Centre for
Society and
Mental Health

THE CSMH PODCASTING TOOLKIT

Creating a social science podcast: A guide for researchers

KING'S College LONDON

UKRI

Economic
and Social
Research Council

Before you start

What is a podcast?

According to our good friend Wikipedia, a podcast is an *"episodic series of spoken word digital audio files that a user can download to a personal device for easy listening"*.

Podcasts are a powerful communication tool, which have maintained popularity over the last few years. No longer a tool just for media savvy producers, many academics and higher education institutions have created their own podcasts to engage wider audiences with their work.

What are the benefits of creating a research-based podcast?

Creating a podcast which effectively communicates research and it's importance relies on skills not usually well-practiced in academia. Although challenging, developing a podcast has many benefits. Not only can such projects help researchers strengthen their confidence and communication skills, but also their ability to:

- Identify and prioritise stakeholders

- Engage and expand networks

- Define objectives for public engagement and knowledge exchange activities

- Manage projects, resources and budgets

- Develop marketing plans

- Monitor and evaluate impact

Most importantly, a podcast can increase the visibility of King's research and facilitate engagement and collaboration between our academics and wider society.

So what is this toolkit all about?

This is one of three guides which have been designed to show social science researchers* based at King's College London, at any level, how they can use podcasts to disseminate their work.

One example we will keep returning to is Our Sick Society, a mental health podcast by the ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health. This podcast was funded by the King's Impact Acceleration Account, and was co-created by:

- a senior academic with experience of podcasting and radio broadcasting

- two early career researchers from the Centre

- an expert by experience

- a professional podcast producer

- the Centre's professional services team

The podcast project had three aims:

- To produce content shaped by experts by experience, hearing their voices as presenters and as well as interviewees

- Build the capacity of the early career researcher and expert by experience team members to communicate and engage stakeholders via podcasting

- Share expertise developed throughout the project to the wider King's community

This is one of three guides which have been written to address our final aim - the publication of a comprehensive toolkit to share expertise, tips and tricks for researchers interested in podcasting. The other guides cover:

- Leading a guest podcast episode

- Being interviewed for a podcast

* academics in other fields may also find this toolkit helpful, but we use examples of content, stakeholders and topics drawn from social science research.

Contents

Click the images to be taken to each section.

Section 1: Developing your idea

Create your team

You may want to jump straight into making your podcast, but it's important to first think about the skills and expertise needed to get such a project up and running.

Many podcasts are a one-person affair - where someone has an idea, learns how to use the technology, and sets off to create the series alone. The advantages are obvious, it's quick, easy to make decisions, and can work around their other commitments.

Other podcasts are put together by a team, which is what we recommend you do. A team brings together lots of different perspectives and diverse voices, which can help to sense-check the approach to both the series and individual episodes.

The expertise of your team members is very important. Regardless of how large it is, there are certain roles to fill. Including, but not limited to:

The Project Manager: Outlines and maintains the project plan. This includes episode schedules, deadlines, team availability, budget and resources. No mean feat when the podcast competes against the team's other commitments!

The Producer: Ensures that content gets recorded and turned into an episode that people want to listen to! Includes oversight or delivery of recording and editing. These tasks require a degree of proficiency and experience.

The Branding Lead: Creates a consistent image and voice for the podcast. This can include guiding content, tone and guests included in each episode, as well as leading visual design to make the podcast immediately recognisable.

The Marketer: Gets episodes out into the world! Working on websites, advertising, social media and other channels to ensure that target audiences can find and engage with each episode and the wider brand.

The Host: The public representative of the podcast. Relies on interpersonal skills to put guests at ease and draw out information that the listener is interested in hearing. Ideally has experience of interviewing and is comfortable working with a people from a range of backgrounds.

You don't want a huge team, as that can become difficult to manage. However, it is useful to cover a range disciplines and expertise, both from academic roles and professional services. Members may join the team to achieve personal capacity building objectives, so consider how members can also learn from each other throughout the project. Other streams of support can be drawn from wider networks or contacts of the team.

One of the aims of Our Sick Society was to strengthen Centre communication activity and this influenced how we put together our team. Our producer and experienced host provided valuable support for the other team members.

Outline your theme

The best podcasts have a specific theme or concept behind them, not only to inform episode development, but to hook audiences with a particular interest. For example:

- Serial, a famous and perhaps the original true crime podcast, is a serialised account of a real-life criminal investigation unfolding in real time, episode by episode

- Say Why to Drugs is an academic show examining the effects of drugs or an aspect of addiction in episodes which don't have to be listened to in any particular order.

If you are developing a departmental podcast, you may want to align the theme to a particular strand of research or topic area. Here are some examples from across King's:

- World: We Got This is produced by the School of Global Affairs. Each episode, the host discusses a particular global issue with academic experts

- A Podcast of One's Own is produced by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership. Each episode consists of conversations between Julia Gillard and prominent female leaders or experts on gender equality and leadership.
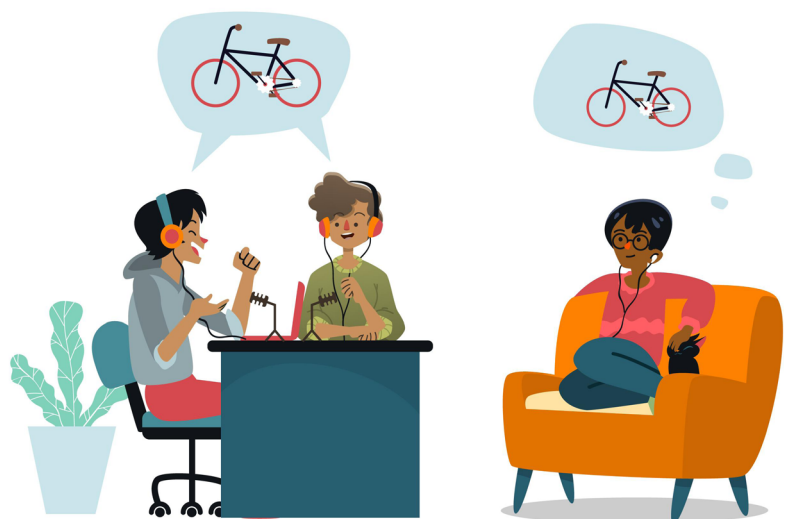
Outlining a niche for your podcast to occupy will help you communicate with your target audience more effectively. But first, we need to find out who they are...

Identify your target audience

Different audiences are reached in different ways, so it is important to be clear about who you want to listen to your podcast. There is no such thing as "the general public" - society is more complicated than that!

As well as considering demographic data such as gender, age and ethnicity, you should also think about broader audience types. They may be similar to stakeholders you have already mapped for your research. Let's look at some common target audiences for research-based podcasts and related communication tips:

- **Academics:** Likely to prefer a scholarly approach, with content relying heavily on theory and published work. They may also want to access resources referenced in your episodes, such as journal articles, via your website or social media pages.

- **Individuals with lived experience of issues discussed:** May prefer to listen to more informal content, with little academic jargon. It is wise to think about the position of the "academic expert" and how that sits with "expert by experience". This is particularly important when dealing with controversial or complex topics.

- **Policy makers:** Both local and national. They tend to like information in bite-sized chunks, and clear recommendations on what actions are needed. Aim to balance content between evidence and advocacy. For inspiration, look at briefing papers produced by your department or The Policy Institute.

- **Students:** Are likely listening to support their studies or career development. Think about how content could complement their learning and where to direct them for further information.

Some of your episodes may appeal to sub-groups of your target audiences. For example, students may be narrowed down to mental health or policy students. Whatever group your audience belongs to, consider tone and language, and how to make sometimes-complicated concepts more accessible. This doesn't mean talking down to anyone, but it can mean taking a more creative approach, perhaps by including more experts by experience to illustrate topics with real world examples, or artistic elements such as music or spoken word.

Complete **Task A** on p14 to explore your target audience in more detail.

We recommend testing your ideas on a representative group of people - tell them what you are planning, ask if they would listen, and if they have any suggestions to make content more appealing or interesting. You can ask the King's Engaged Researcher Network for advice on sourcing these groups if this proves challenging to arrange.

Explore how target audiences influence promotion in **Section 7: Going live**.

Research your competitors

When planning your series, try listening to podcasts which cover similar content. This can help you to get a sense of how related topics are handled, how different formats are used, and how audiences engage with content. As well as looking at popular podcasting platforms (such as Soundcloud or Acast), for more specialist topics, find organisations releasing their own independent podcasts.

For example:

- [The Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)

- [The Mental Health Foundation](#)

Think about what makes these podcasts so successful. Could it be a popular host, famous guests, coverage of key topics and current affairs, or perhaps just effective marketing? Reviews can also give insight into how the audience responds to content.

✏️ What can you learn from reviews for the [BBC All in the Mind podcast](#) ?

Don't forget that competitors could also become collaborators! Try getting in touch with established podcasts, particularly those within King's, to see if there are opportunities to work together on future episodes.

✏️ Complete **Task B** on p15 to identify your competitors.

Outline your objectives

Now it's time to prepare a list of objectives. This is the most important part of project planning, as you outline exactly what you want the podcast to actually do. Inform, entertain, enlighten, change hearts and minds, provoke curiosity, be controversial? All are valid - you may want to do all of the above and more! However, the purpose of your objectives is to direct the project and help you evaluate success.

You could aim for a certain number of listeners or downloads, but are there any concrete outcomes (other than episode delivery) you want to achieve?

