

poetrypause.org presents

# PODCASTING FOR BEGINNERS

why, how to, and pros and cons

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## Introduction

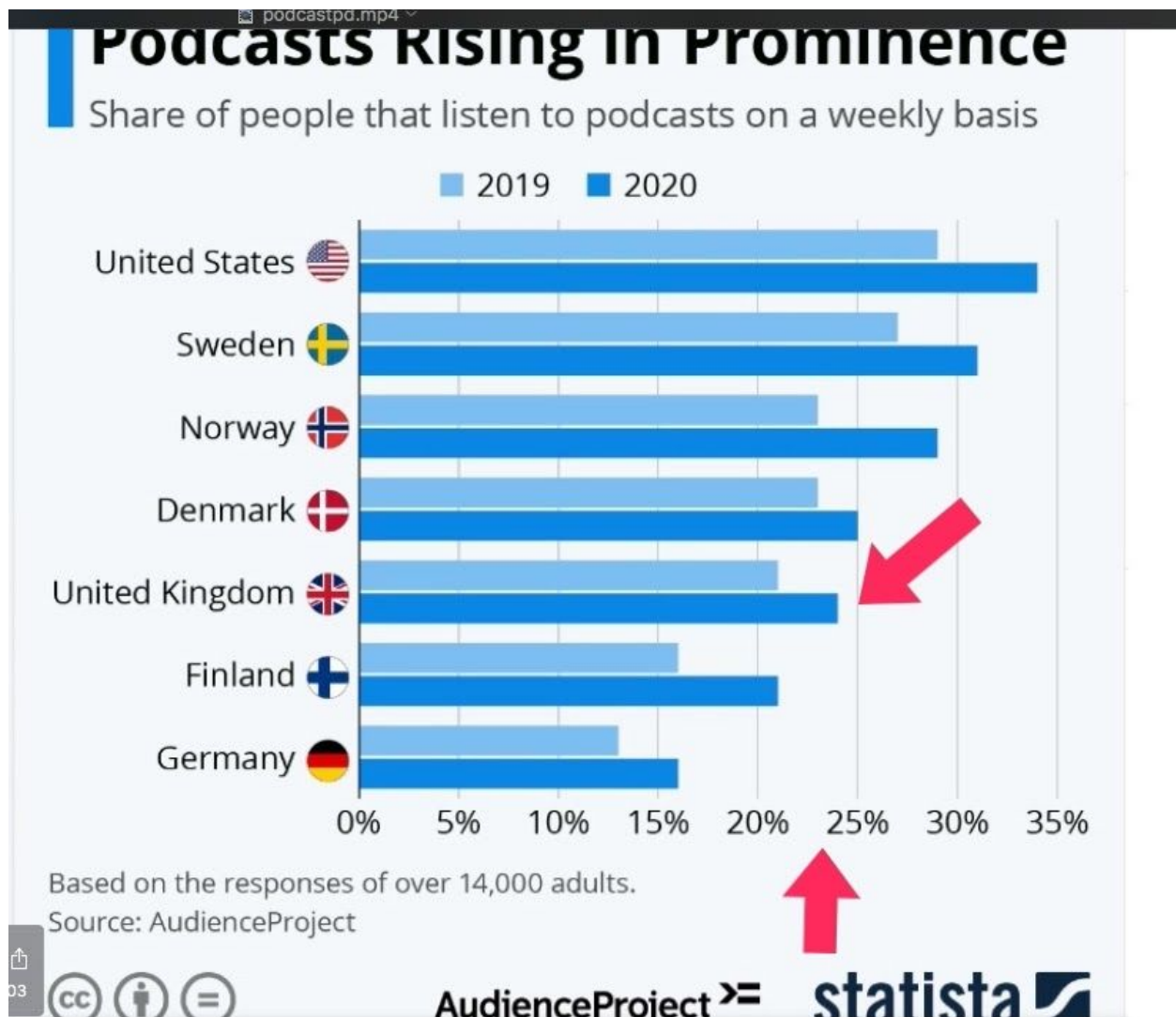
Hi and welcome. Here's a transcript of a video talk I gave at Digital Women online summit, based on setting up our [Poetry Pause](https://poetrypause.org) podcast. In it I answer frequently asked questions:

Why should you podcast? What format and structure to choose? How will you record it? What about branding and building community? And finally pros and cons of podcasting.

If you've got any questions, please get in touch via links at the end.

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## Why Should You Podcast?



In recent months podcasting has become more and more popular, as lockdown encourages us to experiment with how we get our messages out. This chart was published on July 2nd and you can see the growth in the UK.

