Wi-Fi, it will drop out at times, due to interference (microwave ovens, cordless phones, your neighbor's Wi-Fi). Even if you don't do interviews, a really good internet connection will make managing your podcast much less painful.



Photo by [CoWomen](#) on [Unsplash](#)

First Steps:

- Know the purpose and mission of your podcast and count the cost. Podcasting takes a lot of time, effort, and money. This is fine, as long as the investment in the podcast is a worthwhile investment toward fulfilling the purpose and mission of the show. It's fine to do a podcast purely for marketing, ministry, outreach, or entertainment. It's also fine to build a podcast for profit. Knowing which direction you are heading at the outset will determine several factors about how you produce, market, and schedule your podcast. My suggestion is that no matter what your mission, produce a podcast that will, at least, pay for itself.
- Set up your iTunes account before you launch your show. [You will need an Apple ID](#) (if you have an iPhone you already have this). Then you will need to setup an [Apple Podcasts Connect account](#). This is where you will submit your podcast to Apple.
- Promote the show before it launches. Use your newsletter, social media, website, and any other means you can to let people know you will be launching. Ask your social media followers and newsletter subscribers for topic and guest suggestions to get "buy-in" and generate a sense of ownership among your audience. The bigger your launch is, the better chance you have of gaining early listeners through search results and chart rankings. If you can get in the "New and Noteworthy" section on iTunes it is a huge deal.

New & Noteworthy

[See All](#)



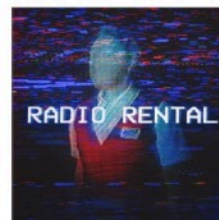
Odd Ball
WJCT



The Derby City
Betrayal
FOX News



Have You Seen This
Man?
ABC News



Radio Rental
Tenderfoot TV & Cad...



Short Wave
NPR



MOONFACE
James Kim



DUST
DUST Studios



Urgent Care with
Joel Kim Booster +...
Earwolf & Joel Kim B



The City
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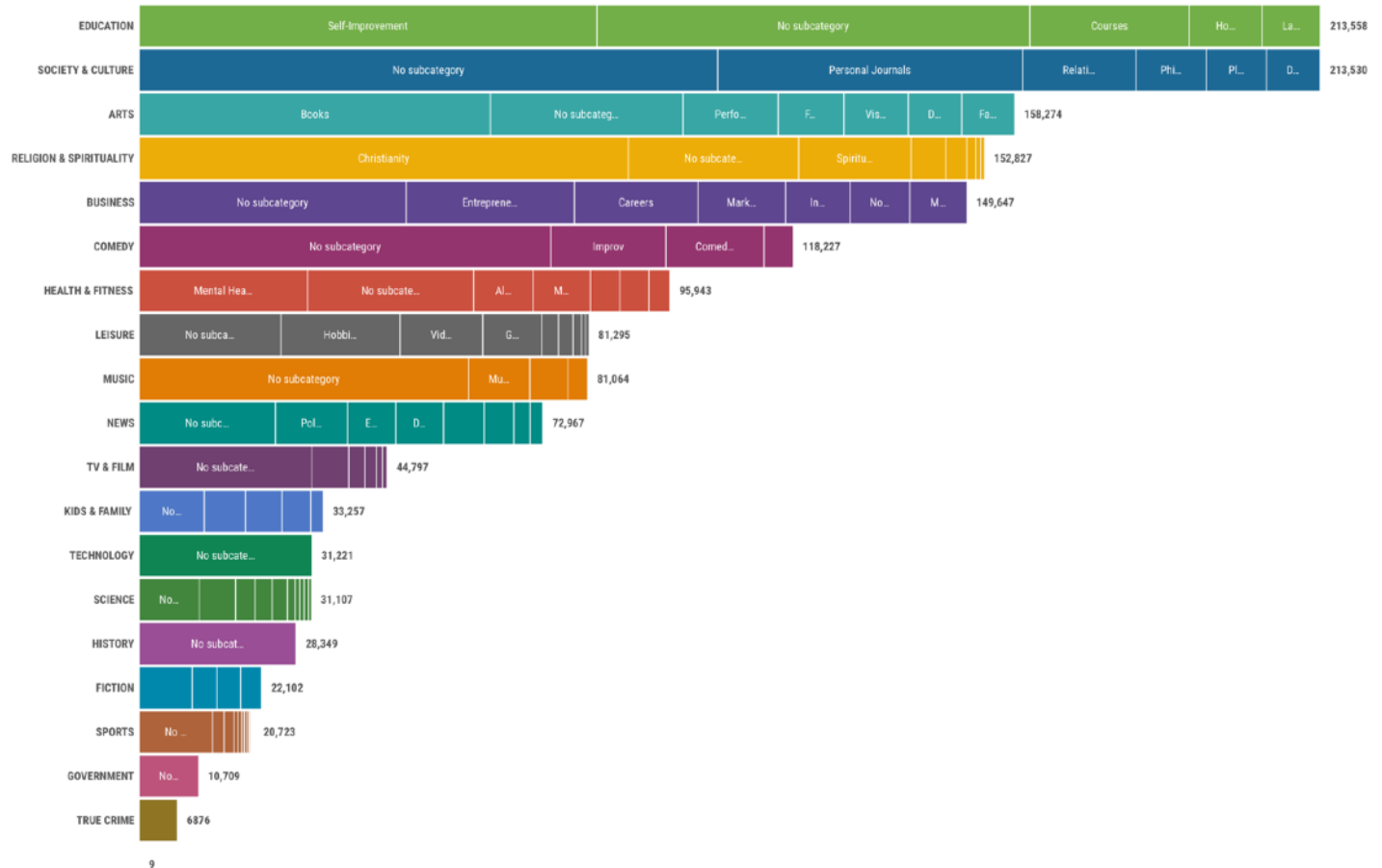