As with all objective setting exercises, make sure you think **SMART** – are they:

- **Specific**: includes a clear and narrow description of your objective

- **Measurable**: outlines metrics to track and evaluate success

- **Achievable**: realistic and motivating, not overly ambitious and off-putting

- **Relevant**: contributes to your wider project goals and purpose

- **Time-bound**: uses deadlines and milestones for reflection and learning

Your team may have personal objectives, such as skills development or ways to apply learning to their work. Try to embed these into your project plan.

Here are two objectives from Our Sick Society:
- Each host to apply training to deliver 2 episodes each
- To achieve 1000 listens by the end of August 2021

Complete **Task C** on p16 to set your SMART objectives.

See **Section 8: Evaluating success** for more information.

Consider your brand

Your brand refers to the way that the podcast will be perceived by your audience. It encapsulates what the podcast is about, what you represent, your tone and your approach. A consistent brand will help you connect to your target audiences.

To give shape to your brand, list your core values, and make sure these are considered or referred to throughout the podcast. Identifying a Unique Selling Point (USP) - something which makes your podcast stand out - can help with this process.

It is helpful to create a boilerplate - a short block of text, usually just a paragraph, which can be used for marketing and communication purposes. It should cover what the podcast is about, who takes part, and what the show aims to achieve.

Boilerplates can be added to your podcasting platform page, website, or departmental newsletters, or just kept on hand if someone asks for more information!

Identify key contributors

Now you have identified your themes, audience, and objectives, we now need to find contributors! Contributors can take part as guests or as hosts. Are there particular groups which need representing or individuals whose expertise aligns to your theme?

Let's say, for example, that you are making a podcast about children's mental health. You may want to hear from:

- **Experts by experience:** Children and families themselves!

- **Researchers**: Those exploring child mental health or related topics.

- **Political figures**: The Children's Commissioner or Minister for Children and Families.

- **Charity sector:** Children's charity staff or local youth groups.

Don't forget other sectors such as healthcare, business and technology.

Having a broad list can help you plan episodes more effectively - but do be realistic! Securing high-profile speakers usually requires an intermediary contact and can take some time.

Review need for funding

It is possible to make a podcast series for very little money. However, there are lots of hidden costs, such as:

- Staff / guest time and expenses

- Equipment purchase or hire

- Music licenses

- Analytical / marketing software

Many funders, including King's, offer grants for public engagement:

- [King's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account](#)

- [King's Cultural Community Small Grants Fund](#)

- [Wellcome Public Engagement funding](#)

You might even find that your department gets behind your idea and are able to fund your podcast. Don't be afraid to ask!

We go into detail about guest payment in **Section 4: Pre-Production**.

Complete **Task D** on p17 to start outlining your budget.

Scope out the whole series

At this stage, decide how many episodes you want to produce, and whether to run continuously or in seasons. Be ambitious, but don't over-reach your team to the point that you can't deliver! Consider:

- Which topics will be covered by each episode

- How topics fit together under your theme

- The order and grouping of episodes

- How frequently will they will be released

Aiming to release one episode a month for the first few months will build momentum, both in terms of your workload and in obtaining listeners. We recommend allowing two or three months to get the first few episodes in the bag before launch. This gives your team time to listen, reflect, discuss and improve, without pressure of public response.

Complete **Task E** on p18 to prepare your workplan.

Section 1: Developing your idea
Tools and Resources

A: Identify your perfect listener

This activity will help you [create an avatar of your perfect listener](). This will help you explore your target audience in more detail, and consider how to engage them. When planning episodes, refer back to your avatar and think about how they would react or engage to proposed content.

- How old are they?

- Where do they live?

- Do they have a family?

- What other relationships do they have?

- What topics are they interested in?

- What hobbies do they enjoy?

- What public figures do they admire?

- Who do they trust?

- Who don't they trust?

- What are their achievements?

- What challenges are they experiencing?

- What job do they do?

- Who do they work with?

- What networks or groups do they belong to?

- What social media accounts do they use?

- What other podcasts do they listen to?

- How did they find your podcast?

- Why do they listen to the podcast?

- Why would they subscribe?

- When do they listen to the podcast?

- What do they do with things they learn from each episode?

- Who do they share the podcast with?

- How do they find out more information about topics discussed on the podcast?

B: Identify your competitors

Find three podcasts that focus on topics or themes you would like to explore with your own podcast. Answer the following questions for each of them:

- Who hosts the podcast?

- What types of guests do they have?

- Do they interact with the guests directly?

- Are the guests young or old?

- Are the guests predominantly representative of one group (e.g. an academic field, mostly male guests, mostly London based) or more diverse?

- What format do they use?

- Is the tone formal or informal?

- Is the language very technical or easy to understand?

- What topics do they cover?

- What geographic location do they cover?

- Can you identify their target audience?

- Do they speak to the audience directly?

- Do they ask the audience to interact in someway?

- Do they direct the audience to other resources (e.g. websites, Facebook groups etc)?

- Is the audio clear and consistent?

- Is the branding professional?

- Can you identify their possible objectives?

- How many episodes do they have?

- Do the episodes link together in some way?

- Is the podcast broken down into seasons?

- How often are episodes released?

- Are there any reviews? What do they say?

- What do you like about the podcast and why?

- What don't you like about the podcast and why?

- How is your planned podcast different to this one?

C: Set your SMART objectives

Complete the below activity to identify SMART objectives for your podcast.

SPECIFIC Should include an answer to "who, what, when, where or why"	
MEASURABLE How will you determine success? Use metrics and / or deadlines.	
ACHIEVABLE How will you make this happen? What skills / support will you need?	
RELEVANT How does this objective contribute to your overarching goals for the podcast?	
TIME-BOUND When will this objective be achieved? What are your deadlines?	

D: Budget

Which of the following items will you need to include in your budget?

- Staff time for your team members

- Guest speaker fees

- Transport costs (team and guests)

- Catering (for long recordings)

- Microphones

- Headsets

- Invoice processing fees

- Editing software / apps

- Venue hire

- Recording studio hire

- Platform licenses

- Social media analytical software

- Intro, outro, background music licenses

Click here to view and download the OSS Podcast Budget Template.

E: Prepare your workplan

Answer the questions below to inform a workplan for your podcast. We recommend using a Gantt Chart or similar project management tool.

- How many episodes are you planning?

- How often will they be released?

- How long will it take to secure guests and a recording space for each episode?

- How long does it take to record each episode?

- How much time will you give for guests to provide consent?

- How long will it take to provide transcripts and a paper edit for each episode?

- How long does it take to send content to whoever is editing the episode?

- How long will they take to put the episode together?

- When will the team have time to review the episode?

- How long will it take to carry out final edits?

- How long will it take to upload the podcast?

- How much lead time does the marketing lead need to develop content?

- How much notice do you need to give guests before the episode is released?

- Will you give them time to listen to the episode first?

- How much time will your team spend on marketing and promotions?

- Will you be able to make multiple episodes at the same time?

- Where are the pressure points for team members over the course of the project?

- How long will it take to process payments for guests or resources?

- When will you schedule team meetings?

- What information do you need to review progress in meeting your objectives?

- Does your funder have specific deadlines for expenditure or reporting?

Section 2: Planning episodes

This section has been written for **podcast series** producers. If you have guest hosts for single episodes, or are developing a one-off episode for an established series, refer to our other guide: **Leading a guest podcast episode.**

Once the wider podcast series has been outlined, it's time to plan your episodes.

Telling the story

Every episode should be designed to tell a story to the audience. As with any good story, you'll need to include some key components:

A clear and relatable setting

When planning each episode, ask yourself:

- What is the episode about? What topic(s) will it explore?

- How does this episode relate or contribute to the podcast theme?

- What are the key questions it will ask and hopefully answer?

- Will the target audience find it interesting?

Keep in mind that the shape and direction of your episode could change as recordings take place. New topics or angles could arise, resulting in a shift of focus.

A varied cast of characters

This refers to both the host and your guests. Who can help you explore topics, answer questions, and most importantly, make content interesting and relevant for our target audience?

As a rule, academics can talk about research and evidence, but to make that evidence come alive you might have to include those with lived experience.

Create a long list of possible guests. See if your team members have contacts who would like to put themselves or others forward. You can also reach out to your department or internal networks to find participants, such as the [King's Engaged Researcher Network](#) or [King's & London](#).

Review your list and consider:

• Are there balanced views?

• Are your guests diverse and representative?

• Are you taking an interdisciplinary approach to finding your answers?

You may be familiar with the work of preferred guests, but it is helpful to do some background research to determine if they will make a good guest. Find examples of:

• **Public speaking**: can they engage audiences, ideally non-academic, with their work? Does their speaking tone and style fit with your podcast?

• **Media articles or blogs**: have they written for, or been quoted by, non-academic media? How do they come across?

• **Their own websites or social media accounts**: what content do they share? How is content presented? Do they already have an audience for their work?

There is a fine line between background research and stalking, so do stick to professional profiles! However, keep in mind that listeners may do their own research after listening to the episode. It is good to be aware of things, positive and negative, that they might find.

Remember that not everyone from your list will be able to make time during your recording window, and others may drop out at the last minute. Have some back-ups!

An easy to follow format

You have several formats to choose from to help you tell the story. You should choose the most appropriate one for each episode, as the format will affect who you ask to contribute to the discussion, and how. Let's look at pros, cons and examples of different formats.

Documentary style

A series of interviews with different people, edited together with a presenter links.

✅ Fast-moving storytelling with lots of different voices
Creates a varied listening experience in terms of pace, tone and content

❌ Relies on effective interview skills and creativity to bring episode together
Very time consuming - for recording, transcription and editing

🎧 Our Sick Society: Covid-19, Quarantine and Community

In conversation with

AKA the "interview format" where the host(s) leads a conversation with guests.

