BROADCAST with PODCASTS

GIVE STUDENTS A VOICE!

When students have a voice in the classroom, their personalities shine through.

They are better engaged.

Their education is more tightly connected to who they are.

When students have a voice, life is good.

Let's give them opportunities to show their voices both literally (their speaking voices) and figuratively (their interests and feelings).

A great way to do that is to tap into digital audio. With technology being what it is today, creating and sharing digital audio is easier than it ever has been.

Wikipedia defines a podcast as "a type of digital media consisting of an episodic series of audio, video, PDF or ePub (digital book) files subscribed to and downloaded ... or streamed online to a computer or mobile device."

Here's why I like using digital audio in the classroom:

Assignments don't feel like homework. It is homework — practice with classroom content — but homework students can do with their beloved cell phones. It's a change of pace.

Listening and grading is a breeze. I create a basic rubric, play through the audio and make quick notes on the grade sheet.

It taps into a new skill set. Using digital audio can engage the brain in ways that other activities might not.

They cultivate a necessary skill. Verbal communication skills often show up on lists of top skills that employers are looking for in new hires. Digital audio develops those skills.

> Creating and sharing digital audio is easier than it ever has been.

Essays make my students groan.

They've done a million worksheets.

But creating digital audio is new territory for most.

The options for creative activities with digital audio are nearly endless, and they touch all content areas. They're accessible, too — all you really need is a device with a microphone (and that device could even be a basic telephone).

Give digital audio a shot in your classroom. You may find yourself reaching and motivating students that weren't before.

SPEAKER

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HOW TO CREATE A PODCAST

Are you wondering where in the world you would even start? Herre's a general guide to how a podcast is created.

1 **Come up with an idea.** What kind of podcast will students be creating? Remember that a podcast is basically like a radio show or some form of digital audio. What kind of material should it have? What should the format be (interview, lecture, talk show, etc.)? (More on format later.)

2 **Plan the episode out.** Iron out all of the details before you hit record. For some projects, this might mean writing a script. Other projects will be more spontaneous and will want more of a bare-bones outline. Plans should include intro/outro, format of the recording, the general idea of what's going to be in it, as well as any transitions, sound effects or music.

3 **Prepare your technology.** Determine how your podcast will be recorded. It can be very simple (a phone call in to Google Voice) or more complex (several audio files recorded and mixed using a program like Audacity). Determine what kind of microphone you want to use (the embedded microphone in your computer, a different external microphone or a telephone). You'll also want to think about whether the initial recording will be enough (a one-take podcast with no editing) or if you'll want to spice it up with effects, music and other editing.

4 **Record the episode.** This could mean getting everyone in a panel together in one place. It could mean sitting down alone and talking to the microphone. Follow your plans and create. Decide ahead of time whether mistakes (stuttering, "umm," "uhh," etc.) is OK, if it will be taken out in editing (requires some work in Audacity) or if it requires a whole new recording.

5 **Save your recording.** The most universal file formats are WAV and MP3. (WAV is usually bigger and higher quality, while MP3 is smaller/faster to download and a bit lower quality.) When using a recording program (such as Audacity), most will let you select a file type. (If it doesn't and you want to use WAV or MP3, there are websites like Zamzar that will help you convert files to the type you want.)

6 **Edit your podcast (optional).** If you decided that you wanted some special effects (music, sound effects, a fade in or fade out), this is the place to do it. Use an editing program (again, my suggestion is Audacity) to add these. You can take multiple audio files and put them together in one podcast. Tweak your podcast to your liking and then save it as an MP3 (the standard when it comes to podcasts).