Bad Batch
Wondery

- You should plan to launch with at least 5 episodes. This gives you a much better chance of showing up in the "New and Noteworthy" category on iTunes and Apple Podcasts, because your early listeners will likely download more than one your launch episodes.

- Pick your category carefully. iTunes allows you to select one main category and two subcategories. Choose these carefully, based on saturation in those categories and on where you would expect your audience to search for your show. iTunes changed several of their categories in 2019, so there aren't a lot of current charts showing how many podcasts are in each category, but I can tell you this: "Religion & Spirituality:Christianity" is BY FAR the most crowded category. Using that as your primary category means you will be competing with Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, Rob Bell, Steven Furtick, and every other celebrity megachurch pastor, and EVERY other weekly church sermon - your show will never ever get found in search. "Religion & Spirituality" is worse, because not only will you be competing with those guys, but now you will be competing with Oprah and all the new age stuff too.

- Here are two charts that shows how saturated each category was in March, 2021.





- As an example, [The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast](#) is in the following categories: Primary - Kids&Family:Parenting (Parenting subcategory of Kids & Family), Second - Education:How To (How To subcategory of Education), Third - Religion & Spirituality:Christianity (Christianity subcategory of Religion & Spirituality). By using subcategories for all our categories, we actually show up in the searches of **six categories, rather than just three**.
- Pick a specific subcategory as your main category (e.g. "Parenting", under "Kids & Family". This way you are in a small category, and you will show up in search results for your subcategory AND for the main category.

- HERE IS THE CURRENT LIST OF CATEGORIES - <https://www.podcastinsights.com/itunes-podcast-categories/>
- Ask people to rate and review the show on iTunes. Do this often. Highly rated shows will show up higher in Apple's search results.
- Stick to a schedule. Whether you post daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, always post at the exact same time and on the exact same day, by scheduling your posts ahead of time.
- Don't forget the show notes! Not only do show notes give your listeners basic information about each episode, they provide a few real benefits to you. First, show notes are text heavy, so they make your podcast episodes much more searchable for listeners and search engines (SEO is good!). Next, they offer a great place to post links to books, products, and tools mentioned in your show. This is a great benefit to listeners. Finally, they offer you a convenient place to put affiliate links, which can go a long way toward having your podcast pay for itself!
- In it for the long haul... launching a podcast is easy. Posting your 50th, 75th, 100th, or 1,000th episode is much harder. Commit to the process and enjoy it. Then get on a schedule and stick to it!
- Don't expect meteoric growth. Don't obsess over numbers. Don't give up. Keep your schedule and promote your podcast and you will build an audience – don't worry too much about how long it takes. Appreciate the listeners you have and work to make them happy and they will tell their friends.