✅ Quick and relatively easy to set up and record
Very naturalistic and easy to listen to (when it goes well!)

❌ Relies on what people say, how they say it, and the relationship between them.
If conversation gets stilted, goes off topic, or becomes long-winded, it can be difficult to edit without interrupting the flow of the episode

🎧 Our Sick Society: Recovery and Lockdown

There is a worked example of this format in **Section 6: Post-production**.

Roundtable

Not dissimilar to panel discussions. When a group of people discuss a topic, with a chairperson (likely your host) to keep everyone on track.

✅ Relatively easy to set up once you have found a time that suits everyone
Quick to record
Guests tend to bounce off each other, with conversation bringing new insight

❌ Guests may talk over each other, which could become distracting
Timeframe can easily over-run or go off-track
Can be difficult to edit without interrupting the flow

🎧 Our Sick Society: Race, Employment and Health

Sometimes a roundtable-style episode is recorded as part of an event in front of a live audience – this requires the host to consider all the aspects of a live event AND the podcast episode. It can get complicated, but an effective chair should be able to make a pretty good job of hosting a roundtable format.

Solo monologue

The listener only hears from one host who tells the story, no guests. More experienced and/or instinctive podcasters might choose a solo monologue format. This format is not for the faint hearted, but when it works, it can be very, very effective.

✅ It's easy! The team only has to rely on one person.
Creates a bond with your listeners – you are speaking directly to them.

❌ Requires a lot of talking!
The host needs to find a balance between being scripted and sounding natural.

🎧 [The Moth: Planting Roots by Andrew Mude](#)

Co-host

Where two or more hosts discuss something together, but as co-presenters rather than interviewee and interviewer.

✅ Popular with many listeners
Easy to listen to, particularly when the hosts have rapport

❌ Requires some scripting, even rehearsal, for longer episodes
Relies on good scheduling over a long period, if repeating for a whole series

🎧 [Say Why To Drugs: Psychedelics](#)

Don't be afraid of making the wrong choice, or of mixing formats up a bit. The process of making a podcast is a learning experience, and much of that learning will take place as you go along. Remember, nothing is set in stone. Yes, there is received wisdom about what works and what doesn't, but rules are there to be broken!

An interesting and well-paced plot

Once you have decided on your format, it is helpful to outline how content will flow together to present your story. Many podcasts will divide their content into three:

- **Part 1:** Setting the scene, laying groundwork about why the topic is important

- **Part 2:** Asking and answering key questions, presenting a 'conflict' to overcome (e.g. contrasting views, a specific challenge or aspect of the topic - something to tie content together and move the story along).

- **Part 3:** Drawing together answers and making conclusions.

How you edit content together will depend on the length of your episodes. For example, if you want your episodes to last 30 minutes, and you interview 5 people, by the time you include an introduction, closing credits, and presenter links, you are only giving guests 3 – 5 minutes of content each, which may be cut up across the episode.

The average length of a podcast is around 45 minutes but can range anywhere between 25 – 90 minutes. It's good to be consistent across all the podcast series, to help the listener know what to expect when they subscribe.
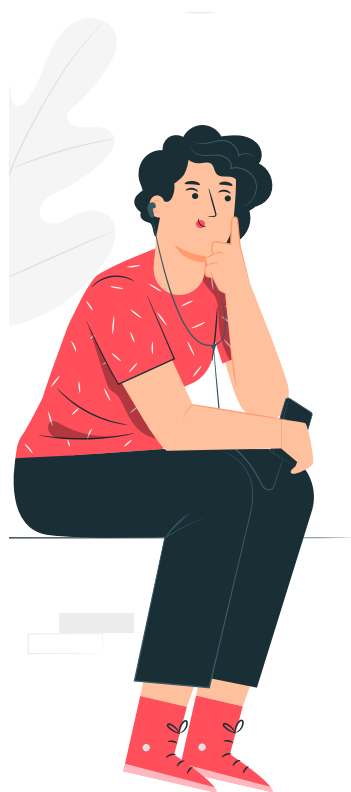
An impactful ending

Use your ending to invite the listener to reflect on content discussed in the episode, and how it relates to them.

Depending on the topics or content shared, you may also want to include a call to action for your audience when you close each episode. This could include:

- Where to find information about about your work and that of your guests

- Where to find related content (e.g. papers or books)

- Sources of support for those affected by content

- A request to leave a review or subscribe

Make sure you allocate enough time for content at the end of each episode, and have a think about where information could sit so that it is accessible for all audiences.

You may want include a teaser for the next / related episode, to entice listeners to return and subscribe!

Complete **Task F** on p24 to outline an episode.

F: Episode outline
Use this template to plan each episode.

Working title	
Topic(s)	
Links to podcast theme	
Links to other episodes	
Key questions	
Host	
Guests	
Format	
Basic structure	*Setting the scene – why is this topic important? Who leads?*
	Key questions – what is the order? Who asks/answers?
	Conclusions – who does this? Key takeaways? What next?
Calls to action	

Section 3: Equipment

This section talks about two different products called Zoom. **Zoom (R)** refers to the Zoom recording devices, while **Zoom (S)** refers to the video-conferencing software.

One of the most important overriding parts of a podcast is the concept behind it. It's an idea that comes from music production – you can have a song which is produced in the most deluxe studio imaginable, with lots of fancy top-of-the-range equipment, but if the song itself isn't working, then there isn't much that the equipment can do to fix this. While nice to keep in mind, it is preferable to use the highest quality equipment available. This certainly doesn't mean spending lots of money, but it helps to understand what you need and why.

Basic concepts

A podcast is, essentially, a series of recorded voices which are chopped and edited together. We therefore need equipment to help us:

- Record each voice

- Edit and balance / equalize each voice

- Stitch all the voices together, along with any music, to form the episode

Let's first look at some basic concepts to help us with these steps.

Lossless vs Lossy Audio
When recording, it's best to begin with a high-quality audio file, such as:

- .wav

- .aiff

- .flac

These are often referred to as '**lossless**' files, which means what it says – they retain as much information as they've received via the microphone - no information is lost or compressed for the sake of file size. Audio tends to be crisp and of higher quality.
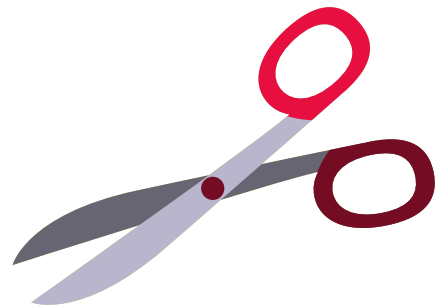
An .mp3 file, which you will usually end up with when recording on your phone or laptop, or via software such as Zoom (S) is known as '**lossy**' - files which are compressed and shrunk down, resulting in loss of quality and a smaller file size. These files can be difficult to edit and balance, and therefore hard to listen to.

A good, solid setting for your recording is **48k / 24bit** – you should be able to find this option in the device or software settings. For reference, this setting is slightly higher than CD quality (44.1k) and will record more sound information into your file. You can get away with recording to **320k .mp3 file** if needed, for example if you don't have much room on a memory card or are using Zoom (S), but it's always best to go higher if possible. You can't upgrade a file from lossy to lossless after recording!

Individual audio tracks

Always record each voice on a separate audio track, regardless of whether you are recording remotely or in-person. We'll go into more detail in **Section 6: Post-Production**, but essentially, individual tracks help the editor to separately balance and equalize each voice (i.e. adjust volume and clarity). This makes it easier to edit out:

- Coughs or clearing throats

- Rustling of papers or clothing

- Background noise

- Echoes or connectivity blips

- Interruptions or repetitions

If you're using Zoom (S) software to record, this setting is found in **Settings > Recording** and by clicking the 'record separate files' box. Remember to save recordings onto the computer and not the cloud. This isn't obvious and has only revealed itself through a few failed recordings over time, but the separate tracks can only be obtained if recording to the computer - not via a phone or iPads.

Section 5: Production has more tips on obtaining well-synced audio files.

Recording devices
It's often said that you can make a podcast on a phone. While this is definitely true,

we don't recommend you use phones or built-in laptop microphones as your primary recording device. This is because the overall quality is often low, and you will almost always pick up background noises such as taps, clicks and whirring fans. Phone recording apps can be used as a backup, but it is best to use specialist equipment.

Microphones

If recording in person, table-top microphones are better than lapel mics, as they are fixed and won't pick up noise when the guest fidgets. Your microphones should be neatly arranged on a table close to the speaker's mouth. Tuck any cables away so they don't distract or disrupt the person speaking. You may need a **pop cover**, something that softens the audio if the room is not adequately sound-proofed, and muffles pops and plosives when someone is talking, making the audio more pleasing to the ear!

For outside recordings, your microphone should ideally be battery powered so it is more mobile. You may need to buy a **wind muff** for your microphone. These act the same as a pop cover, and will improve sound quality by blocking wind as well as pops and plosives. You may also need a boom arm or stand, to hold the microphone at a distance. Check product websites for accompanying accessories.

For remote recordings, ask your guests to use earphones with microphones or a headset. There are lots of options online if you need to provide one for them. Sennheiser or Jabra are good brands which have products in a variety of price ranges.

