



# How to Make a Podcast: Plan, Record, and Launch for Success

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# IDEATION

*Conceptualize your podcast.*

## STEP 1: FIND YOUR CONCEPT

What is your podcast about? Your answer to this question should be specific enough that you establish a clear focus but broad enough that you will be able to sustain the podcast over multiple episodes and seasons.

*📎 Do this: Write down a one sentence summary (or log line) of what your show will be about.*

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## STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR FORMAT

The format of your podcast will determine how your show looks and feels. You can think of format as the blueprint for your show. For example, in John's podcast *Tuner*, the hosts explore why they enjoy a particular pop song in each episode.

*📎 Do this: Describe the format you would like your show to follow.*

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## STEP 3: FIND YOUR CENTRAL QUESTION

What is the main question that you will seek to address throughout the course of your podcast? In John's podcast *Tuner*, the hosts explore the central question: "Why do we like pop music?"

*📎 Do this: Write down the central question your podcast will address.*

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#### STEP 4: FIND YOUR “AUDIENCE OF ONE”

Who do you imagine would be interested in listening to your podcast? Who are you building your show for? This can be as general as “commuters” or as specific as “Stephen King fans.”

📌 **Do this:** Briefly describe the audience that you will be targeting with your show.

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#### STEP 5: LISTEN TO OTHER PODCASTS

The best way to start formulating ideas for your own podcast is to listen to other podcasts. See what’s already out there in your topic area and note any elements of these shows that you might want to emulate.

📌 **Do this:** Write down three podcasts that you will listen to. Once you’ve listened to a few episodes from each, write down what each podcast does well.

Podcast #1: \_\_\_\_\_

What does this podcast do well? \_\_\_\_\_

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Podcast #2: \_\_\_\_\_

What does this podcast do well? \_\_\_\_\_

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Podcast #3: \_\_\_\_\_

What does this podcast do well? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Plan and outline your pilot episode.*

#### CHOOSE YOUR FIRST GUEST

Since the first episode you produce might be messy and might not be published, your first guest should be someone you know, trust, and are comfortable speaking with.

📌 **Do this:** Write down three potential first guests for your podcast.

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## PLAN YOUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

If you think of your podcast episode as telling a story, you can think of your interview questions as sign posts for that story. Planning these questions ahead of time makes for a smoother interview and a more cohesive episode.

📌 **Do this:** Write down six questions to ask your first guest.

Question #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #5: \_\_\_\_\_

Question #6: \_\_\_\_\_

## CREATE YOUR EPISODE OUTLINE

An outline is a chronological plan of what will happen in the episode, one item after another. It doesn't have to be formal, and you can even have it on hand for reference while you're recording.

📌 **Do this:** Refer to the [Example Podcast Outline](#) and consider what elements (intros/outros, music cues, scripted segments, interview segments, ad breaks, etc.) you want to incorporate into your own outline. Then, draft a loose outline for your pilot episode.



# RECORDING

*Choose your gear.*

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

To record your podcast, you will need recording software, a microphone, and some way to get audio from your microphone into your computer so that you can edit it later.

Below are some of John's equipment recommendations.

- Microphones
  - [Audio Technica ATR2100](#) (has a USB jack so you won't need a mixer or audio interface)
  - [Shure Beta 58A](#)
  - [Shure SM7B](#)
- Mixers and Audio Interfaces
  - [RODECaster Pro Integrated Podcast Production Studio](#)
  - [Scarlett Focusrite Audio Interface](#)
  - [Zoom Portable Audio Recorder](#)
- Recording Software
  - Voice memos on your phone
  - [Anchor](#)
  - [Pro Tools](#)

*Record your episode.*

## RECORDING TIPS AND TRICKS

1. **Always wear headphones.** If you wear headphones while recording, you will be able to hear what you'll sound like to your audience.
2. **Stay close to your mic.** Positioning yourself close to your mic and speaking directly into it will make for clearer audio. Be sure to instruct your guest to do the same.
3. **Minimize noise by surrounding yourself with soft things.** You can put up pillows and blankets, or even record with a blanket over your head.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERVIEWING

1. **Go in with a plan.** Prepare your questions ahead of time so that you'll know what questions to ask, how to ask them, and when to ask them.
2. **Prepare your guest.** Make sure that your guest feels comfortable and that you've told them what to expect during the interview.
3. **Be sure to really listen to what your guest is saying.** This makes for a more authentic conversation and will allow you to ask more engaging follow-up questions.



