



TEACHER'S GUIDE TO PODCASTING IN THE CLASSROOM

Why Podcast?

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ABOUT US

Listenwise is an Award-winning listening skill platform. We harness the power of listening to advance literacy and learning in all students. Our collection of podcasts and public radio keeps teaching connected to real world and builds student listening skills at the same time.

The curriculum aligned podcasts are paired with learning tools and listening comprehension assessments to transform them into rigorous academic content.

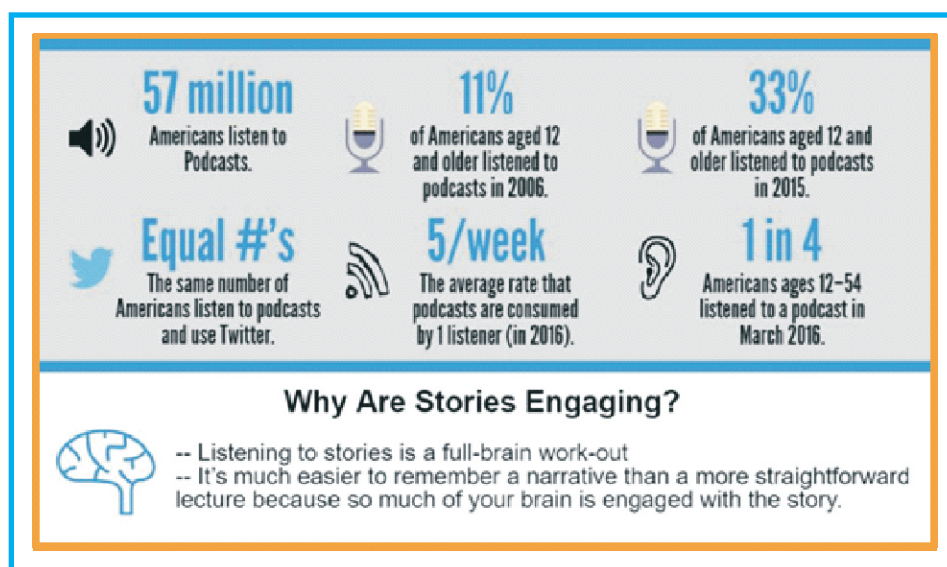
Students are motivated by interesting real world stories, and Listenwise provides the literacy supports and differentiated instruction necessary for diverse classrooms including ELLs and reluctant readers.



Why Podcast?

Podcasting is a great way to provide deeper learning for students and empower them to have their voices heard and shared with a wider audience. And students love to engage with audio content!

Not only is podcasting fun to do, but podcasting supports important 21st century skills for communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Your students will love podcasting as a medium to tell their story and share their ideas, all while practicing their speaking and writing skills.



(View the Full Infographic)



How to Include Podcasting in Your Instruction?

Looking for an impactful new project for your students that both incorporates technology, critical thinking and speaking skills? Podcast assignments are engaging activities that embody the same fundamental elements as writing projects or presentations but are more hands-on and use technology that students love to use! Podcasting touches on literacy and communication skills and is a great way to present to an audience wider than the class. A class presentation for some kids feels high stakes but it's artificial. Podcasting is lower stakes and more authentic. So how do teachers integrate podcast creation into their curriculum?

Your first step in envisioning the lesson will be to decide how much direction you want to give students about topics and how closely you want to connect their podcasts to your curriculum content.

- Is the lesson purpose to research specific curriculum topics so they engage in deeper thinking and do their own investigating?
- Is the project focused on students telling their own stories? Or reflecting on something they are learning?
- Do you want your students to develop awareness and understanding of world events? Or focus on local community issues?
- Should students be focusing on presenting arguments or persuading or creating a nonfiction narrative?

These are initial questions you might want to think about in order to set up your podcasting project - figure out what the overall lesson will look like and then go backwards from there. Keep it simple to start!

GETTING STARTED

We recommend you stick to basics in your first student podcast lesson, just to get a little experience with the writing, recording and editing process. Perhaps start out with individual student projects to record themselves sharing their own perspective on a topic or start with a simple project to interview other classmates or small team project related to people or issues at school. Keep the finished podcasts to 2-3 minutes long. Here is an example of one class who have turned their written personal narratives into audio stories - [have a listen!](#)

In an article by Erin Macpherson called [10 Podcasting Projects Teachers Should Try in the Classroom](#), she lists some creative ideas for podcasting assignments that could be good relatively simple podcast projects:

Current Events Newscasts: Practice nonfiction reading skills by having your students do weekly or monthly podcasts on an interesting current event.

Reading Radio: Have your students make short radio broadcasts summarizing the books they are reading.

Roving Reporters: Send your students out into the “field” (a.k.a. the school) to interview key players in important school events. Find a great toolkit from Youth Radio about the art of an interview.

GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

After trying a basic podcast lesson, you can go to the next level, with a longer project that brings in more complex topics and interviews.