Model	Description	Price
Sennheiser SC30 USB	Individual headset for virtual recordings.	£20 - £25
Jabra Evolve 20 USB	Individual headset for virtual recordings.	£50
Blue Snowball ICE	Desktop microphone for in-person recordings. Higher quality budget option. Includes stand.	£59
Shure SM58	Popular all-rounder microphone for in-person recordings. Can be handheld, or used in a stand.	£99
Shure SM57	More compact all-rounder mic for in-person recordings. Handheld, or used in a stand.	£99
Blue Yeti	Simple USB plug-in mic. Designed for podcasting. Includes stand.	£119

Costs can add up if you have lots of speakers in one room, and it may not be cost effective to buy lots of microphones unless you do this often. Speak to your department or the King's Audio-Visual department about equipment hire instead.

Specialist recorders

Zooms (R) are specialised recorders commonly used by podcasters, including the Our Sick Society team. These are more sophisticated than a standard microphone, recording high quality audio tracks (voices) via a handheld device. Zooms (R) can be used as computer audio interfaces, allowing you to record straight to your computer. They come in a range of models, which vary in cost and performance. Alternatively, King's Audio Visual have a similar model, the Tascam DR-40 available for hire.

Model	Tracks	Description	Cost	King's Hire
Tascam DR-40	4	Variety of export and recording modes	£100 - £150	Yes
Zoom H4N	2	On board mics for indoor and outdoor recording	£195 - £210	Yes
Zoom H6	4	As above, plus back-up option in event of power failure	£300 - £320	No

Check with AV or your department to see what insurance is required when taking equipment outside of King's campuses.

Software

If you choose to record remotely, we recommend using Zoom (S) because, as previously mentioned, it will give you separate audio tracks for each device on the call. However, Zoom audio will **always** be processed into an .mp3 file, so the quality will be quite low.

There are lots of podcast editing platforms available, with different features and prices. To make a good podcast, you want your software to chop up audio tracks, stablise and equalize your voices, and stitch together your all the edited tracks, ideally alongside some music, to create your episode. Here are some popular options to get you started:

Model	Description	Cost
Audacity	Popular and easy to use software for podcast editing	Free
Garageband	Predominantly for music, but basic and easy to use platform for audio editing. Mac only.	Free
Adobe Audition	More sophisticated and comprehensive platform for audio editing.	From £20 per month

Do be mindful that there are some limitations on subscriptions you can pay for using King's payment cards and/or expenses claims.

Support at King's

There is a range of audio visual support for the recording of your podcast:

- King's AV booking

- King's AV Podcasting equipment guide

- King's Podcast Producers (Teams)

Complete **Task G** on p30 to review your equipment needs.

We explore how to use Audacity to edit your podcast episodes in **Section 6: Post-Production**

Section 3: Equipment
Tools and Resources

G: Equipment checklist
Use these templates to decide what equipment is needed.

In-person recordings	
Location	
Recording device	
Number of guests	*(i.e. number of microphones)*
If outdoors	Wind muff Boom arm / stand
If indoors	Pop cover Microphone stands Lapel mics
Transport / storage	

Virtual recordings	
Software	
Location	*(If room booking is required at King's)*
Number of guests	
Host	Pop cover Microphone Microphone stand
Guests	Headsets Microphone / Stand
Transport / storage	

Section 4: Pre-Production

Sourcing interviewees

Prioritise your list of guests and create a shortlist for your episode.

If possible, arrange an initial phone conversation between each person and your producer or host. This could be tricky to arrange, but useful in a couple of ways: If you are confident they'll be a great guest, you could use this call to tell them more about the episode and invite them to take part outright. But if you want to sound them out first, to see how well they can talk about their work or experience, you could instead invite them to provide some "background information" for the episode you are developing before asking them to be interviewed on the show.

Paying for their time

For those you do invite to take part, make sure you discuss any speaking fees or expenses. If you have a tight budget, you may need to discuss this before you confirm their participation, as they could be outside of your price range.

High-profile speakers will likely have set rates for their time, and experts by experience will need time and expenses covered. There are special considerations for paying those who receive income-related employment and support allowances. Here are some helpful resources to look at:

- [ESA and Getting Paid for Service User Involvement by Judy Scott](#)

- [Paying people who receive benefits - Co-production and involvement by SCIE](#)

- [Co-creating our payment policy: a personal reflection by Co-Production Collective](#)

These conversations may be difficult, so please do reach out to your department or the Centre for Society and Mental Health for support if required.

Agreeing a location
In-person recording

If it is safe to do so, you might conduct the interview in person. Secure an appropriate location for an audio interview – it may sound obvious, but open-plan offices, noisy cafés, or busy outside areas are not ideal! There may be rooms available across King's.

Locations are not only functional, but can allow you to add colour and texture to your episode. For example, if you are exploring the value of nature for good mental health,
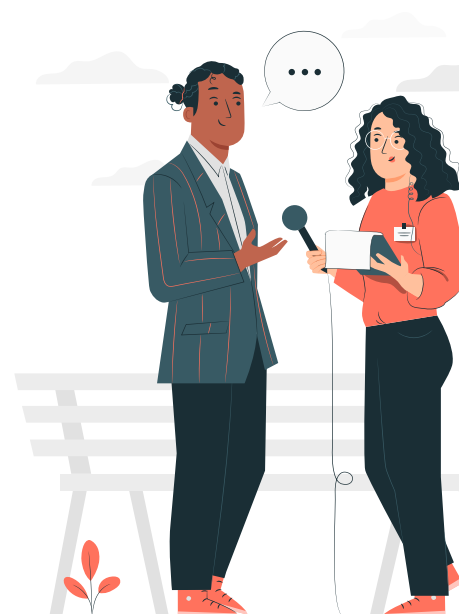
recording outside with birdsong or rustling leaves helps you make a point in a way which is not only effective but beautiful to listen to. There may be sounds you can record on location which will add to understanding in a way that words simply can't - things like traffic noise, sirens blaring, busy crowd noise, or machine beeps and whirrs. This audio can be used as background "music" or as transitions between segments of your episode.

A location can be used as an explicit part of your story. For example, if the host is travelling via train to an interview, they could record something like:

Host: I'm sitting on a train to County Durham, to the only place in the country where this project happens. I'm excited to meet Joe Bloggs, who set this organisation up, and to find out why the North East makes such a good location for this project.

Location is an important consideration when making your guest feel comfortable. You can record in their places of work, indoors, outdoors, private spaces, public spaces – each location will influence how the interviewee feels. Some locations may be triggering or uncomfortable for your guest, for example hospitals or clinical settings. This will of course affect the interview tone, and possibly content too.

You must be cautious about entering other people's homes or spaces which require special supervision, such as schools. Accessibility should also be a key consideration when selecting a location.

If you are recording outside, you may need some special equipment. See **Section 3: Equipment** for more information.

Remote recording
The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that most people are now comfortable with video calling, and it may be better to record remotely. This can save both time and money.

Pick a platform which both you and the guest are comfortable using - although we recommend **Zoom (S)** due to it's recording functionality.

It is very helpful to know which device they will use to join the recording. Remember, interviewees won't necessarily be using a computer, they may be using a phone or a tablet. Some may have accessibility needs or require special equipment.

Find out early, so you can determine if additional preparation or tech support is needed. Bringing the guest into this process can build trust and instill a touch of confidence, particularly when their needs and preferences are catered for.

It is good practice to set up a test run to gauge the guest's comfort with the platform, as well as the audio and internet quality and equipment needs. Do this at least a week before the actual recording, to allow time for changes or delivery of equipment.

Prepping the host and guests

Your host will need to prepare some interview questions – not only the key questions, but follow-up ones to probe deeper, or steer discussion if the guest goes off-track.

Some guests may ask for questions in advance, but this runs the risk of them preparing or rehearsing answers, which will sound unnatural and stilted in the recording. Instead, send them a broad list of topics you'd like to cover, and remind them:

- What the wider episode will look like (length, structure, format)

- What you'll be looking to explore with them

- Why you wanted them specifically to take part

- Who else has been confirmed to take part

- What will happen after recording

This is a good time to ask them if they have any resources to plug (such as a paper or book) and details of any social media channels or websites to include in promotions.
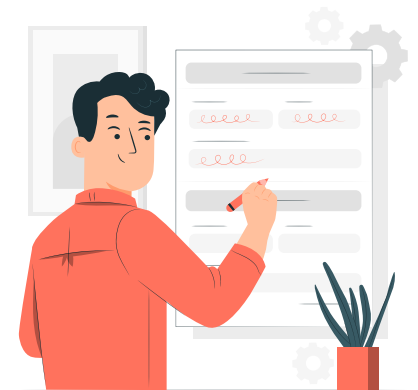
Who should be at the recording?

We recommend having at least two team members present during the recording - one as host and the other as a producer. It is very difficult to interview and record at the same time, and it can be distracting for the guest if the host is not 100% attentive.

Some topics are difficult to talk about, and guests may become distressed or need some support. Make sure that every guest is aware that they can have another person present when recording. If you are interviewing someone who is vulnerable, or under the age of 18, a parent, guardian or support person must always be present.

You should also think about who **shouldn't** be at the recording. When guests are being asked to discuss sensitive or difficult subjects, they may feel uncomfortable having unfamiliar, or too many, people, joining the recording. Where possible, limit numbers and have production support on hand but hidden (this is easier when virtual rather than face-to-face). If this is not possible, brief and reassure your guests ahead of time.

Consent and risk

Before releasing a podcast, you will need to obtain consent from your guests. A consent form provides permission for King's to use recorded audio both within the episode and in any marketing. It also provides clear instructions for the guest to restrict (i.e. anonymise) or withdraw consent. Here is some light-touch guidance on obtaining consent for different types of guests:

- **King's employees:** Consent is captured in their employment contract. However it is good practice to provide them with a written outline of how their data will be used and how to restrict or withdraw consent. Do this in an email, as you will need to file their acknowledgement of receiving this information somewhere safe.