Ratings & Reviews [See all »](#)



5.0 stars from 47 ratings

Great podcasts



"I love listening to Yvette interviewing different moms and homeschooling parents. I feel like I'm sitting down and chatting with friends."

MMR942 via Apple Podcasts · United States of America · 10/28/19

Excellent Home Education Intel



"Well executed interviews with top homeschool influencers of the day. These podcasts represent a wealth of information for equipping & encouraging anyone considering this education option or already on the journey."

TrueGritGal via Apple Podcasts · United States of America · 10/10/19

EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE

HEADPHONES: Notice that headphones are first on my equipment list. That is not an accident. You absolutely need a great pair of headphones for recording and mixing your podcast. I highly recommend Audio-Technica ATH-M30X headphones. I have used the same pair of ATH-M30 (the previous version) headphones for well over 15 years. I use them at least 5 days a week, for several hours every day, and have for several years. They have even been washed and dried with my laundry! After many years of hard use they still sound great, are comfortable for hours of wear, and haven't broken. There are other great headphones out there, but I have battle tested these and they have never let me down. Also, I know that audio that I mix on them translates to other speakers well. I have literally mixed HUNDREDS of hours of audio on them and I am always happy with how my mixes translate.

A few final notes on headphones: Don't use wireless, don't mix on earbuds, don't use consumer music headphones (like Beats), and don't go super cheap. You need to be able to trust your headphones to work every time you put them on, and to provide clear and accurate sound that will translate well to other speaker systems. Wireless headphones will suffer from dropouts and delay. While it may be permissible to record your podcast using earbuds, if only to avoid the look of big earphones on video, earbuds do not provide accurate sound for mixing, they usually



My Trusty ATH-M30 Headphones

have very short cords, and they tend to cause ear strain when worn for long periods. Beats and other consumer music headphones will have overhyped bass and will not provide accurate sound. Cheap headphones will break quickly and won't provide accurate sound.

MIXER AND AUDIO RECORDER: While I don't use it, I recommend the RØDECaster Pro because it fills several important roles well. It will replace a mixer and microphone preamps, multitrack audio recorder, headphone amplifier, audio interface, phone interface, and sound effects/music player. By the time you try to buy all of the gear to do these separate jobs and wire all of the pieces together to get them to work you will have spent more money than if you had just bought the RØDECaster Pro, and you will have many more gray hair than when you started. Also, there are a ton of instructional videos out there, so learning to use it should be relatively simple.



Note: If you never plan on doing remote interviews over the internet, you can buy a [Zoom H6](#). This is the audio recorder that we use to produce *The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast*. It is compact and great for doing location recording. It is also less expensive than the RØDECaster Pro and records excellent quality audio, but [we use it with a mixer](#) to provide a "mix minus" for remote interviews. This is a much less elegant solution than just using the RØDECaster Pro to mix and record.

- **STORAGE:** You need a good, semi-large MicroSD card for your [RØDECaster Pro](#). - [I really like these ones from SanDisk](#).

