

Podcasting Explained

What is with all these kids running around listening to their iPods and other MP3 players? Is there really that much current music worth listening to? Well, maybe it's not music at all that they are listening to. Maybe it's a Podcast!

A Podcast is a file that someone puts on the Internet. It can be audio, it can be video, or it can be text. We'll discuss audio Podcasts here just to give you an idea of what they are.

An audio Podcast is much like a radio program. The content varies. NPR (National Public Radio, www.npr.org) has a multitude of Podcasts available. One of my favorites that I never miss, is the Soundbytes radio program (<http://sbarch.cob.rit.edu/>). Vintage radio programs are cropping up. But most of all, people across the country are sitting in front of their computers, talking into a microphone, recording a program, and then uploading it to the web. A pilot for a major airline that takes his recorder with him and produces "Fly With Me" (<http://joepodcaster.libsyn.com/>). Another example is a quilting program, "Annie's Quilting Stash". Have your imagination ready (<http://www.simplearts.com/blogs/index.php>)

So, how does one listen to a Podcast? There are two ways. The first is to use an MP3 player; the second is to just listen at your computer.

If you own an MP3 player, such as an iPod, use the software that came with your unit. Specifically, for the iPod, use the iTunes software. Launch the software and find the link to the Podcast directory. Within the directory, you can search for topics that interest you. Click on that topic, and the program will be downloaded to your computer. When you hook up your iPod, the program will immediately be downloaded to iPod and available for your listening pleasure. You can also enter a URL for a known website within the Podcast directory. The webpage will come up. When you see a button that says "RSS", click on it and the program will be downloaded.

You also have the ability to subscribe you to a Podcast. When a new episode of that Podcast becomes available, it will automatically be downloaded to your computer and then to your MP3 player when next attach it to your computer.

If you don't own an MP3 player, but still want to listen to a Podcast, do it at your computer. Turn your speakers on and open up your web browser. You can find a Podcast and a topic easily by doing a Google search.. As an example of something to listen to, go to www.npr.org. Click on the "RSS – NPR via RSS" button. Click next on the RSS button for the topic of your choice. Finally, you can click on the specific program you want to listen to, and then click on the "Listen" button. If your speakers are on, you'll be hearing the program.

There are a number of Podcast directories out there. All you have to do is Google Podcasts and you'll find a number of them. They all work a bit differently, but you should have the general idea by now.

So, the next time you see a teen listening to music on an iPod, maybe it's not music...maybe it's a quilting program!

Written for:

The Green Bytes

Newsletter of The Computer Club of Green Valley, Arizona

December 2005