- **External to King's:** you will need to send them a form which is approved by your department. Some may need to seek permission from their employer.

- **Under-18's and vulnerable adults:** you will need to seek permission from a parent or guardian.

[Click here for more information about consent forms.](#) Speak to your department lead for more information, or email csmh@kcl.ac.uk to view our consent forms.

Always carry out a risk assessment for each recording, regardless of the guest or location. This is important if you are interviewing someone who could be deemed vulnerable, or to whom you have a duty of care.

Complete **Tasks H and I** on page 35 to run through guest checklists.

Section 4: Pre-Production
Tools and Resources

H: Guest pre-confirmation checklist

Ensure you tick off all of these key items before confirming your guest:

	Podcast and episode information and links shared
	Fees discussed, negotiated (if required) and agreed
	Recording window provided and availability confirmed
	Consent form shared

I: Guest post-confirmation checklist

Ensure you tick off all of these key items after confirming your guest, but before recording takes place

	Recording date, time and location confirmed
	Consent form deadline confirmed
	(if virtual) Equipment test scheduled
	Accessibility requirements confirmed and planned for
	Travel booked (if required)
	Expenses forms shared
	Guest resources / communication details for promotion
	Episode information shared (Length, structure, format; Broad theme; Topics you want to discuss with them; Other guests)
	Post-production process shared

Section 5: Production

It's time to record! This bit of the process is known as production. The following advice applies whether you are recording in-person or remotely.

Managing the recordings

As discussed, we recommend having at least two of your team present during recording. One to act as host, and the other as producer. The latter will manage the technology and equipment, while host focuses all their attention on the guest.

Record your basic assets

Before you record your episodes, begin gathering basic assets for the series. This includes an intro and outro for each episode, and a trailer for the series.

Intro and Outros

Each episode should have a consistent opening and closing. Not only does this signal the beginning and end of each episode, but it also makes the podcast sound more professional! A good intro will usually consistent of some theme music, a description of the podcast including theme and objectives, and a listener welcome from the host(s).

An outro can be used to thank the guests, departments or funders, as well as to instruct the listener - for example to look up resources, or review and subscribe. You could record these individually for each episode, but we recommend creating files which can be reused throughout the series.

Trailer

A trailer is a great asset for promoting your podcast. You can release this early as a little teaser for what the podcast will cover. You could also ask other podcasts in the King's network, to play it in breaks of their episodes to help generate interest.

A trailer should be short - between 1 - 2 minutes - and should explain what the podcast is about, why people should listen and give a taste of the podcast style and brand.

[Click here to listen to the Our Sick Society trailer.](#)

Consent reminder

Before you record, make sure you have the relevant consent forms signed! You could obtain these after the recording, however it is better to get them up front to save time in post-production. Run through the form to remind your guest about the recording process, and their rights to withdraw or restrict consent ahead of episode release.
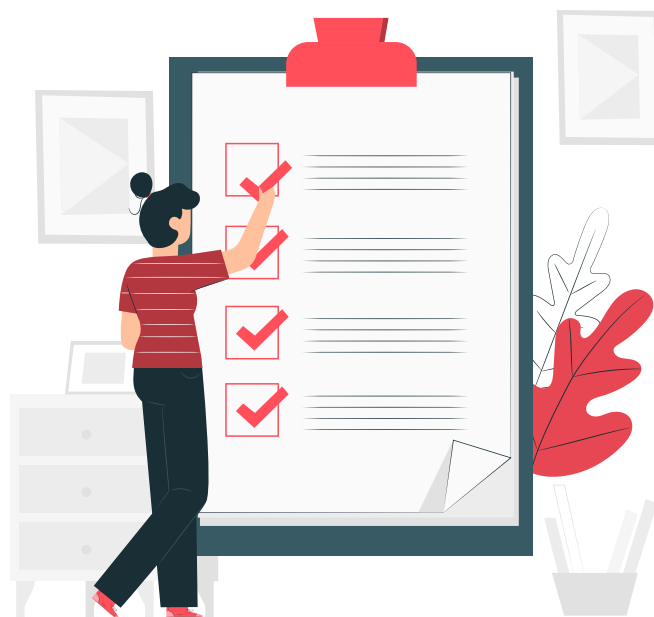
Test equipment

Ask your guest to say something to check that your devices are recording properly and at the right levels. A good question for this is "tell me what you had for breakfast", which can also act as a bit of an icebreaker! Some voices can be difficult to listen to – they may be very soft, very loud or very high. Responses to this question help you tweak the volume or microphone position to improve audio.

Recording requirements

Before you start recording, ask both your host and your guests to:

- Speak directly into the microphone but try not to touch it

- Remove noisy jewellery or items from the table / immediate area

- If referring to notes, lay them out on the table and try not to touch them. If there is no table, shuffle as far away from the microphone as possible

- If recording remotely, do not mute the microphone at any time. This "pauses" the audio track meaning that it will be out of sync with other tracks recorded during the call.

Check-in with your guest

All guests are different, and their recording personas might surprise you. There are people who are very eloquent and engaging speakers, but clam up when a microphone is put in front of them. Many interviewees are nervous about taking part in a podcast - they may not have done it before, or they may not like the sound of their own voices or be worried about saying something inappropriate.

If you pick up on any of these things, it's important to reassure your interviewee before you start recording. Emphasise the fact that it will feel like being in a normal conversation, and that they have control over what is used in the final edit.

It's also very good practice to manage their expectations, particulary if you spend an hour interviewing someone but only end up using 30 seconds of their interview! Let them know how much content will likely be used. Most will understand that you are trying to tell a story, and that their answers will form only one part of that story.

Complete **Task J** on p46 for your pre-record checks.

Recording begins

After you hit record, continue informal conversation before launching into the questions. Encourage them to pause and think about responses, as silences are easily edited out post-production! If they don't like what they say, they can always try again.

Get your guest to introduce themselves, saying their name and one line of quick description as to who they are (this should also sum up what makes them relevant for the podcast). Give them some guidance on the audience and how much (or how little) information is needed. For example...

Guest: My name is Sarah Whoever, and I am Professor of Epidemiology at King's College London

...might be enough if your podcast is directed at a fairly informed or academic audience, but for lay listeners, you might need something a bit more informative, such as...

Guest: My name is Sarah Whoever, and I am a Professor of Epidemiology at King's College London, where I study how groups of people behave...

You might not use this in the final edit, or may decide to re-record an introduction yourself, but if you don't have it, then you don't have the choice about whether to use it or not!

Asking questions

There are a few ways of asking questions, which will depend on the format you have chosen. Give your guest some guidance about how to answer questions as you go along, and how much of the question you want them to include in their response.

For example, if you wanted to know what your guest's favourite colour is, and plan to include both the host and the guest audio tracks, it could sound like:

> *Host: What is your favourite colour?*
>
> *Guest: Blue*

Or if you didn't want to include the host audio in the final edit, it might sound like:

> *Guest: My favourite colour is blue.*

Or if you wanted the host to add some context or bridging later on it might sound like:

> *(Edited in) Host: I wanted to know a bit more about my guest and their favourite things.*
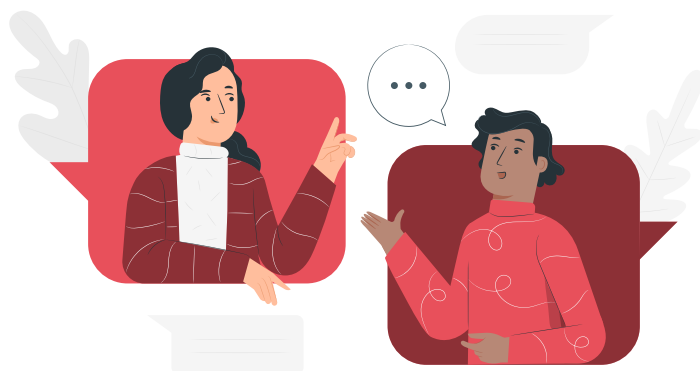>
> *Guest: My favourite colour is blue.*

Some guests may default into technical descriptions or very long sentences. Others might say the same thing two or three times in slightly different ways, which is great if you are looking for soundbites, not so great if you are recording a roundtable. Don't be afraid to ask people to say things again, or ask the question in a different way:

> *Host: What do you do for a living?*
>
> *Guest: I am a Professor of Epidemiology, and specialise in strategies for statistical analyses of causal pathways, interactions, and trajectories of mental disorders.*
>
> *Host: That's sounds very complicated! How would you explain that to someone without expertise in this field?*

A good host will acknowledge responses and offer a reflection or comment before probing further or moving on to the next question. Impersonal responses like "Great" or "That's so interesting" can sound unprofessional to both the guest and the listener, and can also disrupt the flow between episode segments.