- Note: While many people record their podcasts directly to their computer, using Audacity or another DAW (digital audio workstation), I recommend that you record all of your audio to the [RØDECaster Pro](#) or another [external audio recorder](#). It will be more reliable than recording to your computer, and if you are using your computer for interviews you don't want to add the extra processing overhead by trying to record audio too. Once you have recorded the audio on your RØDECaster Pro you will import it and edit it on your computer.
- **MICROPHONE:** This is an area where you have some flexibility, depending on your budget. I don't recommend using a USB microphone, as you can only use it to record with your computer and they tend to use lower quality parts to meet a price point, which results in compromised sound quality. Here are my microphone suggestions:
 - [Inexpensive, but built like a tank – Shure SM58](#). This microphone will last 100 years and will sound great. If you are on a limited budget, consider buying one and then upgrading later. This will give you a fantastic guest microphone when you upgrade your primary microphone.
 - [The Pro Solution – Shure SM7B](#) and [Cloudlifter](#). This is a GREAT sounding microphone, which many professionals use. It sounds fantastic on male or female voices and it is very forgiving of poor microphone technique. However, it has a very low power output, so it must be used with a [Cloudlifter](#) or similar device to raise the output to a useable level.
 - [USB Microphone](#) – If you ABSOLUTELY must have a USB microphone I recommend the [Audio-Technica ATR2100-USB](#). It is affordable, offers reasonably good sound quality, and also has an XLR connection, so it can be used with mixers and external audio recorders.
- **CABLES:** You will need an XLR Cable for your microphone(s) - [These are a good value](#).
- **MICROPHONE STAND:** If you don't already have one, you will need a **good** microphone stand.
 - We use this short **desktop stand** - <https://amzn.to/2MZc0BI> It is sturdy and functional, but doesn't move, and it doesn't offer great flexibility for height and direction.
 - If you get a **boom style stand**, whatever you do, don't buy a cheap one. Cheap boom style stands are noisy, and they sag over time. I really like the [Blue Compass](#) - <https://amzn.to/34f3HaE> This is what a TON of big shows use, and is absolutely worth the cost, but only if you want to be able to move during your show.
- **POP FILTER:** Unless you buy choose the [Shure SM7B](#) as your microphone you will need a good **pop filter** - At the very least, you should use [a foam windscreen](#), but I

recommend [a good pop filter](#). The SM7B has a very good built-in pop filter, so all but the most sibilant/plosive speakers can get away without an external one.

- **AUDIO EDITOR:** You will need an **audio editor** (DAW – digital audio workstation) to add music, trim your audio, and output a final mix - [Audacity is free](#) and works on Apple or Windows (I don't use it). I use [Reaper](#). It is not free but is powerful and relatively easy to use. If you have a Mac, you can use Garage Band for free. It is about as simple as you can get but lacks the ability to use some necessary plugins.
- **PLUGINS:** Plugins are additional audio tools that integrate with your audio editor (DAW) to provide additional functionality. Audacity and Reaper both include some very good plugins, but I use a few third-party plugins to produce every episode of The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast. If you sign up for the mailing lists at [Waves.com](#) and [iZotope.com](#) you will get regular coupon codes, which will make these plugins much more affordable.
 - [Scheps Omni Channel, from Waves](#) – I use the Scheps Omni Channel on both the host and guest, to EQ, De-Ess, and compress their audio. It is a great sounding all-in-one tool.
 - [iZotope RX7](#) – I use the RX7 Voice De-noise, RX7 De-clip, and RX7 De-hum as needed, to fix problems with bad audio. Because we conduct many remote interviews over Zoom, sometimes I have to really work to fix guest audio. These plugins are very useful, but none of them works miracles, so CAPTURE GOOD AUDIO!
 - [H-Comp, from Waves](#) – I use H-Comp to compress my final mix, to get it to appropriate broadcast levels (-16 LUFS).
 - [YouLean Loudness Meter](#) – I use the YouLean Loudness Meter to ensure that my final mix is within the appropriate loudness and dynamic range for podcasts ([between -16 and -15 LUFS, with no peaks over -1DB](#)).
- **MUSIC:** You will need a good source of **royalty-free music**. I really like [audiio.com](#). A lifetime account is \$299, which is really inexpensive for royalty-free music, and the quality is really good. I have a pro account, which allows unlimited use on any type of video production, but if you are only using the music for podcasting a pro account isn't necessary. Don't use unlicensed commercial music! You will get sued. Your episodes will also get blocked or flagged on YouTube and other content platforms.
- **PODCAST ARTWORK:** You will need a podcast logo and thumbnail. I also suggest creating artwork for each episode. I use [Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator](#) for this purpose, but for those of you who are not familiar with the [Adobe Creative Suite](#), [Canva offers a free](#), user-friendly, online tool for creating artwork.

