



What's a podcast?

Podcasts come in all shapes and sizes. That's good news for you, because it means that you have lots of room to be creative and make something you're excited about. Some podcasts, like [This American Life](#), are long — sometimes an hour or more. Others are less than 10 minutes. Some podcasts, like [NPR's Up First](#), are about news.

Yet, there is a wide range of podcast from tutorials to in-depth conversations.

It's up to you to bring your ideas and have a conversation about the issues important to you.

Getting Your Ideas Together

We will give you a few prompts not required, but you may choose to use them.

Here they are again:

1. Tell us a story about your project and interest: about something that happened there — recently or in the past — that your audience should know about.
2. What was the beginning? Describe your journey.
3. What are the important concepts your project? Specifically?
4. What are your goals the future?
5. Tell us how to get more information.

Before you settle on one idea, take a few minutes to brainstorm. Try to come up with an idea that might work for each of these prompts. Be sure to think about how you might structure your podcast.

[Here are some tips](#) from the pros at NPR about starting a podcast on your own.

Would it be an interview with someone? Would one host narrate the podcast, using clips of interviews to tell a story? What sound would you use to give listeners a full idea of the story you're telling?

Before you settle on one idea for your podcast, ask yourself:

- Is this podcast idea realistic?
 - If the idea involves traveling somewhere far away or interviewing someone famous, it might be difficult. Make sure you can do it before you settle on one idea.



If you're telling a story, it may help to think of the parts of the story in separate sections. Check out this [guide to structuring your story](#) — and another about [telling a story in three acts](#).

- Does the timeline work? Can you complete your interviews or record other sounds well before the podcasts are due — so that you have time to edit the audio and submit it?

Let's Talk Structure

Now that you know what your podcast is going to be about, and you've got an idea of the sounds you want to use, it's time to think about structure.

Of course, the structure of your podcast will depend on the idea you've chosen. Will hosts from your class narrate the podcast? Then you'll start differently from the way you would have a conversation on tape.

What Makes A Good Interview?

There's a good chance that you're interviewing someone for your podcast. Maybe you're even talking to lots of different people. It's important to make the most out of the time you take to record them.

Before you get there ...

Do your research.

- Make sure you understand *why* you're interviewing this person. Read up on who the person is, what he or she does, and the subject you're making a podcast about.

Prepare questions.

- Come up with a list of open-ended questions or talking points about your project.

Clarify the terms of the interview.

- Make sure your interviewee knows you're talking to him or her for the NPR Student Podcast Challenge. The person should understand that you're recording audio.

When you arrive ...

Arriving at the Studio.

- Relax. Resist the urge to start the conversation before the recording begins.

When you start recording ...

- Remember to have fun, it's just a conversation.
- Continue talking. Always have a question or comment at the ready.
- Remember there is a brief start-up or Intro and a ready to go ending. In other words, prepare a brief opening to the conversation and a wrap up of things to remember.
- Sometimes, a "thank you" is a perfect ending.

Scripting Your Podcast

Simply put, if you prepare a word-for-word script and intend on making it perfect, it generally doesn't go that way. Use the template above or prepare 4-5 questions (depending on your length). All participants will generally know the questions in advance or have "some" idea of the direction of the questions.

Starting the story

First things first. So, you've figured out how you want your podcast to be structured and you've gathered the sound you need. Whether you're scripting the entire podcast or not, you probably need to write out at least one part: the very beginning.

And no matter how you start, make sure you do the following:

- **Tightly focus your idea**
- **Make that focus clear to listeners**
- **Tell your audience what to expect (You'll learn XX or discover what happens to this character/place/policy/etc.)**
- **Create a sense of movement or momentum**
- **Smile like crazy! Laughs are always good. End on the positive!**

Good luck!