Probing further

There are some questions or prompts you can use to probe further if you don't get what you want from initial answers. If you have experience in qualitative research, you'll already be familiar with some of these prompts:
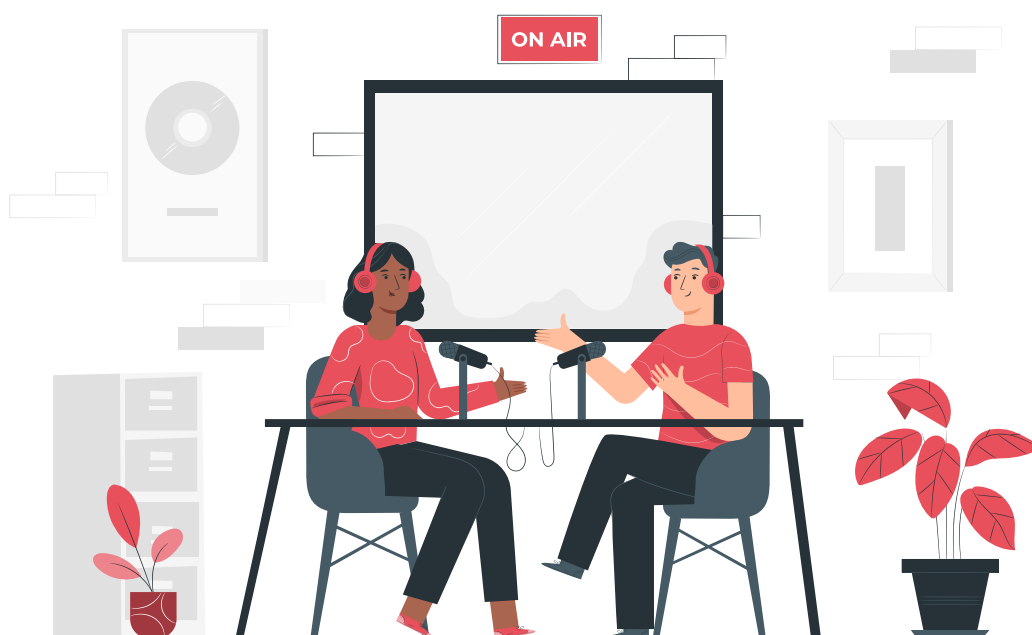
- *You mentioned X, can you say a bit more about that?*

- *How did that make you feel?*

- *How would you explain that to (a specific group of people)?*

- *What would you say to people who have the opposite belief?*

The last question allows you to indirectly challenge the guest without alienating them.

As the guest is speaking, note down follow up questions. For example, if a guest is asked to describe depression, they might give a clinical description, whereas you wanted something that captures the lived experience. So you might follow-up and ask:

- *What does depression feel like?*

- *What's the difference between depression and feeling low?*

Have some questions up your sleeve for putting people on the spot and making them defend their views, particularly in episodes where you're debating a topic. For example:

- *What would you say to people who think that depression isn't a real illness, and that people should just pull themselves together?*

The key part here is not to challenge an idea directly! It's a gentler way to keep your guest on side whilst engaging them with an argument.

Keep the listener in mind

You should keep an ear out for technical descriptions or acronyms which listeners might not understand. Where possible, get your interviewee to explain these, otherwise you will need to add an explanation during the editing process, which could disrupt the flow of the conversation. For example, it could sound like:

Guest: I mostly use RCT in my research and...

Host: Sorry to interrupt, for listeners who don't know what an RCT is, can you tell us?

Guest: Yes of course, RCT stands for Randomised Control Trials, where participants are randomly assigned particular interventions, such as treatment methods, in order to evaluate its effectiveness. My most recent study used RCTs to explore...

Or if the host adds an explanation later it might sound like:

Guest: I mostly used RCT in my research...

(Edited in) Host: RCT is an acronym which stands for Randomised Control Trials. This is when participants are randomly assigned particular interventions, such as treatment methods, in order to evaluate effectiveness.

Guest: ...and recently explored the effects of a new treatment for this disorder.

If you get an answer which is confusing or not quite right, it's fine to ask interviewees if you can ask the question again and record a new answer. For example:

Host: That was great, but I wonder if you could be more explicit about X... I'll ask the question again, and we can record a new answer if that's okay?

Sometimes you'll go backwards and forwards, and the interviewee might want more information about what you are looking for them to say. The trick is to find a middle ground so that they give you what they want, but it's their view in their own words.

You may want the guest to revisit something said in background conversations or while setting up the recording, or even in a separate interview or article. The host could say:

Host: Do you remember when we spoke / you talked about how.... Can you say something about that now we're recording?

Managing interruptions

You are almost certainly going to have to deal with unexpected noises and interruptions which will interfere with the final episode.

If a helicopter flies overhead, a police car drives by with siren blaring, or even if a remote connection has a bit of a wobble, you should pause the interview. Make it clear that it's because of the external interruption, not because the interviewee has done something wrong. The host could say:

Host: Hang on a second, we won't be able to use this bit because the helicopter is drowning you out, can we wait until it's passed, then record this question again?

In the event that the interruption is more significant, for example they are needed for childcare or a builder starts work next door, you may need to change locations or postpone the interview.

Special considerations

There are also some things to consider for different formats.

Roundtable

It's possible that one member of your panel dominates the conversation, and others are unable to make their points or contribute in the same way. Although you're recording on separate tracks, this will still be difficult to edit. This is when the host must draw on their chairing skills, by explicitly bringing people into discussion, just as you would if you were chairing a panel discussion. The host must keep track of who speaks and for how long, and ensure there is balance in content and representation.

People may have similar voices and be hard to differentiate easily. The host can help the listener by using people's names often, much more than you would in real life:

> *Host: Thank you Charlotte, can I ask Gemma, what do you think?*

You can also remind the listener about people's roles

> *Host: Gemma, as a youth worker, what are your thoughts on this topic?*

In-conversation with

The host should resist the temptation to say "yes" or "really". Although they can be edited out, they could be distracting or detract from your interviewee's answers. But don't fail to react at all! The host should give non-verbal encouragement for your interviewee to keep talking or elaborate – nodding, using facial expressions etc.

It might be that an interaction between the host and the guest will add depth and interest, for example if they respond with a gasp to something shocking, or laugh at something delightful or funny. This can add warmth and relatability to the episode.

What to do if an interview goes badly

If you have prepared properly, by researching your guest and outlining your questions in advance, it's unlikely that an interview will go badly. However, it can happen for several reasons:

Second thoughts

The guest may change their mind, not necessarily because of something the host has said. If they tell you they want to withdraw from the podcast - before, during or after the recording - you should respect their wishes. Tell them that you acknowledge and have no issue with their request, and that you will file their decision and destroy audio. Obviously, you should then delete the files and make a note on their consent form.

Emotional responses to questions

With some interviews, you may want to push guests a little, perhaps on issues where their views are controversial. However, you need to keep them onside so that they'll continue to engage and not feel alienated. If you have potentially contentious questions, think about asking them towards the end of the interview rather than launching with them. If your guest becomes aggrieved by the line of questioning, apologise and ask if you can rephrase and try again, or if they would rather move on.

The person you're interviewing may become upset, particularly if you are discussing a sensitive topic. An emotional contribution from an interviewee can be very powerful, but often comes at a cost. If someone becomes upset, you should always acknowledge their emotions, and ask if they want to take a break or stop the interview altogether. Let them know that they can ask for parts not to be included in the final edit.

Depending on the topic (and your judgement) you could mention omitted questions or responses in the episode, but do keep guest consent and well-being in mind.

It just wasn't right

Unfortunately, sometimes an interview may just not turn out how you expected. A guest may not given rich or long enough answers, or they aren't particularly engaging to listen to. It may sound harsh, but you should **always** keep the listener in mind! However, even the worst interviews can produce at least one interesting soundbite. You may need to think about switching up your format or adding some interesting context or links to keep both the guest and the listener happy with the final episode.

Ending the interview

Be mindful of the time – your guest may not have longer than the allocated slot! As the end of the interview draws near, the host can indicate how much time is left:

- *I only have a couple more questions to go now.*

- *Sadly, this is my final question!*

It's good practice at the end of an interview to ask whether there is anything the guest thinks you've missed, or anything they think it's important to add. This is often where magic happens in the form of unexpected insights or experiences.

When the interview is over, we recommend that you keep the recording going a while, during the debrief. There is often an audible sigh of relief when the host declares that they have reached the end! The guest relaxes, and a more casual conversation between them and the team may produce little gems for your episode. If this happens, do ask them if you can include this in the final episode.

When the REACH Project Young People's Advisory Group took over Our Sick Society, we had lots of these little gems in between the formal interviews. See if you can hear any!

Don't forget to thank your guests, and let them know next steps and timeframes.

Complete **Task K** on p46 for your end of recording checks.

Securing your audio

Many podcasts have collapsed at the post-production stage because an essential interview can't be found, or because a file has been corrupted. Whether remote or in-person, don't forget to save, label and back-up your audio files immediately after recording has finished.

Complete **Task L** on p47 for checks when secure your audio.

Guest follow-up

Its good practice, and just good manners, to follow-up with your guest after the recording. Make sure you:

- Say thank you again!

- Give them a rough turnaround time for the episode

- Ask them for any external links or information they would like to be shared during promotion

- Point them to source of support if appropriate

It may be better to send this email to each guest individually, even if multiple guests were recorded together. While we don't recommend explicitly asking the guest if there is anything they want cutting (this can affect your turnaround time if they ask for big changes or re-recording), by sending an individual email, you are giving them a private opportunity to flag anything they are uncomfortable with.