What do we know about people who listen to podcasts? Let's have a look at an infographic published by [podcast insights](#): and [music oomph](#)

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Podcast listeners are generally more active than the rest of the population on social media and about half of them listen at home.

Big media companies have steamed in on the act, and there are lots of celebrity podcasts - but there are still independent creators breaking through and this maybe where opportunity lies for you.

A podcast can help you get your voice heard - literally - and get your message out.

## **Podcast Possibilities**

You can combine usual interests: [My Favorite Murder](#) - crime and comedy. Podcasting is largely not a way to make money but according to statista these gals made \$15m last year... which is not to be sniffed at.

Or interests that are overlooked : [Brown Girls Do It Too](#) . These fab women just won the British Podcast awards.

Or combine interesting people - [Brene Brown](#), [Reese Witherspoon](#), [Kerry Washington](#).

Podcasting is characterized by being intimate and informal.

Often a podcast is evergreen content: episodes that are not time bound and will stand the test of time, so they have search engine value for that.

Podcasting is less about marketing and more about networking and community building. A podcast shows that you can create something

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and produce something which can lead to opportunities. Your reach is likely to be smaller than with other forms of media, but deeper. When people hear enthusiasts chatting about something, they often like to chat back, so podcasting is great for those of us who love to chat.

## **Your Podcast Mission**

So before we go any further I'd like you to think about now: what would your mission be in making a podcast? This is your *why*...and you may want to do one or several of these things:

Do you want to:

Teach people?

Entertain people?

Make people laugh?

Help people through challenges?

Engage them about news or culture?

Give them new perspectives?

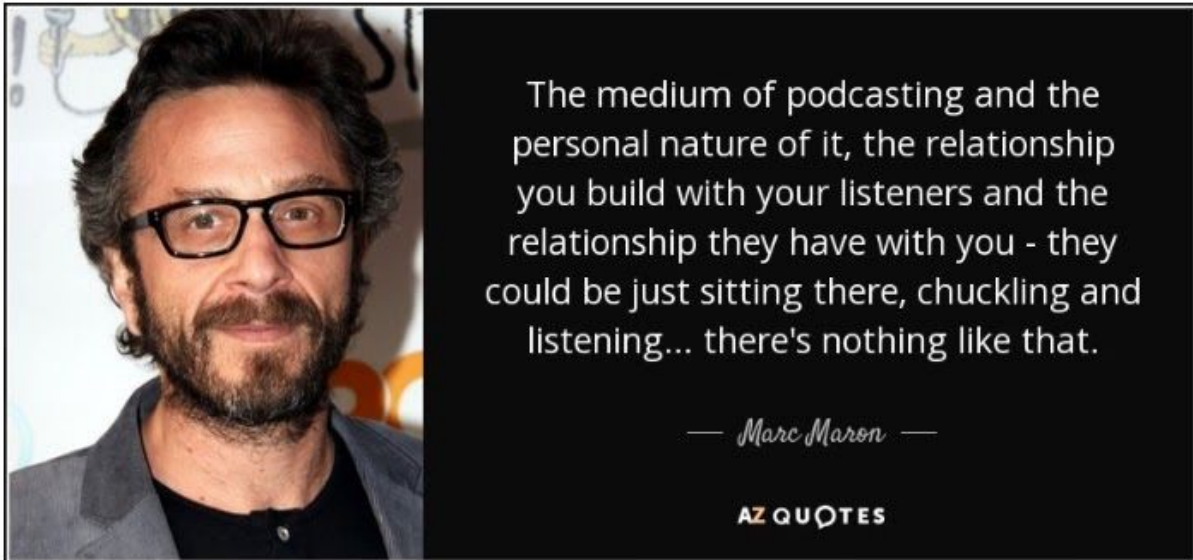
Identifying your mission is important because it will steer your content and motivate you. I don't want to sound all hippy dippy here, but loving your subject is quite important in podcasting. It's love that will keep you going through the initial hurdles and keep you podcasting...

'Either way, your show has to be something you can obsess over and that makes your heart sing. It has to be something you can see yourself

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doing for more than a weekend or a few weekends. It's the least your heart -and your show-deserve'.

Kristen Meinzer, author of [‘So You Want To Start A Podcast’](#)



## Who are you podcasting for?

As we glide into how to podcast, we need to think about who you are creating your podcast for. For instance, our Poetry Pause podcast is for poetry lovers - people who already know they like the stuff.

I've two friends who are great podcast fans, both in their thirties and Meg is a gardener and Billy is a hairdresser. They'd both make great podcasters.

