



Teacher Guide: On Air! Podcasts in the Classroom

by Louise Kulwicki, host of The Study Legal English Podcast



Note: This is a guide for teachers about running a podcast project where students make a podcast episode for a class podcast.

Pre-project activities

▼ Introduction

Teacher note: Introduce your students to podcasts. Ask them:

What are podcasts?

A podcast is a spoken-word audio show about a particular theme that is published online.

What are podcast episodes?

Each podcast has episodes that focus on a particular topic. There are over 48 million episodes as of April 2021 compared to 18.5 million in 2018. There are podcast episodes on every topic, and they are current. <https://bit.ly/3moHDq8>

Who makes podcasts?

Podcasts are produced by a range of people from amateurs to experts. Many podcasts are produced by educators who can help students understand a topic and keep them motivated. Many students are also producing podcasts as part of their course, for example, students from Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland.

Where can you find podcasts to listen to?

On websites:

- Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/genre/podcasts-web>
- iTunes: <https://podcasts.apple.com/genre/podcast/id26>

- Google: <https://podcasts.google.com/>

Via phone apps:

- Player FM: <https://player.fm/>
- Pocket Casts: <https://www.pocketcasts.com/>

You can subscribe to a show and listen to episodes by streaming or downloading them for free, anywhere, anytime.

▼ Integration

Teacher note: Before you set your students a podcast project, you may want to integrate listening to podcasts into your class in the following ways:

Set your students a podcast to listen to outside of or in class. Use this search tool to find an appropriate podcast: <https://bit.ly/3brgDjs>. Here is a free handout that includes 10 exercises for using The Study Legal English Podcast in class. The exercises can be adapted to use with other podcasts: <http://bit.ly/2zymWQ6>.

Other helpful exercises: <https://bit.ly/3mjWuA>

NPR Teaching Podcasting: A Curriculum Guide for Educators
<https://n.pr/3vQMun3>

Project steps

▼ Teacher note

Set your students the task to create their own podcast episode for a class podcast. The project can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. The guide below contains the steps to complete the project, some of which you may want to miss out.

1. Establish your class podcast

▼ Teacher note

You may want to create your own class podcast. The episodes that the students create are all for the class podcast. Remember that the 'podcast' is the show, like *Friends* is a popular TV show, which is made up of many separate 'episodes' e.g. *The One Where It All Began*. You don't have to make your class podcast public, you can keep it private. Use this template handout: <https://bit.ly/3GxLjh2>

▼ 1.1 Name your class podcast

Students collectively create a name for the class podcast. The name should:

- *highlight the main theme of the podcast*
- *be short (3-4 words)*

▼ 1.2 Write your class podcast description

Students collectively create a description of your class podcast. The name should:

- *state what the podcast is about*
- *who the podcast is for*
- *how the podcast can help people*
- *be approx. 50 words*

▼ 1.3 Create your class podcast cover image

A podcast cover image is what people see when they search for your class podcast. Students create a class podcast cover image that:

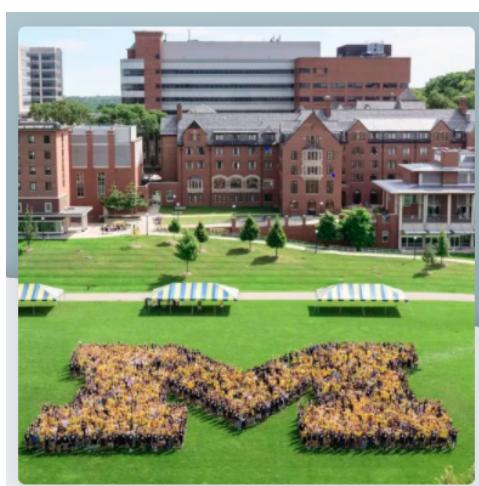
- *includes the podcast name*
- *your podcast logo*
- *communicates what your podcast is about*

They can use the free website Canva to find a template to adapt for a podcast cover: <https://bit.ly/3mh7zUk>

▼ Example: The @UMichStudents Podcast - name, photo, description

[PODCAST NAME] The @UMichStudents Podcast

[PODCAST COVER PHOTO]



[PODCAST DESCRIPTION]

One of the most powerful things about social media is the platform for expression it provides. Individuals can share their stories and become advocates and inspirations for others. Students at U-M have harnessed this potential and used their personal media to do just this. Listen and hear how each of these students has made a unique impact through social media.

2. Prepare podcast episodes

▼ Teacher note

Individually, in pairs, or groups, students create their own podcast episode. As the teacher, you may want to define the episode length e.g. *10-15 minutes* and overall topic e.g. *business law yourself*.