7 **Share your podcast.** This depends on your audience and how you decided to broadcast your podcast. There are several options for podcast hosting (more on that later). Choose the one that best fits your audience and your requirements and upload the file.
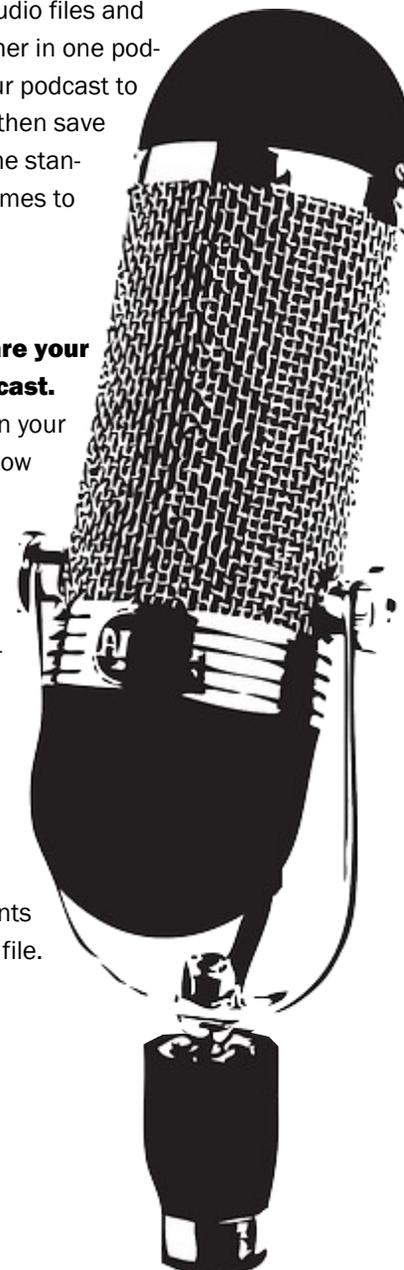
15 IDEAS FOR USING DIGITAL AUDIO

1. Traditional lesson questions: Haven't ditched that textbook completely yet? Put a new twist on a common practice. Have students answer textbook lesson questions by voice instead of by pencil. Grading may take a bit longer, but the change of pace may inspire.

2. Audio essays: Give students a chance to make their case verbally. Audio essays – whether the 30-second or multiple-minute variety – let students inform and persuade verbally, a skill they will likely need in the workforce.

3. Interviews: There are so many directions this can be taken. Students can interview their friends for their opinions about topics from class. They can delve into their own genealogy with family. They could even interview community experts on a research topic.

4. Debates: This takes interviews to the next level. Students get a topic from class and find one or more classmates. They grab a cell phone (or land line phone) and dig in for a discussion.

5. Poetry reading: Make poetry assignments come to life. Students can write their own poetry and recite it, or they can give their own interpretation of a poem the class is studying.

6. Speak for a character: Let students interpret what a character in history, in a story or in anything involved with your class would say. How would Juliet describe her sticky family situation? What would Adam Smith say about the state of our economy? How would a Haitian describe her daily life and struggles?

7. Directions: Give geography mapping activities a new look by having students give directions from one place to another. Include important cities or landmarks they should know. Creativity reigns!

8. Tour guide: This is similar to the directions activity. Students study an important place and take tourists on a verbal tour, identifying people, places and things and injecting information along the way.

9. Predicting the future: Based on what's happened in the past and what students have learned in class, what do they think the future will be like?

10. Songs, raps, chants or cheers: These can be fun to write and even more fun to perform. Make sure they tie back to class content, of course.

11. How did you solve it?: When students hear their peers explain how they've reached a solution on a problem in math, science or any other class, they might be more receptive to hearing it. However, student explanations can have mistakes (sometimes serious mistakes), so checking answers before recording might be a good idea.

12. Talk show: Students take the role of talk show host, taking call-in questions, discussing issues with their co-hosts or talking to guests.

13. Game show: Hosts ask the questions and contestants answer them for fabulous prizes. Celebrity guests could make things interesting!

14. A call home to Mom: Students could leave a message for their parents or siblings, explaining an interesting place they've visited, an interesting event they've witnessed or talking about something that's on their mind. Tie it into a theme from class and you get conversational, easy-to-understand explanations of your class content.

15. Surprise question: Leave a question that students must answer on the outgoing message. The catch: Students don't know the question until they call! This can be a kind of pop quiz and an opportunity to think on their feet.