Meg does very sustainable environmentally friendly gardening, specializing in very natural gardens. She might podcast for other gardeners who want to follow her style of gardening, or amateur garden enthusiasts who want to be as green as possible, or even teachers, on how to get kids doing green gardening.

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Billie might do a hairdressing podcast for other hairdressers, on hairdressing dilemmas: what do you do when your client ruins your handiwork? Or for people who want to do their own hair at home, or bridal hair tips, maybe.

Your interest as a podcaster will be important, but you can also check out what podcasts exist already by going to [podfollow.com](http://podfollow.com) or [listennotes.com](http://listennotes.com) to type in your subject and see what else is about. You can also look on Apple, Spotify and google your subject followed by the word 'podcast'.

And because of the informal and intimate nature of podcasting, an exercise where you look at your ideal listener can be very helpful. What I like to suggest to would be podcasters is that you think about a day in the media life of your ideal listener - what media does she consume throughout the day, and when would your podcast win over something she may watch on tv or listen to on the radio.

For instance, Meg with her sustainable gardening, may think of fellow gardeners who will listen in the way that she does while working, especially late morning, when lunch is looming and you need an extra bit of motivation...

Billie with hairdressers as an audience, may aim for that time between finishing work and collapsing on the sofa, when you're in the kitchen doing supper and maybe have a sip or two of wine...so early evening.

The clearer the picture you've got of your ideal listener and what she's up to, the better.

If you want to take this useful exercise further, then you can ask yourself what other media does she consume during the day - does she



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read a paper- physical or digital? What websites does she regularly visit? If she watches tv, what channels does she like? Box sets? What radio stations would she like?

And then of course there's thinking about related interests and whether your ideal listener is in any particular online groups. Poetry fans for instance often go on big free poetry moocs , online courses run by universities, and they often like gardening, nature and the Guardian!

## What Format And Structure To Choose?

Once you've got your podcast mission and who it's for, you'll need to decide on the type of podcast. So here are some different types of podcasts - and time, costs and technical skills will come into your choice here.



Let's have a look at these: For our green gardening podcast, Meg might decide she's going to do straight interviews with people, or she may

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visit other people's gardens and chat to them there about greener gardens - she might even decide she'd like to do an ask me anything slot.

And Billie, our hairdresser, could do something similar - but she might decide to record in the salon after it's closed ...or to have a couple of hairdresser friends around with a bottle of wine, to discuss disasters...

Have a little look now at these formats and find one or two that might work for you. This is your most important decision really, because it determines what you'll do in your podcast.

So to sum up now, where we're at: we've thought about your mission in your podcast, who you will podcast for, and the format your podcast might take. All of these you may want to research further, and you may find it useful through [podfollow.com](http://podfollow.com) to find other podcasts in your subject matter to do a 'compare and contrast' based on looking at their:

Podcast mission.....

For who.....

Format.....

This could help you find gaps in provision that you could fill.

### **What will the structure be?**

Next, you'll need to decide on structure within your format, what happens in each episode.. You're most likely to be scripting ideas rather than actual words, that you will repeat verbatim. We've found on our podcast that if we over script and include too many things we want to say verbatim, the podcast sounds stilted and formal.



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Your script steers the action: key questions and themes you might want to include.

Here's an example from Poetry Pause:

Intro - then Jean reads her choice of poem and says why.

Emma and Pippa respond.

Pippa question - how typical is this poem of poet X's work? - we discuss.

Include \*personal life/ upheaval \*illness \*philosophy.

We share our response poems.

We answer what did we learn from this?

If you're unsure about how any of this, a good way to start is to identify key questions you know your audience wants answered, and then experiment with recording the answers in different ways.

Listening to other podcasts should be really helpful, as well as researching in online groups, on You Tube , other podcasts and the radio.

## **How Will You Record It?**

Now your idea is cooking, you'll need to work out how to record your podcast. People worry a lot about the technical side of podcasting. The good news is sound engineers are the most amazingly helpful bunch of people offering free advice online. The bad news is to be a good sound engineer you have to love detail, so as a newbie it's easy to drown in a morass of really great advice and feel swamped.

A most useful resource I've found is a fantastic Facebook group - the [Podcasters Support Group](#) run by Helen Zaltman, a trailblazer

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podcasting woman. Another great resource is [Buzzsprout](#) with a load of helpful resources.

Your budget will determine your equipment and whether you are going to farm out some tasks like editing your podcast. We do everything DIY here, and researched a lot before buying equipment.