Section 5: Production
Tools and Resources

Ensure you tick off all of these key items during each recording
J: Before you hit record

	(If using Zoom) Ensure there is enough space to save to computer
	Consent reminder
	Sound / Equipment check
	"Noise maker" check - jewellery, papers etc.
	(If using Zoom) Ask them not to mute microphone at any time
	Host questions and notepad for prompts ready
	(If using Zoom) Select "Record to Computer"
	Record warning

K: Ending the interview and follow-up

	Anything to add / re-record?
	Thank guests
	Indicate anticipated release
	Request resources and/or promotion support (account handles/websites etc)
	Confirm who they can contact with questions
	Refer to support if required

L: Secure audio

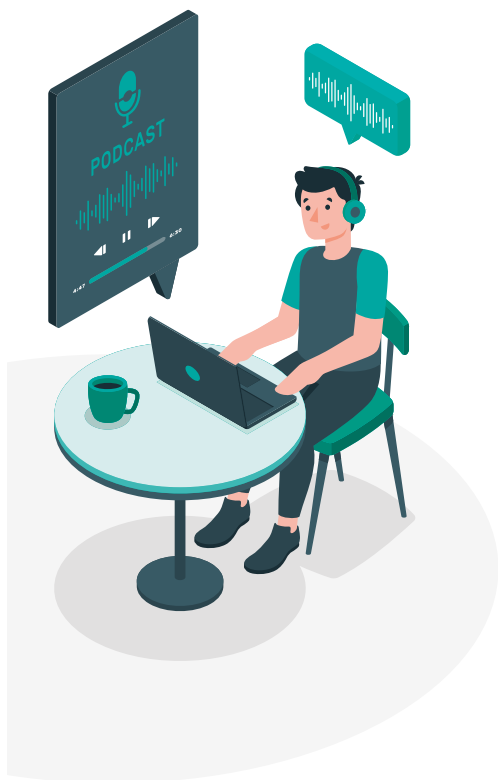|	
	Export files to computer
	Save in labelled folder
	Name files (be consistent - Episode #, Recording #, Guest = E1AJane)
	Save consent files using same naming convention (E1AJane_Consent)
	Back-up files on SharePoint

Section 6: Post-Production

After you have recorded all of your interviews, i.e. the raw material of your episode. What happens next depends to some extent on your chosen episode format. However, the first step is usually transcription of your audio.

Transcribing

Transcription is important for three reasons:

- It helps you to review and find content

- It makes the editing process much easier

- You can upload the transcription to your podcast website to improve accessibility and outreach of your episode.

There are lots of online solution for preparing these transcriptions, such as Otter or Trint. Both are incredibly accurate and can even detect different voices, making the transcriptions very close to those made by a human. Both also offer a free allowance per month before premium pricing kick in. Depending on how much you need transcribed, and how regularly you will require the service, you might fall under the payment threshold but if not, it's most certainly a service worth paying for.

Whether you transcribe manually or with an online solution, you should be consistent with your format. Use consistent labelling for voices, time codes, and highlighting. In other words, make it easy for the editor to find what needs keeping or cutting!

Here are two example transcriptions, which we'll use throughout this section.

Note: example interview material is illustrative rather than real, but they have been informed by the BEAT charity website, a leading eating disorders charity.

Example A: Interviewing an academic colleague

File Name	Interview A – Jane	
Speaker	**Time**	**Transcription**
Interviewer	00.01	Can you tell me your name and title for the recording please
Jane	00.05	I'm Jane Smith, I'm a post-doc researcher at King's College London where I work on a study called IMPRINT
Interviewer	00.15	That's great, but can I ask you to do it again and this time tell me a bit about what IMPRINT is?
Jane	00.45	Oh gosh, I'm sorry, it's more difficult that you think
Interviewer	00.50	I know, seriously, don't worry, it happens to everyone, just give it another go, and it will get easier when we get into the actual interview
Jane	01.00	My name is Jane Smith, I'm a post doctoral researcher at King's College London where I research anorexia nervosa on a study called IMPRINT
Interviewer	01.15	Thanks Jane, Tell me about IMPRINT – what are you trying to find out?
Jane	01.20	IMPRINT is a study led by Professor Marjorie Simpson where look at how people with anorexia nervosa think about choosing clothes to buy, and whether those choices are tied to their perceptions about their bodies.
Interviewer	01.40	Is anorexia nervosa the same as what most people usually call anorexia? And for listeners who might not know what anorexia nervosa is, can you explain a bit about it?
Jane	01.50	Yes, most people would call it anorexia, but its full name is anorexia nervosa. In fact it's a serious mental illness where people maintain a low weight by limiting how much they eat and drink. They may develop "rules" around what they feel they can and cannot eat, as well as things like when and where they'll eat.
Interviewer	02.10	I think most people when associate anorexia with teenage girls?

Jane	02.15	Yes, but in fact anorexia can affect anyone of any age, gender, ethnicity or background. We are increasingly seeing more young men developing anorexia for example. And there are also many people for whom anorexia persists into middle age, even older age groups have anorexia. The longer anorexia goes on, the more difficult it is to treat.
Interviewer	02.35	So why is IMPRINT so important?
Jane	02.45	Anorexia nervosa often goes alongside body dysmorphia and
Interviewer	02.50	Sorry to interrupt, body dysmorphia, what is that exactly?
Jane	02.55	Body dysmorphia is when…the way someone sees themselves and their body is at odds with how others see them. In other words they have a distorted image of themselves, in this case, they think they are larger than they really are. We know this can lead to them checking their body regularly, or trying to avoid scales and mirrors. What we don't know is whether their body dysmorphia affects their choices when buying clothes. It may be that they buy baggy clothes to cover up their body, or it may be that they buy dark colours so as not to draw attention to themselves. And we think this might be important because it could be that getting people to think differently about which clothes they buy might be a helpful way to get them to think differently about their bodies, and help with their treatment.
Interviewer	03.30	A kind of fake it to make it approach?
Jane	03.35	Well, recovery from anorexia nervosa is going to take more than just changing a person's wardrobe, but this might be one thing that can work alongside other ways to help people's recovery. But we don't know at the moment, so that's what IMPRINT will be looking at.

Example B: Interviewing someone with lived experience of a mental health condition

File Name	Interview B: Katie	
Speaker	**Time**	**Transcription**
Interviewer	00.01	Can you tell me your name please
Katie	00.03	My name is Katie

Interviewer	00.07	Thanks Katie, and as I explained, we are making a documentary about anorexia, can I ask you to tell me a little about your experiences?
Katie	00.13	Yeah, well, I've, erm, I mean, I, well, I suffered from the age of 12 until I finally sought help at the age of 24. At that point, I was pretty desperate and hopeless. I thought that change would never ever be possible and therapy was such hard work. It took a long time but I eventually entered recovery and have never looked back. My life now is wonderful – and I never thought that possible.
Interviewer	00.30	And when you were in the depths of your anorexia, what was that like?
Katie	00.35	I thought about food and calories all the time. I tried to avoid foods containing lots of fat or carbohydrates and only had 'safe' foods which I felt were okay to eat.
Interviewer	00.45	That sounds like a nightmare
Katie	00.50	It was, I had a 'voice' in my head that shouted at me. It told me I was fat and worthless and that I was not allowed to eat because I did not deserve food. I thought I was in control of my eating but it got harder and harder to ignore the voice.
Interviewer	01.10	What effect did all of this have on you?
Katie	01.15	As I lost weight I began to feel tired and this made me more depressed. I couldn't think straight or concentrate at school. All I could think about was food because my brain and body was craving for it. I realise now I was suffering from the effects of starvation.

Using links

Now we have our content laid out, we can start to make sense of what the episode might look like. Even the most simple set of recordings need to be reviewed carefully – if you simply chopped audio from your contributors, or edited down one long "in conversation with" interview, there is unlikely to be a consistent narrative, and this makes it difficult for the audience to understand the story you are presenting.

Instead, your host should record context in between clips, also known as "bridges" or "links". These help to bring a coherence to the narrative, making everything flow better.

You could use links to signpost the listener to something _what_ they are about to hear :

Host: I spoke to Doctor Medicine at the World Health Organisation and asked them about rates of mental illness in low and middle income countries...

Or _who_ they are about to hear from:

Host: We've heard a lot from the clinicians and research scientists about the impact of Covid-19 on mental health, but now let's hear from Amanda, who has lived with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder for many years now, and whose experience of the pandemic has been far from easy...

You can use links to signal a change in direction.

Host: But what about our politicians? Why are they so silent on this subject? Matthew has a view on that...

Links also allow the presenter to insert information for context which maybe didn't come out well in the interviews:

Host: We know that anorexia nervosa is one of the most costly of all mental illnesses, with one of the highest mortality rates. But what work is being done to support those living with anorexia? Let's hear from a researcher with an interesting approach...

You can use links in lots of interesting and useful ways - to sum up content, ask questions to the audience, to inject a note of the personal, the list goes on. Links are a way of bringing colour and life to your story.

If you have favourite podcasts, particularly those using a documentary format, try listening to them while paying particular attention to the links. As with all aspects of podcasting, if you hear something that works well, adapt it for your own podcast.

Paper editing
After transcription, you need to carry out some sort of "paper edit". This is when the structure and content to be included in the final episode is outlined.

Sketch out the episode
Before you start, outline the rough structure of your episode. Let's say you want to have a 45 minute episode, split into three sections, including a standardised intro and outro

(we'll look at this later in the section). This gives you roughly 40 minutes to play with, which is good to keep in mind.

Identify your content

First, gather each of your recordings, transcripts and timings. Your team, and most importantly the person editing the episode together, should agree on an editing system. You might take each transcript and cross out words or sections, or just highlight parts to keep. You could also use notations or instructions to the editor. This is why transcripts are so helpful - you can review them, read them and mark up what feels important to include.

The format of your episode will affect how complicated this process will be. If you have recorded a panel discussion, you might simply need to highlight hesitations or repetitions to be taken out, or parts where links are needed to add context. If however you are using a documentary style format, your paper edit will be more complicated. You will need to go through each transcript and:

- Find soundbites which work on their own

- Find connections between sections and quotes

- Highlight bits to be removed or enhanced (e.g. increase volume)

- Identify links needed to join up sections

With this format, you will only be able to use a small amount of each interview, and they could end up in a different order to how it was recorded, or indeed mixed with parts of other interviews.