▼ 2.1 Define your episode length

Students decide how long your episode will be, it could be either:

- *short-form (1-20 minutes)*
- *long-form (20+ minutes)*

20 minutes is the most popular length. However, the main point is that the content is good, without too much repetition. <https://bit.ly/2XUqdYX>

▼ 2.2 Define your episode format

Students decide whether your episode will be:

- a *monologue*: *only one person*
- a *co-hosts show*: *conversation between 2 co-hosts*
- an *interview*: *you interview a guest*
- a *panel show*: *an interview with many guests*

▼ 2.3 Decide on your episode topic

Students decide what their episode will be about. Think about:

- *What are you interested in?*
- *What could your listeners be interested in?*
- *What is your goal with this episode?*
- *What topic do you know about?*

▼ 2.4 Establish your episode structure

Students decide what structure their episode will have. For example:

1. *Podcast intro: a 20-second message at the start of each episode which includes: music, the podcast name, the podcast description.*
2. *Introduce the episode and any guests*
3. *Summary of key points*
4. *Podcast interview/ main content*
5. *Final summary*
6. *Call to action: a question to your listeners to ask them to do something such as visit your website*
7. *Podcast outro: a 20-second message at the end of each episode, similar to the intro.*

The main content can be structured as:

- an explainer: explain what something is e.g. *What is a public limited liability company?*
- how-to guide: explain how to do something e.g. *A step-by-step guide to setting up a limited liability company*
- list: give a list of items, such as the top e.g. *The top 3 resources for learning about company law*
- ask me anything (AMA): listeners send in questions to ask the host or host asks questions to a guest e.g. *Ask Me Anything about Company Law*
- news: comment on a news story e.g. *Breaking news - new regulation for companies*

▼ 2.5 Write the episode script or episode outline

Students write the episode script or outline. They can:

- write exactly what they will say to avoid making mistakes
- write down key points so they improvise and sound more natural
- write down questions they will ask guests and send them to him or her in advance

They may need to do research into their topic and identify helpful material to refer to in their episode.

▼ Sample interview questions

1. Tell me something not many people know about you.
2. What do you like doing when you are not at work or studying?
3. How did you get to where you are today?
4. Where did you grow up?
5. Where are you based now?
6. What was your dream job as a child?
7. What is your biggest failure, and what did you learn from it?
8. What is your biggest achievement and why?
9. What advice would you give someone wanting to pursue a career similar to yours?
10. What are the best resources for [topic] that you recommend?
11. What are the 3 key takeaways from today's interview?
12. Where can listeners connect with you online?

▼ Sample expressions

Intro: (*background music*) You're listening to [PODCAST NAME] a podcast about [THEME] for [TARGET AUDIENCE]. For more information visit [WEBSITE].

Introduction: Welcome back to [PODCAST NAME], a show about [TOPIC]. I'm your host [NAME]/ We're your hosts [NAMES] and on today's show...

Call to action: Thanks for listening today. If you want to find out more or hear previous episodes, you can go to [WEBSITE]. You can send me/us your feedback to {EMAIL ADDRESS} or you can also message me/us on social media at [SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT NAMES].

Outro: (*background music*) You've been listening to [PODCAST NAME] hosted by me/us [NAME/S] and produced by [NAMES].

▼ 2.6 Practise!

If students script their episode, they should practise reading the script out loud to see how it sounds and try to make it sound more natural.

If they have questions to ask a guest, they should practise reading them.

Students must make sure they know how to pronounce people's names and difficult words.

3. Record and edit your podcast episode

▼ Teacher note

Students may worry about the technical aspects of recording and editing. You may consider incorporating some tech elements into your classes using this resource *Teaching Podcasting: A Curriculum Guide for Educators*: <https://n.pr/3vQMun3>. Alternatively, ask students to team up with Music, Music Tech, or Sound Design students who could help them. If you don't care about sound quality - make this clear to students so they spend more time on content rather than recording and editing.

▼ 3.1 Make your audio professional pre-recording

1. **Microphone: I recommend the cheap option to start with.**
 - a. Cheap option: use inbuilt phone or laptop microphone
 - b. Medium option: buy a lapel mic for phone: <https://amzn.to/3mlJRqd> or buy some headphones with a microphone for laptop: <https://amzn.to/3nxI9CC>
 - c. Expensive option: buy a lapel mic for phone: <https://amzn.to/3El1blk> or buy a microphone for laptop: <https://amzn.to/3Cp0TZZ>

Whichever microphone students choose, they must experiment with it to get the best sound e.g. how far away to place it from the mouth.

2. **Environment: the recording environment is more important than the microphone.**

Students should:

- a. Record in a quiet place away from any large noisy appliances e.g. fridge, TV, or external noises e.g. café noise, traffic.
- b. Record in a room with soft furnishings such as rugs and blankets. They could make a sound booth environment by putting blankets near the microphone or over their head to cover themselves and the microphone. An alternative is to buy a recording booth <https://amzn.to/3BoM3Bf> or sound shield <https://amzn.to/2Zwh6hC>.

3. Get ready: make sure you are prepared for the recording.

Students should:

- a. Turn off all notifications, applications on the phone and computer and go to the toilet to avoid distractions.
- b. Drink some water and apply some lip balm to avoid dry throat and lip-smacking sounds.