PODCAST HOSTING

[We host The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast on Podbean.](#) I LOVE PODBEAN! There are other great solutions, like Libsyn and Blubrry, but Podbean is more affordable and offers ROCK SOLID hosting. Additionally, Podbean uses WordPress as their content management system, so the interface will be instantly familiar to many users and it provides the added benefit of a good-looking podcast website for no additional cost. Don't want to use Podbean for your podcast's website? That's fine too. You can just host your audio with them, then set up your own RSS feed on your website, but that's outside of the scope of this guide.



RSS FEED

You will need to submit your RSS feed address to iTunes, Google Podcasts, and other podcast directories. This is what these directories will look at to see if you have new content. If you use Podbean to host your podcast they will set up your RSS feed for you and you can find it in your hosting dashboard under "Settings-Feed/iTunes"

This is what the RSS feed for The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast looks like:

<https://podcast.schoolhouserocked.com/feed.xml>

[If you use WordPress for your website, you can read more about setting up your own RSS feed here.](#)

There are some great, [free podcasting WordPress plugins](#), which make setting up your RSS feed much easier.

While I have only referenced WordPress websites here, this covers the vast majority of websites personal and small business websites. The steps for setting up an RSS feed on other hosts and content management systems is similar.

CONTENT

As I said before, launching a podcast is easy, but posting your 50th, 75th, 100th, or 1,000th episode is much harder. If you are going to commit to doing a podcast you should carefully consider your content and format before you begin.

- **Passion and Expertise:** As you develop your show, consider a topic that you have some expertise in. That doesn't mean you have to be *the expert* in the field, but you should, at least, be conversant in the topic and have a passion for learning more about it. When a host is learning along with his audience it can create a sense of excitement and intimacy. Also, don't just consider topics you would like to cover for the first three episodes. Make sure whatever topic you choose has some staying power.
- **Consider a co-host:** Very few people can carry a podcast by themselves (unless it is very short). Unless you are a genius communicator and entertainer, you should consider another voice on your show. This not only allows for entertaining dialog, but it allows you to divide the creative, technical, and administrative workload while you build your show to a point where you can hire some additional help.
- **Rely on your guests:** Many podcast formats require the transmission of expertise on a subject. Listeners in most categories want to learn, rather than just being entertained or encouraged. While you may be an expert on a few subjects, you can't be the expert on every subject you will cover on your show. That's where great guests come in. Rely on your guests to bring their expertise to the table, then make them look great! Be an interested interviewer. Be engaged and friendly, and look for opportunities to make your guests shine. Be a generous host and allow your guest to promote their current projects, businesses, books, and passions. This has the double benefit of providing great value for your listeners and ensuring that your guests want to come back.
- **Mailbox Monday:** A final tip for creating great content show-after-show, month-after-month, year-after-year, is to schedule regular segments. Heidi St. John, in her hugely popular podcast has "Mailbox Mondays", where she reads and responds to messages from her listeners, and "Meet my Friend Fridays", where she interviews her friends, both new and old (other speakers, podcasters, and authors). Try "Newsday Tuesday", "Worldview Wednesday", or another themed segment to fill your schedule with original content.

FINAL NOTES:

- Don't expect to keep or publish your first episode. Record a test episode (or three), just for practice. You WILL have a few technical issues to work out. I am pretty sure we recorded three two test episodes of The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast, which were never released, and I have been producing music for over twenty years and podcasts for around ten.
- We currently use [Zoom](#) for all of our remote interviews. It allows you to record side-by-side video of the host and guest, fullscreen video, which automatically switches between the active speaker, or both. It also records separate audio tracks for both the host and guest, which is a great safety net, however we always record our audio to an external recorder to get a better sounding recording of the host. We only post the video recordings, as the host audio isn't as good as I would like.