One popular project example is collecting stories about immigrant experiences to build empathy and dovetails nicely with many curricula. Emily Lee and Nanor Balabanian outline an [immigrant storytelling project](#) that could easily be adapted for a podcasting.

Shalini Rao, a Park School teacher from Brookline, MA has also done her own immigrant storytelling [podcast project](#). Her Social Studies curriculum covers immigration all year: covering the building of the Statue of Liberty to Ellis Island, Angel Island, and then modern immigration. Her students embarked on an immigration project, split into small groups of 2-3 and interviewed a first generation immigrant within their Park school community. Students recorded their own interviews - and learned about interviewing techniques, tips and skills - and their finished product was to create a kind of a museum exhibit (the museum exhibit could be multimedia in various forms, one of which a podcast) built to honor the immigrant's story.



Listen to Shalini Rao speak about why some of her students chose to incorporate podcasting in their projects and what essential skills students learn when creating an original podcast

- ▶ [Shalini Rao describes why collaboration is important](#)
- ▶ [Shalini Rao describes why she incorporated podcasting as a project medium](#)

LISTEN TO STUDENT SAMPLES

Now, hear from the students themselves! Listen to these samples of more advanced podcasts that have been produced by students. All of the podcasts below were part of classroom projects that were tightly integrated into science, humanities and history topics.



History: Listen to one of the podcasts that was created from Shalini Rao's classroom in Brookline, MA. These fifth graders interviewed immigrants within their community to learn about their experiences. They worked in small groups to write the podcast and select parts of the interview.

[Listen to this student podcast on Jug Chokshi's immigrant's journey.](#)



Science: An eighth grade science class did research on how core sediment shows climate change. They researched the work of scientists from the field and interviewed the real scientists about their work. They worked in small groups to select parts of the interview with the scientist, write the body of the story and record and edit the podcast.

[Listen to the podcast on core sediment and climate change.](#)



Math: A middle school math class used podcasting as a way to better understand

radicals and indexes. They wrote a script and had a conversation about key math concepts and recorded their conversation, including answering listeners questions.

[Listen to this math podcast about radicals and indexes.](#)



Humanities: In a podcast called “Art Attack” a high school humanities classroom looks at art of the Renaissance. It's a collaborative project that brings in student voices as explainers and as questioners. It also has some fun sound effects.

[Listen to Art Attack Class Podcast](#)



How to Make a Podcast

When teaching your students how to creating a podcast, there are 5 simple steps to follow.

STEP 1: Planning

Before your students start recording their podcast, it's important for them to each create a podcast format and content strategy:

Format: What's their podcast going to sound like?

Content: What's their podcast going to say?

Listening to exemplars like the stories on [Listenwise.com](https://www.listenwise.com) can help students to conceptualize what high-quality content they want to produce. You can listen to some well chosen samples as a class like this story on an [art museum that offers tours to blind visitors](#), or this story on [what it feels like to be a refugee](#). Or listen to [an interview with the author of The Giver](#) to hear a different style of audio story.

The group of students working together on a podcast should decide on what they are trying to achieve with their podcast. Have them start with an idea and do some background research, then have them develop that idea and identify any sources they might want to interview. If your students have a primary source to interview, it'd be best to have them brainstorm a bunch of interview questions and then have them

narrow down the list of questions down to 3 or 4 that they'd want to record before heading into the interview. Make sure they have an idea in their head about where their story may go before they start the interview. (Know this may change once they do the interview, but it's always great to have an initial plan.)

Here are some team project roles that you might want to assign each student in a group or have them choose amongst themselves:

Recorder	Editor	Writer	Director
Responsible for recording the chosen interview questions (Director should serve as back up recorder)	Will lead the group through the listen, choosing what to use and cutting the "tape"	Will lead the group through writing, finalizing and practicing the script	Will lead members through voicing their lines (also backup recorder)

If your students aren't interviewing someone on their podcast, you can have them create a [show outline](#) to make sure they have all the participant voices planned out. "The Writer" can draft a script, which can be very much like a play script.

We HIGHLY suggest that your students read their story out loud and time themselves reading before they start to record. This allows students to hear whether what they wrote actually sounds good. It also allows them to put the time together with the clips from the interviews and see the total length of the feature story.

Quick Tips

Have your students think about all the angles or themes or frames for a story. Plan to keep their podcast length to 10-15 minutes. Make sure they keep topics moving, and limit topic coverage to 2-3 minutes. Your students should try to use interviews with guests as a way to break up the conversation, pace, and tone of their shows. Here is an example of a [podcast outline example!](#)

STEP 2: Recording

For this step, your students will need a microphone, recording software, or a recording device that can be connected or downloaded onto your computer. Most smartphones will also have an app available to record audio. There are several recording software programs aimed to help beginner podcasters! Here are a few tools we've found work really well in the classroom:



Audacity is a free, open source, cross platform software for recording and editing sounds. It is available for both Windows, Mac, GNU/Linux and other operating systems.