THE EASY TOOL: GOOGLE VOICE

Google Voice allows your students to create easy digital audio — as basic as a phone call. The files that students create here can be podcasts themselves or can be parts of podcasts to be edited later.
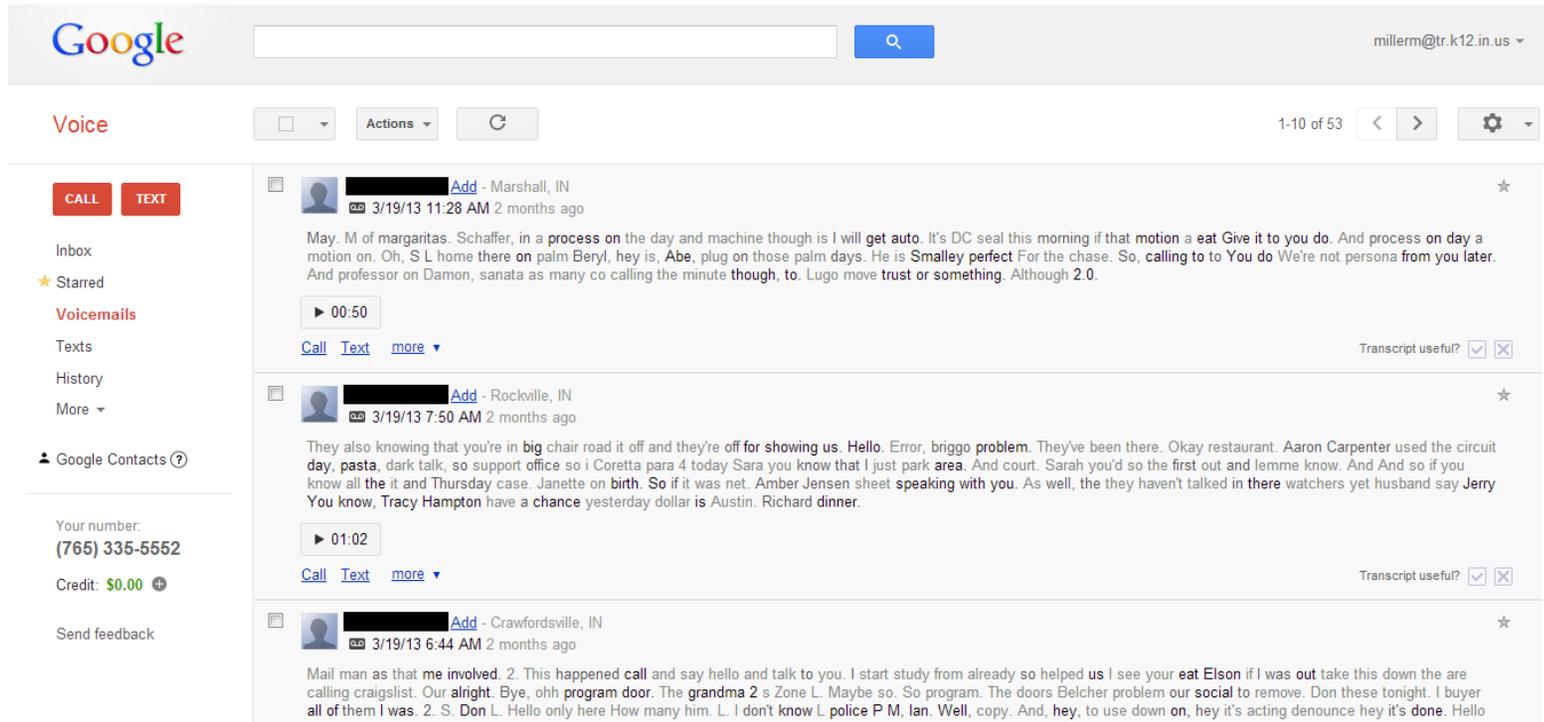
Creating an account: Sign up for a free Google account if you don't already have one. When you connect to Google Voice, it allows you to pick a free phone number from the area code and prefix of your choosing.

Setting an outgoing message: After setting your phone number up, you can record the message your callers will hear. This message can be changed to have specific instructions for each assignment that you create. It can also be a general greeting that welcomes callers and identifies the class and/or the teacher.

Calling in: When students call, they hear your outgoing message and then a tone to start recording. When they are finished, they simply hang up and the voice message is

sent to your Google Voice inbox.

Reviewing new messages: Check new messages in your inbox like new e-mails. Each call shows up with time/date details, the incoming phone number and a transcription of the message. Either read the transcription (it's pretty good but not always exact!) or push play to listen to the call.

Downloading messages: Voicemails can be downloaded as mp3 files by clicking on "more" and "download". This is the option you use to save audio files to your computer to use as podcasts or to add to a podcast in an audio editing program. Messages can be archived on your Google Voice account for playback and download later.

Adding notes: A text-based note can be added to voice messages in Google Voice. These are nice for

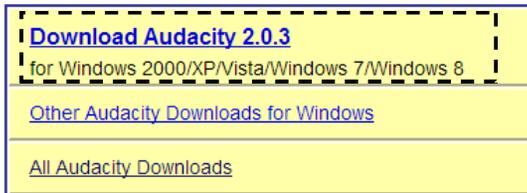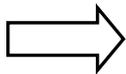making a note about grading or something you need to remember when you grade.

