

What are Podcasts?

Podcasts are generally available as a series of prerecorded talk-radio type episodes that users typically listen to on demand from a mobile device. The episode length is usually well under an hour – the average is around 40 minutes.

The term “podcast”, a combination of the words “iPod” and “broadcast”, reportedly was coined in 2004 by Adam Curry and Dave Winer, a former MTV VJ and a software developer, respectively. These two friends found a way to download online radio broadcasts to an iPod and are thus credited as the inventors of the podcast.

Unlike a radio program, there are no broadcast times for podcasts. The episodes are available for listening and downloading, usually for free, as soon as they are published.

Although there are web versions of podcasts for those who prefer to use their computers, the most common method of listening to podcasts of interest is via an app on a smartphone that is most likely already installed. iPhone users have the Apple Podcasts app and Android users can play podcasts through Google Podcasts. There are other podcast apps available, such as Spotify, Castro, Overcast, SiriusXM; many of them have both a free version and a premium version that entails a fee.

Most podcast apps have search and browse capabilities. Podcasts can also be discovered by doing a Google search using specific keywords such as “business podcasts”, “self-improvement podcasts”, “health and fitness podcasts”, etc. In addition, most apps enable a user to subscribe to a podcast and to receive a notification when a new episode becomes available.

While podcasts are largely designed for listening, video versions on platforms such as YouTube allow someone to watch hosts and guests as they interact.