4. **Stay flexible.** Use your interview questions as guidelines, but make sure that you're still allowing the interview to unfold organically.
5. **Don't be afraid of silence.** Staying silent after your guest offers up an underdeveloped answer will prompt them to elaborate, clarify, or add more detail.
6. **Ask open-ended questions.** Avoid asking yes or no questions that don't require your guest to elaborate.

## HOW TO CONDUCT REMOTE INTERVIEWS

If you choose to conduct an interview in which the guest isn't actually in the room with you, you'll want to practice ahead of time to ensure that things will go smoothly during the actual interview.

You have several options if you're looking to conduct a remote interview. You can:

1. **Interview your guest via [Skype](#).** Make sure to record your end of the call and your guest's end of the call on different tracks so you can mix them later. To do this, John recommends programs like [Audio Hijack](#) or [Piezo](#).
2. **Use the [Anchor](#) app.** If you're hosting your podcast on Anchor, you and your guest can both download and record from the app.
3. **Use [Zencastr](#).** This program records audio from each speaker on a separate track and then sends you a file with each speaker's track.
4. **Have your guest call from their phone.** If you do this, make sure to record your end and your guest's end separately from one another. Your guest's audio will sound phone quality, but your audio will still sound high quality.

**Pro Tip:** If you're interviewing someone who doesn't have their own microphone, ask them to stay close to and speak directly into whatever recording device they're using for the duration of the interview.



# EDITING & MIXING

*Prepare to mix your pilot.*

## PRE-MIXING CHECKLIST

- Devise an effective file management system
  - Create a new folder for each new episode of your podcast
  - Utilize subfolders within each episode's folder
  - Consider creating a template folder that you can copy for each new episode
- Choose your editing software and upload your audio
  - [Anchor](#)
  - [Audacity](#)
  - [GarageBand](#)
  - [Logic Pro X](#)
  - [Pro Tools](#)
- Sift through your audio
  - Listen to everything you've recorded and note any moments that stand out
  - Determine if anything is missing or needs to be re-recorded
  - Use a transcription service and work off of a transcript if you're working with a ton of source material ([Temi](#) and [Trint](#) are both reliable options for this)
- Start thinking about music
  - Note any moments that could be enhanced with music
  - If you're mixing your podcast in Anchor, you have access to over 100 free tracks
  - If you're looking for music tracks, consider [Blue Dot Sessions](#), [Musicbed](#), and [AudioJungle](#)

*Mix your pilot.*

## MIX LIKE A PRO

You can use the following techniques to make your audio sound more professional.

- Add simple fading to the end of music tracks to help smooth audio transitions
- If you're editing multiple tracks, cut out portions where nobody is speaking
- Add a safety limiter on the master channel
  - John sets his to -0.5 DB
  - This prevents distortion from occurring
- Put a gentle compressor on vocal channels
  - This smooths out the volume between high and low sounds
  - The compressor makes everything sound more pleasant



## WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR FIRST PASS

After you make your first round of edits and listen to your episode draft from beginning to end, consider the following questions.

1. **Do listeners have the context necessary to understand what's happening in your episode?** For example, if you're discussing a book in your episode, does anyone (host or guest) ever introduce the book by title and author?
2. **How do you normally listen to podcasts?** If you usually listen to podcasts while taking a walk or during your commute, try listening to your own episode draft in that same setting.
3. **Have you spent hours in front of the computer, laboring of your first draft?** If so, take a break and sleep on it before you return for another round of edits. This will allow you to come back refreshed and ready to approach your episode with a clear mind.
4. **Have you asked anyone else to listen to your draft?** This is a great opportunity to introduce new perspectives into your mixing process and to consider how listeners might react to your podcast.