Zoom is relatively affordable, unless you need to purchase additional storage for video. We avoid this by just downloading videos as soon as our interviews are complete.
- [Streamyard](#) is also great for doing remote interviews, and we will be using for a week-long virtual homeschool conference in February and may be switching to it as our primary remote recording tool. Don't hesitate to check it out. A ton of people use it and love the audio quality. It is in the same price range as Zoom.
- To do remote interviews you have to set up a "mix minus". This means that you are recording and monitoring both *your* audio and *your guest's* audio through your headphones, but you only send *your* audio to the computer for the guest to hear. If you send *their* audio back, it will cause echo and feedback. [The RØDECaster Pro allows you to create a mix minus.](#)
- You also want to record your voice, your guest's voice, and any music or audio cues to separate audio tracks. This allows you to adjust levels and apply necessary EQ and effects separately to each track when you (or your assistant) mix. This is called multitrack recording, and the RØDECaster Pro does this too.

THANK YOU

You made it to the end! If the information in this guide has been helpful to you, please consider supporting our work by [making a tax-deductible donation here.](#)

For even more value , enjoy this bonus content.

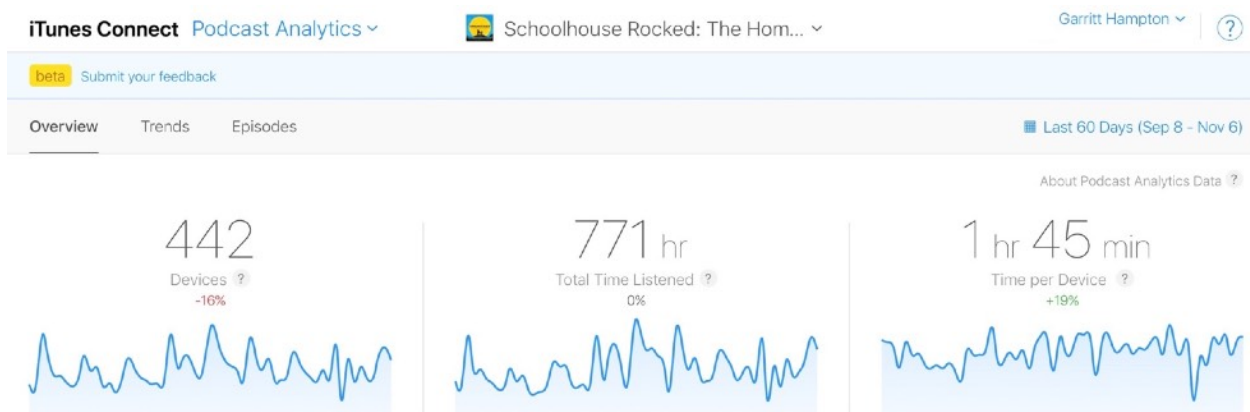
BONUS SECTION 1 - Next Steps

Track your performance

While you shouldn't obsess over them, you should regularly check your performance statistics on your podcast host. Not only are download statistics really helpful for seeing trends, they allow you to see which episodes are performing the best. Often this insight will allow you to make small changes to your format, titles, publishing times, or other factors that will improve the performance of every episode. Additionally, as you begin to seek advertisers, they will want to know how many downloads you have per episode, per week, and per month.

[Chartable](#) offers a great, free tool for tracking your performance on the Apple Podcast charts.

[Apple Podcasts Connect](#) offers in depth statistics for each episode, including number of devices (listeners using Apple Watch, iTunes, and Apple Podcasts), average consumption per episode, total time listened, time per device, and more.



Remember that Apple Podcasts Connect only provides data for listeners using apple products, but this is an important subset of your listeners, and the consumption data can be extrapolated to provide a great picture of how much of each show your listeners are consuming.

Transcribe Your Podcast for Twice the Content

Want to get more mileage out of your podcast content? We have found repurposing our podcast content as blog posts has been a great way to increase the impact of every episode. We use [Rev.com](#) to get (human) transcriptions with speaker names, then I do a bit of cleanup to format the transcript as a blog post, with links back to the original podcast episode.

[Rev.com](#) charges 10 cents per minute for fully automated transcripts, or \$1.00 per minute for human transcripts. I have found the automated transcripts to be good for many purposes, but we use their human transcription service for our podcast episodes, because it means I can get them posted to our blog with much less editing. Our podcast episodes run around 30-38 minutes, so the average cost for a transcript is around \$35.