We record in my home, a converted cowshed, which is very echoey. We record in the 'softest' room, which happens to be my office, and is semi book lined, which also helps absorb sound. You can do a lot to make your environment softer through using blankets and screens - ideally, you want to go for the opposite of a typical bathroom which has a lot of hard reflective surface for the sound to bounce off.

## **Basic equipment**

Here's a list of basic equipment:

Microphone - beginners often start with USB mics that can plug directly into computers.

Headphones

Optional audio recorder - so you can record anywhere, and with multiple tracks, like Zoom. We use the H6.

Recording and editing software - like Audacity, Adobe Audition or Hindenburg. These may be called DAWs - standing for Digital Audio Workstation.

There are quite a lot of decisions to take about technical aspects, but don't be daunted - the amount of helpful advice online is staggering.

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## **Choosing hosting**

Once you've made your podcast you'll need to decide where it will be hosted, it's home base online, if you like. You'll save your podcast as an MP3 file and then you'll upload it.

Anchor is owned by Spotify and can match you with advertisers, but after a lot of research we decided to go with Libsyn, who cost a small amount every month, but also get you up on podcast platforms like Spotify and Apple, and have strong support and education. They are a platform run by podcast enthusiasts and well-established.

You'll connect to Apple podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts, plus other places from here. And you may want your own website, though some platforms, like Libsyn offer a basic one. You can find themes on Wordpress, Wix and Squarespace to specifically host podcasts.

Research and making decisions about technical set up was the most time consuming part of getting the podcast together, but being poetry, we probably needed to be a bit fussier than if we were doing something like best gin to drink down the pub.

You can of course hire a podcast producer or you may have a techie friend who'd like to help out. Or you may think as I do, that it's worth learning some techie stuff for the long term.

## **How will you brand it?**

At this stage then, you can think about branding - can you sum up the idea neatly so people immediately understand it? what will your podcast be called? what will the artwork look like? and how will you let people know about it?

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Your podcast branding needs a kind of immediacy - so that people can know straight away whether it's for them

Your podcast may be going into a kind of ecosystem you have which might include a website, a newsletter, events maybe and your social media streams.

One way or another you're most probably going to need to be team handed, so who will be fun to work with?

Now the fun stuff... we divided up jobs in our podcast, so I produce, Emma is art director and Jean is in charge of research. We already met in a live poetry workshop, so we knew we loved chatting together and we put a version of this online. We created a mood board before deciding on the look we wanted. We wanted it to be a social thing and we're all pretty busy so we decided to go for a once a month release.

The good thing about beginning a podcast is that once you've spent time and possibly money on the actual set up, creating several episodes turns into fun.

While I'm talking about branding, I should mention money. Podcasting is not a route to get rich quick unless you are incredibly special. But your branding and following may make your podcast an attractive proposition for an advertiser or sponsor. Have a look at [megaphone.fm](https://megaphone.fm) and [anchor.fm](https://anchor.fm) You may want to investigate affiliate possibilities for your podcast website. Some podcasters go for [Patreon](https://patreon.com) or [Kickstarter](https://kickstarter.com) where they crowdfund support. There are some legal and crime podcasts where this seems to work well.

## **How will you build your community?**

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Getting your podcast to people feels more like community building and building networks than aggressive marketing - we know our audience is likely to be interested in our subject and probably share our enthusiasm, as they've been bothered to download the podcast.

One thing that makes all the detail worth attending to, is the scope for creativity in social media for your podcast. So you can publish sound, text or video excerpts and there's software like [Headliner](#) and [Wavve](#) which will convert your podcast quickly into little video or audiogram, where a sound wave indicates its audio content. These can go in all the usual places like instagram, you tube, facebook and twitter. And if you wish, other tools of engagement - quizzes, polls, competitions can pop out from your podcast.

## **What are pros and cons?**

**Pros** - opens up opportunities, gives you credibility and authority  
Refreshes your subject, widens open creative possibilities  
Widens your network and your learning  
Relatively new form of digital - there may be gaps in provision

**Cons** - deep reach rather than wide reach  
Time consuming initially and you may need to upskill  
Your obvious community may be low on podcast fans - in which case may not be the best media...unless you want to embark on a conversion campaign.

Here are a few more links to finish with, and good luck on your podcasting journey, remember it's a great way of having a terrific chat!

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Newsletters: [Podcast Movement](#) and [Podnews](#)

Awards UK: [British Podcast Awards](#)

Community: [She Podcasts](#)

And you can contact me at: [twitter](#), [Fbook personal](#), [linked in profile](#)

[The Complete Freelance Writing Course](#) is my biggest seller on Udemy.