

PODCASTING CRANNY

Gear & Hosting Tips

Summary

1. We'll show you a variety of gear options and setups for podcasting for different budgets and purposes (and even show you our setups!)
2. List of products by type and links to learn more about them
3. So you're all setup and ready to try to test out your system--Now what?
4. Tips for the interview: Preparing your guest, preparing yourself, preparing your tech.

Gear Options and Setups

You have a couple of important decisions to make before you go any further here. First, what's your budget? This depends on what you want to record, why you want to record it, and what kind of computer you already have. Take a look at the options below and the details for each of them. Note that, for transparency, we are providing links to the company that made an example of each product. We tell you what we like to use in the accompanying video, but the table below is not meant as an endorsement of any kind, and none of these companies have sponsored TechNook in order to have their company website linked. The prices are not listed either, so you can shop for yourself, new or used, budget or fancy, Its all your choice!

USB microphone → Computer

This combo is when you have a microphone that has a single cord connecting the microphone to the USB port on your laptop or desktop computer. Then the computer has to recognize there is a new device, and you may have to go to your audio settings and choose that mic as your input device.

Pros: One device, cheaper, somewhat portable if needed

Cons: Less control over the way it sounds, USB mics can be pretty bulky compared to handheld mics, may need a mic stand or a few books to get it close to your mouth

XLR microphone → USB interface

Maybe you already have a microphone or two, or maybe you have a little know-how about mixers and plugins. This option requires that you spend some money on a good interface, which can be basic or look more like a mixer (both options are in the table below). An interface is where you plug the mic into it/the mixer, and it functions as an amplifier, so if your interview guest talks much softer than you, or the mic is a little further away from the sound source, you can “boost” how much of that sound goes into the computer. You can also alter or EQ (equalize) the sound to your liking instead of altering/EQ-ing the audio in your editing program.

Pros: Can use a wider variety of mics, hold them closer to the sound source if needed, alter/EQ the sound and listen to it in your headphones in real-time while recording (also possible with some USB mics)

Cons: Not very portable, extra cost with mixers, in particular, takes a little more know-how with an extra step instead of USB→ computer which is more “plug-and-play”

Handheld microphone → Recorder → Computer

This is likely the most expensive option because you need the mics and a portable audio recorder that is also functioning as an external hard drive of sorts, but it also offers the most portability. If you don’t want to do editing and have someone else to do that, this is the option that will work for you. If you listen to podcasts with celebrities interviewing each other, this is usually what they use, because they just need to hand their interviewee a microphone, plug them into the recorder, and hit record and stop when done. Then they send that audio file to an engineer who adds the intro and outro, any spoken ads, edits out anything that doesn’t sound good, and tweaks the EQ to make it sound ideal. Recorders sometimes also have mics built in as backups.

Pros: Portability, sound quality, able to use quality microphones, small enough to pack

Cons: Extra step of recording, then moving the recording to the computer; Cost

Table of products by type and link

Product	Type	Link	Notes
Snowball or Yeti series microphones	USB mics	Blue microphones	USB microphones mean the mic plugs directly into the computer, no need for any other hardware.
SM58 X2U	USB mics	Shure site	The Shure SM58 is one of the most used microphones of all time, and this bundle includes an adapter, so you can use any mic with three prongs (XLR, see below) and convert it to a USB mic.
MV51	USB mics	Same as above	This is a USB mic that you can use in different ways, particularly if you want to record vocals, instruments, and use close up or further away. A few more “bells and whistles” than the Blue mics.
Behringer UMC22	USB interface	Behringer	An interface means something that goes between your mic and your computer. Plug your mic into an interface with an XLR cord, and then the interface plugs into the USB slot in your computer. Then you use the interface to control the volume.
Q502USB	USB mixer	Behringer	This is an interface AND a mixer, which means you can have more control over the tone (more treble or bass) of the sounds before they go into your computer, and often there is a headphone jack to plug in some phones and listen back.
GarageBand	Recording software	Apple	If you have a Mac or MacBook, this is free software that is great for podcasts and recording audio, generally. There are several good tutorials online and we will provide some in the TechNook. It works easily with USB audio interfaces, and you can add backing tracks, intro/outro music, etc.
Audacity	Recording software	Audacity	Audacity is similar to Garageband but available for Apple or non-Apple operating systems. Has that same basic interface, in that you create an audio track and edit from there.