[You can see a sample post here.](#)



True Education Reform, The Homeschool Revolution!

"I've taught at seven different universities now and I've always had one colleague in every English department who looks forward to teaching homeschool kids. One, because they were smart and two, because..."

Record and Post Video



Crystal Twibell – A System for Homeschool Success – Podcast Bonus Video

"I've told my kids this for years and we've prayed for years and the Lord would fill in the gaps. There are so many gaps in our homeschooling. I look back and I think, "How did they learn anything?" It's..."

We record all of our remote interviews using Zoom, but we don't just use Zoom to conduct the interview, we also record and [post the video](#). When we have an in-studio guest we record video of those episodes as well. We offer these videos as bonus content on [our membership website](#). Usually these videos feature 15-30 minutes of additional content, not played on the podcast. This provides a great way to monetize your podcast and to provide real value to members and [Patreon](#) supporters (if you use Patreon), but even if you don't use Patreon or have a [membership website](#), you can [post this video on YouTube](#) to drive additional traffic to your podcast.

While the webcam on any new laptop will provide decent video quality for recording your podcast, you will likely want to upgrade to a better webcam if you are regularly recording video of your podcast. I recommend either the [Logitech BRIO](#) (4K) or [Logitech C922X](#) (1080p), as both will provide excellent video quality for a reasonable cost.

You will also need lights. Even the best camera won't look good if you are not properly lit. Consider a decent set of [LED video lights](#) and dress your set up a bit to give your podcast videos a professional look. We built an inexpensive set from some wall panels and shelves, and I added a custom LED Logo light and computer monitor for a relatively inexpensive, but professional looking set.

Consider Patreon or a Subscription Website

As your podcast grows in popularity, consider offering your listeners additional perks and bonus content for helping to support it. I would recommend an "either or" approach here. We have the [Schoolhouse Rocked Backstage Pass website](#), which offers bonus content through free subscriptions and paid memberships.

Advertising

Though not appropriate for every podcast, as your podcast grows in popularity, you may also be able to monetize it through advertising. [Podbean](#) offers a built-in ad platform and I was shocked at how quickly we received offers from brands to advertise on our show. As an effort to more closely control the content on our show and to provide more value to our listeners, rather than accept these offers, we opted to pursue our own advertising agreements. Though we were not charging very much, we were able to bring on paid advertisers around our 20th episode and have had reasonable success at selling advertising on our show since then.

Podcast advertising rates are based on listenership. Advertisers will be concerned with your audience demographics, and with download and consumption statistics. [Podbean](#) provides pretty great statistics, but I also include statistics from [Apple](#) (average consumption), and from [Chartable](#) in our media kit.

Media Kit

Most advertisers will expect to see a media kit before they consider advertising on your podcast. A media kit will give basic information about the podcast and host(s), information on the listeners, statistics, and advertising rates. I have included previous samples of our media kits for both podcast and video advertising at the end of this guide. I revise our media kit and adjust our ad rates every few months, as our audience grows.

Don't forget ad trades and product reviews!

Even before you have paid advertisers you may be able to benefit from ad trades and product reviews. Don't be afraid to approach companies, which offer resources that will be of value to your listeners. Think of these opportunities as a way to provide great value for your listeners and to build relationships with possible future advertisers.

Before we were able to sell ads on our podcast, we were able to get valuable products that we needed for homeschooling our girls in return for advertisements and reviews on our podcast. Even now, while we sell some ads, we periodically offer companies ads on The Schoolhouse

Rocked Podcast in trade for products that we need. This is a true win-win, as you and your listeners benefit from exposure to these resources, and the advertiser benefits through vastly reduced advertising cost and exposure to a new audience. Just be careful to choose the products that you advertise carefully and know your audience. No one benefits when you shoehorn ads for unrelated products or services into your podcast.

Additionally, we have had great luck doing cross-promotional ad trades with other podcasts with similar audiences. This is a great, no-cost way to grow your audience and theirs!