Now, go back into your draft and edit again!



# DISTRIBUTING

*Prepare your podcast for launch.*

## TITLE YOUR SHOW

Think strategically about what you will name your show. Your title should be relatively short, should not include the word “podcast,” and should most likely not include your own name.

📌 **Do this:** *Write down the title of your show.*

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## DESCRIBE YOUR SHOW

This description is different from your log line as it will be shown alongside your podcast in podcast directories. This is where you tell listeners what your podcast is about and why they should give it a listen.

📌 **Do this:** *Draft a description for your show. Aim for roughly 300 words.*

## PROVIDE THE AUTHOR'S NAME

In most cases, this is just your name, but it also might be a production company or the name of a company that you work for.

📌 **Do this:** *Write the name of the author below. If you're not working with a production company or producing a podcast for a specific company, this will just be your name.*

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## CREATE SHOW ART

Show art is sort of like a book cover — it should be representative of your podcast and it should include the title of your podcast. Keep in mind that although your image should be 3000 x 3000 pixels, it will be shown at small sizes. You'll want to keep it simple and ensure that any text is readable.

📌 **Do this:** *Create your show art. [Canva](#) is a great program for creating high quality graphics.*



## ACQUIRE SOCIAL HANDLES FOR YOUR SHOW

You'll want to create a website and social media accounts for your podcast. Be sure to do this well before the podcast launches so that you'll have these channels ready to go when the time comes!

🔗 **Do this:** Register your social channels and record your handles/URLs below.

Twitter: \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook: \_\_\_\_\_

Instagram: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

If you decide to create a website for your show, it should include a description of your show, brief biographies of the show's hosts, high resolution show art, and any press clippings that mention your show.

## DISTRIBUTION CHECKLIST

- Title your show
- Write a brief description of your show
- Create show art
- Acquire your social channels
- Build out a website for your podcast
- Choose a platform to host your podcast
  - This is where your podcast will live and where you'll upload and publish new episodes
  - Hosting your podcast on [Anchor](#) is free
- Set up your podcast on its hosting platform (enter its title, description, and show art)
- Upload audio content to your feed via your podcast host
  - This can be a short teaser, a trailer, or your pilot episode (keep in mind that you cannot control when this initial audio content will be published to your feed)
  - John recommends uploading a trailer first so that you can then control the launch of your pilot and all subsequent episodes
  - You cannot submit to directories until you have some audio content in your feed
- Submit your show to podcast directories
  - The following are well-known podcast directories that you might consider submitting to:
    - [Apple Podcasts](#)
    - [Stitcher](#)
    - [TuneIn](#)



# PROMOTING

*Planning for launch.*

## MAKE A PLAN FOR LAUNCH

- ❑ **Pick your first episode.** Is there an episode that is especially prototypical of your show? Which episode would best showcase the sound and feel of your podcast?
- ❑ **Consider how many episodes you'll launch with.** Will you launch just your pilot episode or will you launch several episodes at once to give your early listeners more content to explore?
- ❑ **Decide what day to publish on.** Consistency is key in building a podcast following, so if your podcast is a weekly one, try to publish on the same day and at the same time each week. You should choose a day that you will be available to promote your episode and ensure that you will have time to get everything ready to publish the night before.

*Growing your audience and monetizing your show.*

## TIPS FOR GROW YOUR AUDIENCE

1. **Make yourself available on social media.** Make sure that you're active on social media and your website should anyone want to get in touch about your podcast.
2. **Consider adding episode transcripts and bonus content to your website.** This will make your site more searchable and will provide your listeners with more ways to engage.
3. **Consider cross-promoting your show.** Find other podcasters speaking about similar topics and promote one another on your respective podcasts. You can also do guest spots and interview each one another.

## HOW TO MONETIZE YOUR PODCAST

You can monetize your podcasts by working out sponsorship deals and reading ads on your show. To do this, you can either sell your podcast directly to potential sponsors or (if you're using Anchor) sign up for [Anchor Sponsorships](#), which matches you directly with sponsors.