▼ 3.2 Make your audio professional during recording

Students should consider the following:

1. Recording platform: record audio using computer: <https://podcastle.ai/> is very easy to use and has a free trial. Other platforms to consider are: www.audacityteam.org/ and <https://www.descript.com/>. If interviewing someone online, use <https://zencastr.com/>. Another option is to record audio using an app on the phone: Voice Recorder App <https://bit.ly/3jH6lju>.
2. Avoid making noise other than speaking e.g. hair or jewellery banging into microphone, rustling paper, clicking pens, foot-tapping, knocking on a desk, interrupting guests with noises like 'uhuh' or words.
3. Keep notes visible to avoid forgetting what to say.
4. Speak at a reasonable pace, with a good volume, vary your tone, keep your energy up.

▼ 3.3 Make your audio professional post-recording

Students should:

1. **Process your audio:** when we record some parts of our audio are quiet and others are loud. To level audio and make it more professional, upload the audio to the free website Auphonic.com and use the default settings to process the audio.
2. **Edit your audio:** sometimes we make mistakes when we are recording, so students may want to edit the recording to remove gaps, mistakes and 'ummmmm' parts. It is easiest to edit audio on a computer using software such as <https://podcastle.ai/>. Other platforms to consider are: www.audacityteam.org/ and <https://www.descript.com/>.

▼ Example: The Study Legal English Podcast recording

Here is an example of a 15-minute podcast recording:

<https://studylegalenglish.com/episode110/>

4. Publish your podcast episode

▼ Teacher note

The easiest option for 'publishing' is to get students to send you their recording or publish it to the university website. You could ask your students to submit their audio along with a document giving information about their podcast and podcast episode. See this template handout: <https://bit.ly/3GxLjh2>

▼ 4.1 Name your episode

Students name their episode. The name should:

- *highlight the main idea of the episode*
- *be short (3-4 words)*

▼ 4.2 Write your episode description

Students should create an episode description, also called 'show notes', and include:

- a summary of the episode in under 200 words e.g. *This podcast episode is about [TOPIC DESCRIPTION AND KEY POINTS]*.
- the host and any guest's names e.g. *This podcast episode is hosted by [NAME], and features an interview with [GUEST NAME]*.
- links to the podcast and guest's website and social media e.g. Visit our website [LINK], find us on social media [SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT LINKS]. You can also find out more about our guest on his/her website [GUEST'S WEBSITE LINKS] and connect with him/her on social media here [GUEST'S SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT LINKS].
- links to resources mentioned in the episode e.g. *Here are some links to helpful resources mentioned in this podcast episode [LINKS]*.
- call to action e.g. *Thanks for listening. Please subscribe, review, and share this episode.*

▼ 4.3 Create your episode cover image

Students create an episode cover, this is an image that people see when they find the podcast episode. Students can use the same image as the podcast cover image or a new one specifically for this episode. The episode cover image should include:

- *the podcast name*

- *the episode title and number*
- *your podcast logo*

Use the free website Canva to find a template to adapt for an episode cover:
<https://bit.ly/3mh7zUk>

▼ 4.4 'Publish' your episode

Students 'publish' the episode. There are many options for publishing podcasts.

1. University system: the easiest option for students to 'publish' their episode is by sending it to their teacher via email or uploading it to the university's learning platform.
2. YouTube: if students use YouTube to publish their episode, they must turn the audio into a video before uploading it. Students can use www.canva.com/ to create an image and then www.oneimagevideo.com/ to create a video with the podcast episode audio and image. You can make your podcast episode public or private. See this example:
<https://youtu.be/kuXkC60UHtw>
3. Podcast host: Most podcasts are published on a podcast host for example <https://buzzsprout.com/> and <https://anchor.fm/>. This requires more effort, and should only be done if you are serious about creating a publicly available podcast.

▼ Example: The Study Legal English Podcast - episode cover, show notes

[EPISODE COVER PHOTO]



[EPISODE DESCRIPTION]

In this episode I give an overview of intellectual property law and what IP lawyers do. I read an extract from an article about IP, the article was written by Liz Cohen, partner, and Claire Phipps-Jones, senior associate, in the IP litigation team at Bristows LLP.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [Full article](#)
- [Bristow Law Firm](#)
- [Lex 100 website](#)

5. Assessment of your podcast episode

▼ 5.1 Peer-review

Students listen to the podcast episodes created by other students and answer the following questions:

1. *Is the episode length appropriate?*
2. *Is the episode format appropriate?*
3. *Is the episode topic well presented?*
4. *Is the episode well-structured?*
5. *What are 3 good things about this episode?*
6. *What 3 things could be improved?*

▼ 5.1 Self-assessment

Students listen to their own podcast episode and answer the following questions:

1. *Is the episode length appropriate?*
2. *Is the episode format appropriate?*
3. *Is the episode topic well presented?*
4. *Is the episode well-structured?*
5. *What are 3 good things about this episode?*
6. *What 3 things could be improved?*

To listen to The Study Legal English Podcast visit:

<https://studylegalenglish.com/>



© Copyright 2021 Louise Kulwicki. You may use and share this resource for educational purposes provided that you keep this citation: *Teacher Guide: On Air! Podcasts in the Classroom* by Louise Kulwicki. Disclaimer: This is an English language teaching resource and is not a source of legal advice.