

Intro to Podcasts

Podcasts are basically on demand internet radio shows. Their types cover a dramatic range. I tend to skew NPR and podcasts that are more informative or academic. But other types—like fiction, comedy, self-help, sports—are just as prevalent. Quality also varies dramatically. Some are professionally produced radio shows, and some are made by amateurs or new comers who are just putting their podcasts out in the world to see if they can find an audience.

Podcast Apps:

You can listen to podcasts online from a computer and browser, but most people listen through apps on their phones (hence broadcasts for the now defunct iPod). In 2012, Apple put their Podcast app on the iPhone as a default, and that's when podcasts really took off. If you have an iPhone, you can just use the default app. If you have an Android phone, you'll need to download an app. Most are free. Here are some options.

Apple Only

- Apple Podcasts – comes default with the phone
- Overcast – <https://overcast.fm/> (has a fairly simple, usable interface)
- Pod Wrangler – can download from iTunes
- RSS Radio - <http://rssid.io/>

Apple and Android

- Radio Public - <https://radiopublic.com/>
- Stitcher - <https://www.stitcher.com/>
- Podbean – <https://www.podbean.com/> (has some shows Overcast doesn't)
- Google Podcasts – <https://play.google.com/store/apps> (download through google play)
- Castbox - <https://castbox.fm/>

Podcast Genre:

As I noted above (and note below), there are a number of topical categories for podcasts, but there is also an emerging set of typical “genre”—combinations of topics, forms, and rhetorical purposes. Here is a set recently identified by Julie Shapiro, Executive Producer at Radiotopia (kind of like an indie label for podcasts).

- Crime-casts – solving cases, following trials
- Chum-casts – a couple of friends talking, usually informally
- Back-casts – history, usually from experts but sometimes amateurs

- Data-casts – topics supported by experts, data, details, and analysis
- How-casts – how-to, typically focused on technology but not always
- Fiction-casts – such as Nightvale, Adventures in New America, The Horror of Dolores Roach
- Daily-casts – newscasts, typically from recognizable media outlets
- Politi-casts – politics based on experts and analysis (not chum-casts)
- Celeb-casts – Malcolm Gladwell, Oprah, Neil deGrasse Tyson
- Cult-casts – former cult follower stories and support
- Fem-casts – by and for women, from moms to rebel grrls
- Kid-casts – science to games to how-to for kids (Pants on Fire is a game show)

Podcasts that I Listen to:

As I noted above, I tend to skew NPR and “academic” in my listening. Below is a decent list of what I listen to regularly, along with various political podcasts that are mostly produced by NPR. When I think of podcasts as a “genre” or genre set, I tend to have these in mind, which combine fairly high quality, artistic production and well thought out layers of sound with quality sources of information, research, and analysis.

- Serial – the first big mainstream hit for a podcast, first season followed a trial
- S-Town – considered the first “creative nonfiction” podcast, big hit
- This American Life – award-winning, story-driven human interest podcast
- 99% Invisible – focuses on design and architecture in everyday life
- TED Radio Hour – collects clips of various TED talks around a single topic
- Hidden Brain – psychology topics delivered through a storytelling, interview format
- Revisionist History – Malcolm Gladwell’s podcast, academic takes on social history
- Radiolab – award winning stories focused on topics in the natural sciences
- Freakonomics Radio – looks at social and cultural phenomena through economics
- Planet Money – “the economy explained” but with good storytelling
- Criminal – quirky crime stories beyond typical headlines
- Up and Vanished – true crime, started by an aspiring documentary filmmaker
- Atlanta Monster – series on the Atlanta child murders in the late 70s
- Sworn – true crime investigations and explanations
- Lore – folklore, horror, and history through storytelling
- Invisibilia – combines narrative storytelling and science to explain human behavior
- Reply All – explores internet technology and modern life
- The RFK Tapes – series on RFK’s murder and surrounding conspiracy theories
- Accused – investigative journalists look back at unsolved crimes
- Undisclosed – law and crime, spin-off of Serial, early seasons featured a USC prof
- Science vs. – quirky host puts common questions up against the latest research
- Science Fridays – general interest science stories grounded in research
- Song Exploder – musicians tell the story of how one of their songs was made
- Lost Notes – a look at more obscure stories in music’s history

- NPR Podcasts – <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/>

Apple Podcasts Main Categories:

If you are using the Apple “Podcast” app, it allows you to click on “Top Charts” to get the top 300 most listened to podcasts for that week. You can also click on “Categories” and go deeper into each of these areas to find podcasts to listen to that interest you.

- Arts – design, fashion, food, literature, performing art, visual art
- Business – news, careers, investment, management and marketing, shopping
- Comedy –
- Education – technology, higher ed, k12, language courses, training
- Games and Hobbies – automotive, aviation, hobbies, games, video games
- Gov’t & Organizations – local, national, non-profit, regional
- Health – alternative, fitness and nutrition, self-help, sexuality
- Kids and Family –
- Music –
- News and Politics –
- Religion and Spirituality – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, spirituality
- Science and Medicine – medicine, natural science, social science
- Society and Culture – history, personal journals, philosophy, places and travel
- Sports and Recreation – amateur, college and high school, outdoor, professional
- Technology – gadgets, podcasting, software how-to, tech news
- TV and Film –