Track your ads

As a rule, I always try to use tracking links in ads we run on *The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast*. I want my advertisers to know exactly how many sales they are making or new customers they are gaining because of the ads they are running on our podcast. This makes for happy advertisers and really improves your chances of keeping them when their contract ends. Also, if you are able to get the data, you can use sales statistics in your media kit to attract new advertisers.

Don't Forget Those Affiliate Codes!

Even before you have paying advertisers, don't forget to use affiliate codes to start monetizing your podcast. [Amazon affiliate codes](#) are a fantastic way to get started, as they offer products for just about everyone. Try to find products that will meet the needs of your listeners, then promote them using your [Amazon affiliate codes](#). Whenever we have an author on our show, we post the Amazon affiliate link to their book in our show notes. This produces a small, steady trickle of income that we would otherwise miss out on. In addition to Amazon, we have affiliate accounts with [Christianbook.com](#), [Podbean](#), [Rev.com](#), [Memberpress](#), [Adobe](#), [SendinBlue](#), and many homeschool resource providers. We post these links when appropriate and usually make a bit of money on each one.

BONUS SECTION 2 – Podcast Guests

Prior to every interview we send an introductory email to our guests, which has a link to schedule their interview and has a handy Guest Checklist, which gives tips on how to ensure a great interview. We keep the guest checklist short and simple, so important steps aren't missed. Following the interview, we send a thank you note and a coupon code for a free lifetime Backstage Pass membership. Finally, when the episode airs, we email our guest and ask them to share the episode on their blogs, social media pages, and in their newsletters.

SCHEDULING GUESTS

We use [Calendly](#) to schedule our guests, as it easily integrates with [Zoom](#). We try to schedule our guest well before their interview. During the scheduling process we have each of our guests sign a media release (a waiver, which allows us to republish and repurpose the podcast content). We also send them the following guest checklist to help ensure a successful interview.

PODCAST GUEST CHECKLIST

Thank you for your willingness to be a guest on ***The Schoolhouse Rocked Podcast!*** I'm certain that you will be a great encouragement to our listeners.

Our interviews are recorded via [Zoom](#) (you can set up a free account using the link if you don't have one) so that we can post video of the interviews on the [Schoolhouse Rocked Backstage Pass](#) membership site. Each podcast episode is around 30 minutes; however, we sometimes go longer on video in order answer some questions from our listeners or further our discussion from the podcast. *This "Bonus Portion" of the interview will only be available to our [Backstage Pass](#) members.*

We need a few things from you before we get started

- **Headshot** - preferably together (large, high resolution - at least 1200px by 1200px)
 - **A Short Bio** (around 7 sentences)
 - **Any relevant links you'd like us to share:** (Your website, company name, books you've authored, social media links, etc.)
 - If you could send me a few questions or points to direct our conversation, that's always helpful
-

Here are a few things to keep in mind prior to recording

We want to capture the best possible sound for the show. Here's what you can do on your end to make sure your sound is great.

- **Make sure your internet connection is fast and reliable** (wired ethernet is always more reliable than Wi-Fi)
 - **Wear headphones or earbuds**
 - **Use an external microphone** if possible (not the built-in microphone on your laptop) and get close to it
 - **Record in a quiet room** with minimal hard surfaces
 - **PRAY!** Please pray prior to your interview that the Lord will impact the hearts of all who hear it.
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Remember, you will be on video, so there are a few things you can do to make sure you look great

- **Make sure you have sufficient light** on your face and try to eliminate any bright lights behind you.
 - **Adjust your computer monitor or camera** so that you are properly framed. Center yourself vertically in the frame and try to avoid cutting off your head or having a big space above you.
 - **SMILE!**
 - **Restart your computer** so you don't have any other programs running that may interfere.
 - **Please turn off noisy notifications** on your computer or phone if you have those enabled.
 - If you're not sure about your internet connection or sound setup, we're happy to do a test call with you prior to your interview.
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BONUS SECTION 3 – Media Kit Samples

Because we sell ads on both our podcast and on our podcast videos we have created separate media kits for both video and audio advertising. I have included samples of our previous media kits here, but we regularly update download information, chart rankings, and rates.