Garageband is an Apple software that provides users with a great platform where they can record their audio files and share them with others.



Soundtrap is an online learning tool that enables teachers to follow the STEAM curriculum through music and podcasts. ((Mac, PC, Chromebook, iPad) FREE trial, low cost subscriptions for schools)

To learn more about these tools, visit these websites for more detailed descriptions and instructions on how to use them:

Podcasting with Audacity: http://etc.usf.edu/te_win/movies/audacity.html

Podcasting with GarageBand: http://etc.usf.edu/te_mac/movies/podcasting.html

Podcasting with Soundtrap: <https://www.soundtrap.com/>

A Recording Device: Many computers have built-in microphones. This will be useful for recording the student/reporter's voice but they might also need a portable mic. Students can use their smartphones or you can purchase recorders and microphones. If students will be interviewing anyone long distance, they can simply send the questions in writing and ask interviewees to record their answers using their own phone.

Smartphone: If you don't want to buy a microphone, you can have students record content on their smartphones in a couple ways:

[Quick Voice](#) – easy to record and share and FREE
Voice Memo Recorder FREE (on every iPhone)

Microphone: If you want an external mic for better sound quality here are some options (Note, if you are using a USB microphone with an iPad, you will need a [lightning to USB adapter](#) to give you the USB interface you need to plug in the microphone):

[iBig Mic Cast](#) (\$40 – works with iOS and Android, also Apple laptops)

[Plantronics 655 Audio Headset](#) (\$34.99)

[Audio Technica ATR 2100 USB mic](#) (\$68) – professional quality

[Blue Microphone Snowball](#) (50\$)

If your classroom wanted to invest in a recorder, here are some options:

[Digital Voice Recorder by Yemenren](#) (\$29.99)

When it's time to record, "The Recorder" student needs to make sure they have an optimal environment for sound recording, in other words somewhere quiet that won't have many interruptions. Set up quiet spots in a room with a rug or other objects to absorb excess sound. If you have a storage closet in the classroom you can turn it into the recording studio. Students should read their tracks in a slow, conversational way. They should aim to sound like they are telling this information to a friend and not in a put-on "radio voice".

Not only should they record the talking parts of the podcast, but also record ambient noises that help tell the story. Not all stories have ambiance. (Ambiance is the noise in the background of a story.) But in order to set a scene and paint a picture in people's minds, it's best to do it with the ambient sound of the location or subject matter of the story.

Quick Tips

Have students keep their faces close to mic, and make sure they don't speak while others are talking, don't agree, laugh or make any noise. They shouldn't hold the mic directly in front of their mouth as this results in popping "p's" and other mouth noises.

STEP 3: Editing

When it's time for your students to edit, "The Editor" should lead the group through listening to all the audio clips of the interviewed guests and choosing which ones to keep, and which ones to cut. "The Editor" helps by advising "The Writer" and "The Director" on story treatments, the best audio to use and parts of a story to highlight. Using the clips that are chosen, "The Editor", "Director", and "Writer" should collaborate on the final vision the podcast story, which may have shifted slightly after an interview.

If your students need a little inspiration about how to put the story together, have them read this [article by public radio veterans about how to write and edit the story](#) for their podcast before they move onto finalizing.

! Quick Tips

Students should save the recordings in their initial rough copies and make copies when they edit, so that if any mistakes happen in editing your students always have back ups!

STEP 4: Finalizing

At this stage, your students' story has taken form and now it's time for them to create the final draft as well as fill in any missing pieces. You should have you student with the role "The Writer" keep this in mind as he or she finalizes the overall podcasting story arc and creates the introduction script, any additional pieces that are needed to help move the story, and a conclusion.

! Quick Tips

Students should structure the story in a way that delivers compelling information at the top/beginning of the story. Make sure your students always attribute quotes from sources and let the audience know where their information comes from.

STEP 5: Producing

Now is the time for your students to finalize all the components of their podcast story, record, and combine all the audio clips together in a thoughtful way.

Everyone in the groups of students should collaborate to help polish the story to embody the vision within the final production.

The final version of a high-quality podcast should have a storyline with an introduction and conclusion, showcase multiple voices, and some clips of ambient noise. Music can also be a great addition. Music use in news reporting is not standard but is considered an editorial element. But music can be a powerful tool in the radio storytelling toolbox. Music can build tension, develop emotion and deliver impact. It can be a subtle way to move a story forward or to punctuate a point.



Your students' final product should be:

Clear – The recording is audible and comprehensible.

Clean – The recording is well-edited: free of pickups, retakes, and other distractions.

Creative – The more unique and engaging a story, the more engaging it will be to the listener.

Additive – The audio is there for a reason—for increasing the impact of your storytelling.

Quick Tips

Practice, practice, and practice! Have your students read the script several times out loud before they actually record.