Google

millerm@tr.k12.in.us

Voice | Actions | 1-10 of 53

CALL   TEXT

Inbox
★ Starred
Voicemails
Texts
History
More

Google Contacts ?

Your number:
(765) 335-5552
Credit: $0.00

Send feedback

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3/19/13 11:28 AM 2 months ago

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3/19/13 6:44 AM 2 months ago

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Google Voice

THE VERSATILE TOOL: AUDACITY

Here are the basics of using Audacity to create digital audio.

Downloading Audacity

Audacity is open-source software, so that means it's free. It can be downloaded at http://audacity.sourceforge.net. Click on the "Download Audacity" link at the top of the page if you're a Windows user. If not, click "All Audacity Downloads" to find Mac and GNU/Linux downloads.

Download Audacity 2.0.3
for Windows 2000/XP/Vista/Windows 7/Windows 8

Other Audacity Downloads for Windows

All Audacity Downloads

Recording digital audio

Make sure your computer has a microphone (most laptops have one built in) or that your microphone is connected. When you're ready to record, just hit the red record circle button and go. When you're done, click the yellow square stop button.
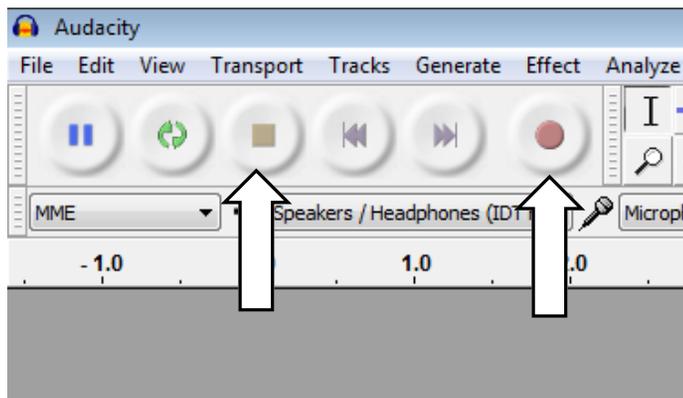
Cutting parts out of a recording

If there are parts of your recording that you don't want, they can be cut out. Simply click and drag to highlight the part that you don't want (make sure have the selection tool (looks like a capital i) selected). Then hit "delete." That's it. The parts before and the parts after will be pushed together into one recording.
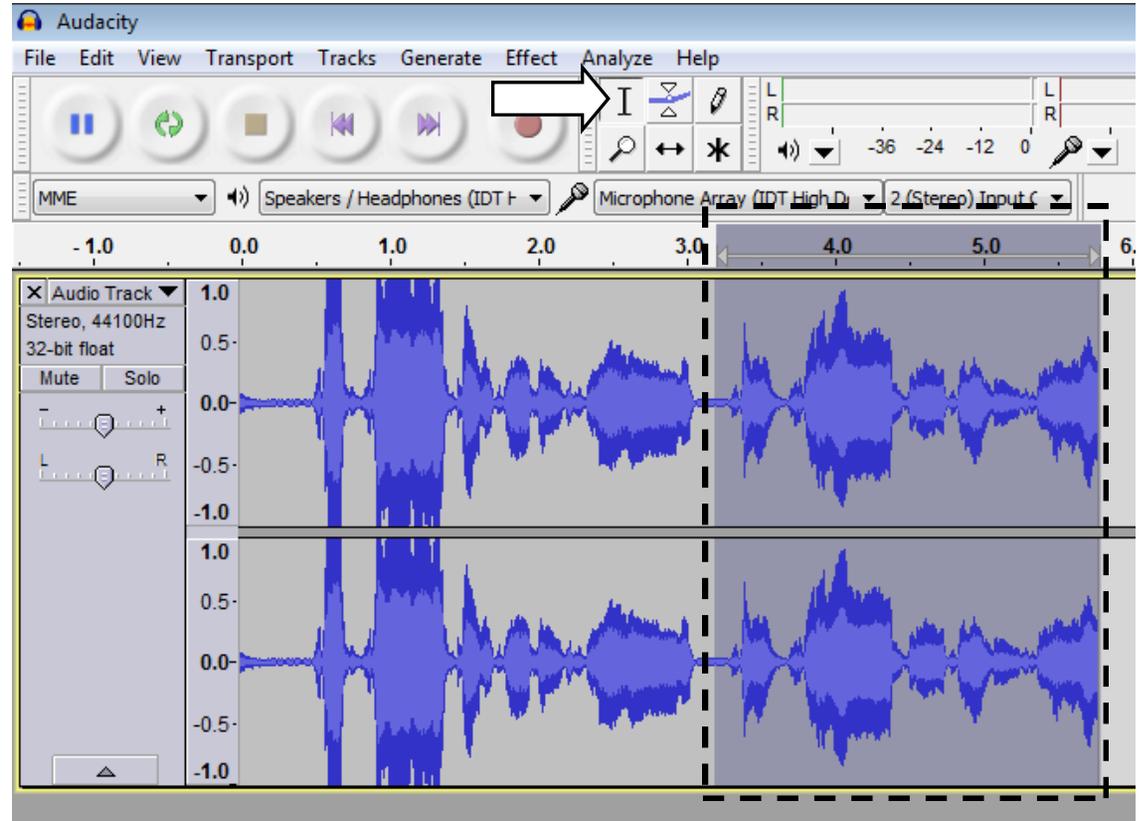
THE VERSATILE TOOL: AUDACITY