Tascam DR-40X	Recorder/ Hardware	Tascam	If you want more portability, an audio recorder is a good option. Take a mic or two with cords, and plug them into this Tascam, and then record away. Your audio goes right into the recorder (with built-in rechargeable battery). Take the recorder back to your computer later, and upload your audio to your computer for editing. Some also include microphones on the recorder, although handheld mics are better for close-up sound.
XLR 6' cables	XLR cords	Amazon	If you have a microphone with three pegs in the bottom, that is an XLR mic (stands for external line return). Anytime you see a live band with wired mics, those are XLR cords. Get one of these for each of your mics and an extra as a backup.
Desktop stand	Mic stands	Proline	Use mic stands when possible so you can avoid extra bumps and pops from the mic and cord.
Boom arm and clamp	Mic stands	Rockville	Using a boom arm is a more professional and permanent option if one of your mics will “live” at a home studio.

Tips for your Interviews

Technook Tip: Before podcasting, listen! Listen to several podcasts. Which one are your favorites? What are the key elements that make them so listenable for you? Ask some friends and colleagues what they listen to, and try to listen to several styles of podcast.

Before you get behind the mic - whether solo, with a regular cast, or for an interview - here are a few tips to get you started.

- a. Troubleshoot your tech -
 - a. Know your signal path
 - i. Each segment of technology could fail at any time, so it may be helpful to use as simple of a signal path at the start, which is why so many podcasters prefer the simplicity of a USB microphone straight into a DAW like GarageBand. Podcasting can be a lot like running live sound for a venue, so you have to know all the points of contact.
 - b. Look for kinks
 - i. Your tech is a lot like a waterhose, usually no sound or other anomalies, is akin to a kink. Common steps might be:
 1. Is everything plugged in at all connection points?
 2. Do I have too many programs running / overloading CPU?
 3. Do I need to restart my computer / has it been on too long?
 4. Is the volume at an appropriate level at the mic / interface?
 5. Is the volume at an appropriate level at the computer / recorder?
 6. Is my cable malfunctioning? Do I have a backup?
 - c. Have a backup plan
 - i. Can I record simultaneously in two places?
 1. Record an interview / conversation into a web-based program like Zencastr or Ringr
 2. Also record onto hard disk into DAW like GarageBand or even a voice memo on your device
- b. Record a practice discussion
 - a. Try a conversation with someone you trust - a significant other, a friend, a colleague
 - b. Listen to the playback - do you have a lot of fillers or dead space, are you too close to the mic (boomy sound, lots of popping plosives “Ps” & “Bs” - use a pop filter), is the tone of your voice pleasing (can I edit with EQ / compression - intermediate skills)
 - c. How is the flow of the conversation - do I need to edit my questions, how can I make it more natural, just like clinical verbal skills - where do I need to edit?.

a. Editing basics

- a. Technook Tip: For long interviews, I edit in double time by changing the standard tempo in GarageBand from 120 bpm to 240 bpm. This literally can cut your editing time in half.
- b. Technook Tip: During interviews try keeping a notepad handy. Quickly & naturally jot down with timestamps moments you might want to revisit (i.e. a bathroom break, restarting a question, etc).
- c. The main skills for editing include:
 - i. Splicing, deleting, & arranging audio - taking out unnecessary sections, rearranging order, dealing with audio imperfections, arranging items like bumpers / transitions
 1. Technook Tip: Try to split audio at points where there is no sound, even if it is a brief split second between phrases. Any split between audible sound will create pops, clicks, & digital noise - it doesn't have to be perfect, but you can avoid it if you're aware!
 - ii. Adding volume automation - fading in & out of sections
 - iii. Adding audio enhancement - Equalization, compression - *intermediate skills will be addressed in future content
 - iv. Technook Tip: Once you have your first episode edited, you can save your DAW file as a template and reuse it. That way you can drag & drop audio files into the template and save time instead of always starting from scratch.

b. How to create a semi-structured interview pattern

- a. Think of your interview like a session plan - especially like a counseling based / verbal processing. An interview feels more natural when you treat it more like a road map with detours, possible stop-offs, and with a few firm items you don't want to miss rather than a task analysis checklist.
- b. Do your research - does your guest have publications, recent projects, things you need to digest to better serve the interview?
 - i. People **LOVE** story arc. How can your interview have a beginning, middle, & end?
 - ii. Think about potential follow-up questions that your standard questions could have.
 - iii. Technook Tip: Let them talk! Leave dead space as much as you can. You can always delete dead space, but you can't create it if you've interrupted your guest / cohost.

- a. At the end of the talk
 - i. Do you need to debrief your guest? Here are some common things you might want to consider after ending the recording:
 - 1. Thank you - immediate or follow-up
 - 2. Guest contact - where do they want to be seen & promoted? These are easy items to add in your shownotes.
 - a. Social media
 - b. Website
 - c. Products, books, research, etc
 - d. Email / preferred contact
- b. Making copies; How NOT to lose your recording
 - i. Technook Tip: Save in multiple places (e.g. on your hard disk and also on cloud storage such as Google Drive / Dropbox). Save a copy of your final episode after it airs.

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Need more help? You can always consult the authors directly for 1:1 tutorials, lessons, etc.