Here are the basics of using Audacity to create digital audio.

Adding music/audio to a podcast

If you have an MP3 file of a song you'd like to add to your podcast, it's simple to incorporate using Audacity. Just find the audio file on the desktop or in the folder where the file is. This also works if you want to add another recording you've done and saved. Then drag and drop it below your recording in Audacity. Is the file too long? Use your "cutting parts out of a recording" skills to trim it down to size!

Drag and drop music here!
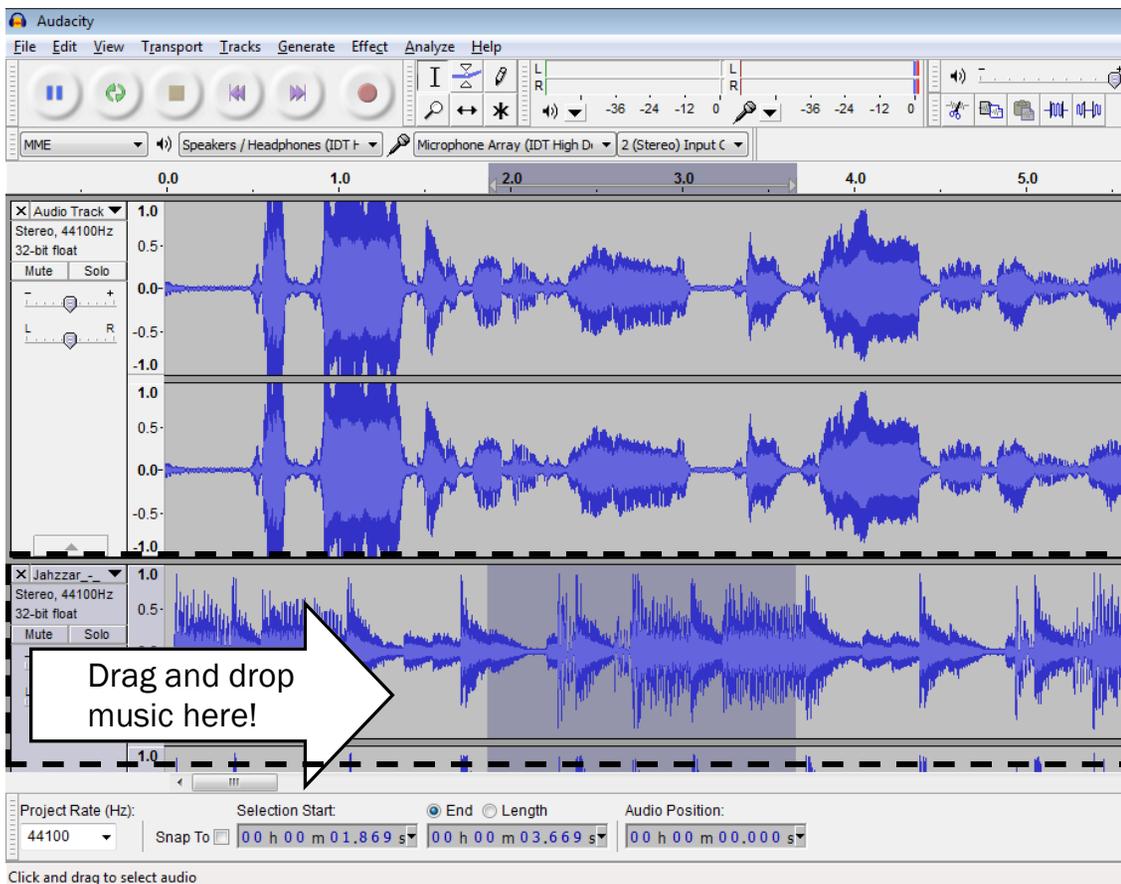
Fading in/fading out

You can make music or a recording fade in (gradually get louder) or fade out (gradually get quieter) very easily. Highlight the audio using click and drag that you want to fade. Then click "Effect" from the menu bar at the top and "Fade in" or "Fade out."

Click "Effect" and "Fade in" / "Fade out"

Highlight the audio that you want to fade in or fade out (use click and drag).
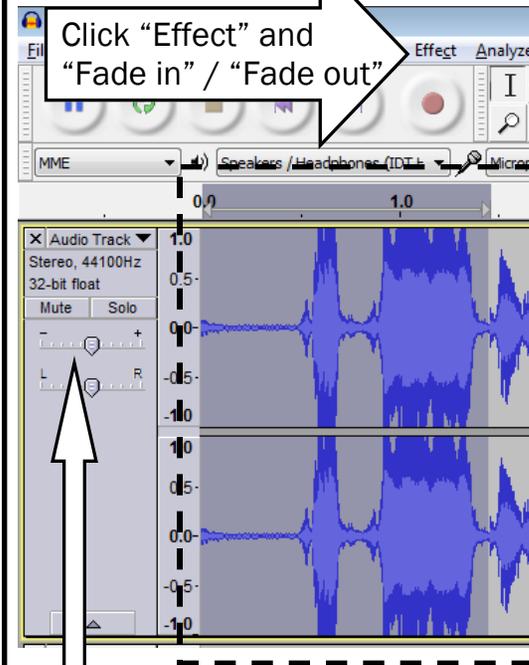
Adjusting volume

Want to make your music or your voice recording louder or softer? Just use the - / + slider next to the recording to raise or lower the volume.

DETERMINING YOUR AUDIENCE

Before turning students loose with a podcasting assignment or project, it's a good idea to think about the audience for whom they will be creating the podcast.

For the teacher: This option obviously has the least reach, but it is generally the easiest to plan for (i.e. no time or effort required to have anyone else listen).

For classmates in class: If students create audio presentations that will benefit the class (i.e. about class content you're covering), you may want to play them in class for everyone to hear. This can get time-consuming and there may be many podcasts to listen to (especially if everyone created one individually). This option might work if you hand-select a few for playing. Students could have an activity connected to the podcasts they listen to (i.e. a worksheet, a written response, etc.)

For classmates outside of class: This requires students to download their peers' podcasts outside of class for listening. Teachers could require students to listen to a certain number of classmate podcasts and do an activity in response (see above). This also requires students to have access to digital audio downloads outside the class.

For the whole world: This is where a free podcasting service or website to post a podcast (see gray box on this page) comes in handy. By sharing student podcasts with the world in this way, their work goes beyond the walls of the school and becomes a contribution to society. This is powerful, but it has its dangers. Be careful that students don't include personally-identifying information in their podcasts. Also, be sure that any music or sound effects are created by the students or are not covered by copyright.

WHERE TO HOST PODCASTS

All that a podcast really is is an audio file. So hosting (i.e. making available) a podcast is as simple as putting it somewhere that people can download it. Most people save podcasts as mp3 files. Here are some ideas:

1. Your class website: You can upload your podcast file and provide a link to it for downloading purposes. Then the person doing the downloading can play it on their device.

2. A free podcasting service: Using a site like Podbean (www.podbean.com) or Podomatic (www.podomatic.com) makes it possible to offer podcasts for download without having your own website. Simply create an account and start uploading your audio files to the site. Students can go to your account's page on the site to download podcasts and listen to them.

3. A shared Google Drive or Dropbox: If you have a free storage service online, you can make the file sharable. This way, students can go to the link to the file and download the file from there. It's easy and there's no need to create a new account or use your own website.