Let's say we recorded the above example interviews because we are making a documentary about hidden aspects of anorexia nervosa. We now need to take all those clips and spaces for links to create something which is close to a script. In the worked example below, we are working with the two example interviews, plus an already recorded Theme and Intro; and a file with section links recorded by the host.

Example C: Worked example of a paper edit

File Name	Episode 1 paper edit			
Episode timing	**Source**	**Start time**	**End time**	**Notes**
00:00 - 00:30	Theme & Intro	00:00	00:30	Full intro - no need to re-record
00:30 - 02:00	Episode 1 - Host links	00:00	01:30	*Yet to be recorded.* My name is Amanda, and welcome to this episode of our podcast series Innovation in Research. This week we will be exploring hidden aspects of anorexia nervosa…
02:00 - 03:14	Interview A: Jane	01:00	01:14	Start: My name is Jane.… End: …on a study called IMPRINT
03:14 - 03:19	Episode 1 - Host links	01:45	01:50	*Yet to be recorded.* I asked Jane to explain…
03:19 - 03:37	Interview A: Jane	01:51	02:09	Start: Most people would call it anorexia, but its full name is… End: …They may develop "rules" around what they feel they can and cannot eat, as well as things like when and where they'll eat.
03:37 - 04:07	Episode 1 - Host links	01:55	02:25	*Yet to be recorded.* Katie had anorexia for 12 years. She explains what this felt like…

04:07 - 04:16	Interview B: Katie	00:35	00:44	Start: I thought about food and calories all the time. I tried to avoid foods containing lots of fat or carbohydrates... End: ...and only had 'safe' foods which I felt were okay to eat.
04:16 - 04:38	Interview B: Katie	00:51	01:13	Start: ...I had a 'voice' in my head that shouted at me. It told me I was fat and worthless and that I was not allowed to eat because I did not deserve food. End:...I thought I was in control of my eating but it got harder and harder to ignore the voice.
04:38 - 05:08	Episode 1 - Host links	02:30	03:00	*Yet to be recorded.* Dealing with those negative opinions about the body is a key part of the illness. Here's Jane again
05:08 - 06: 12	Interview A: Jane	02:55	03:10	Start: Body dysmorphia is when... End: ...they think they are larger than they really are.

As you piece the episode together, your material may take you in a different direction than originally planned - and that's okay! Refer back to the episode plan and your overarching objectives. What story did you want to tell? What were the key messages? If you can't fulfil those objectives you may need to re-edit or re-record content.

Review paper edit against your audio
Take time to listen back to selected audio. Sometimes there are words and sentences which look perfect on paper but in audio form are very difficult to edit. Cadence and intonation need to be considered - the person might be speaking quickly with run-on sentences, which is very hard to edit! You could end up with a nice, isolated clip or a jarring heavy-handed cut, which makes a difference between a great sounding podcast and one which takes you out of the flow as a listener.

Audio editing

Later in this section, we will provide basic instructions on how to edit your episodes using Audacity - free podcast editing platform available online.

Once the paper edit has been completed, and any additional presenter links have been recorded, you are ready to start audio editing. With any luck, the edits can be made without any sudden cut-offs and chops, allowing the audio to flow nicely.

This might mean a simple job of deleting unwanted audio from one long recording, but sometimes it might mean taking separate chunks of audio from various sources to build the episode outlined in your paper edit.

This is a good time to take care of any extraneous sounds, the "umms" and "ahhs" and so on, which might occur on the audio. Do this when you are breaking audio down into chunks, as that can make the task a little easier, as you're focusing on individual pieces rather than a whole long file . It's good to have clean audio for final assembly.

As you work through the episode, keep track of edits made, adjustments to edits, and any issues on the paper edit.

Including music
Music can be a subtle force, providing mood and emotion to your episode. Badly used though, it can feel overbearing or inappropriate. You can include music as:

- A repeated theme tune

- Background sounds

- Interludes between sections

- A standalone feature

Beware of falling into clichés! Many mental health podcasts feature a mournful piano, but if you are trying to demonstrate hope or show that people with mental ill health can lead productive lives, a sad piano doesn't reflect that!

For Episode 5: Music for the Mind, we explored music, mental health and wellbeing. We therefore used music in different ways. Listen to how music was used throughout.

While you may have a favourite track in mind, chances are that you can't legally use it! Websites like Pixa Bay and Canva have royalty free music options.

Use of sound effects

Sound effects can be used as elements of 'theatre of the mind' - by which sound is used to conjure vivid imagery in the audiences' minds. It's never necessary to 'Micky Mouse' everything - the sound effect-ing of every action - but when used sparingly and at opportune moments, they can add a nice flourish, or awaken the senses a little.

Open new segments

You might hear a scrape of a chair or equipment noise, which can add to the feeling of being in someone's company, rather than sitting with a disembodied radio voice.

Separate content

If the episode jumps between segments, you could add effects to help the listener distinguish them from one another. For example, if the host includes a quote from a book, you could include the sound of a page turning or add an effect to the voice to make it sound like it's an old cassette tape.

Illustrate the topic

Sound effects can be used to illustrate a point being made in your podcast. For example, if you are talking about darts, you could use the thwack of darts into a board as punctuation.

Provide a sense of place

This works particularly well if you are filming on location, or if you want to emphasise the importance of place. For example, if you are interviewing a guest in a seaside café, you might include seagulls in the background or perhaps a hiss of a coffee machine. This works particularly well if the location is explicitly referred to in host introductions or links.
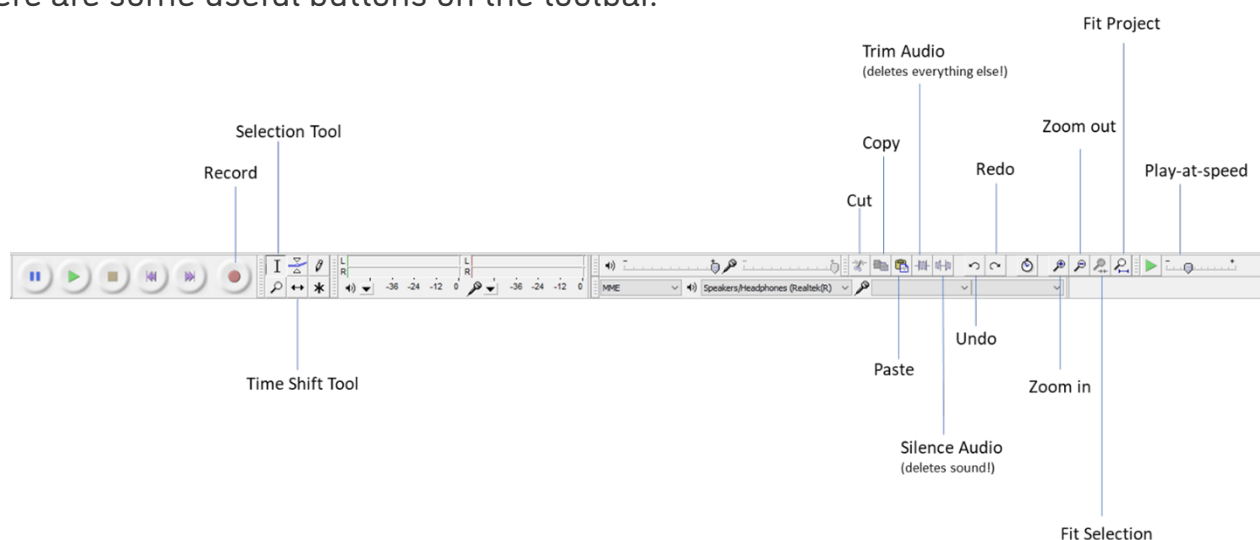
Editing your podcast using Audacity

This part of the toolkit provides an overview of basic editing in Audacity. [Click here to download Audacity.](#) For detailed instructions, refer to the [official Audacity manual.](#)

Before you start

Make sure you have back-ups files of all your original recordings! Open Audacity to begin editing.
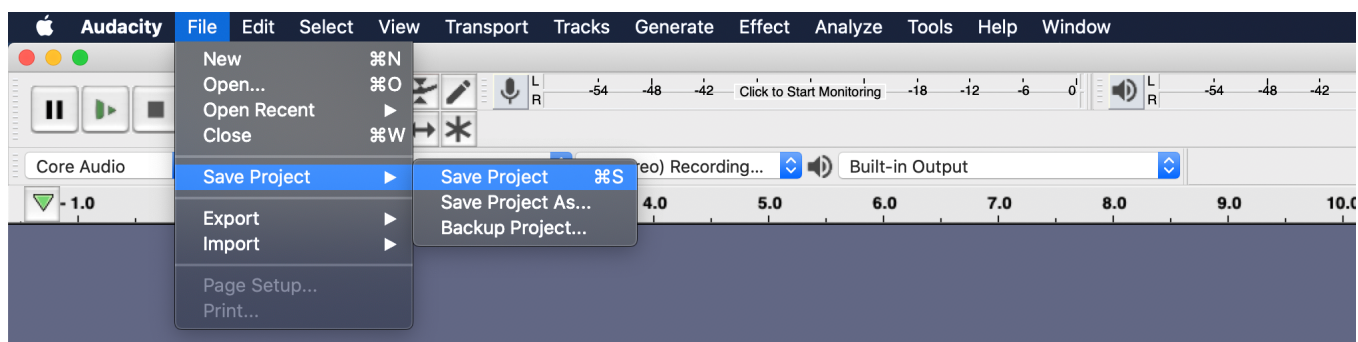
Functions

Here are some useful buttons on the toolbar:

Create your episode file

From the **File Menu**, tap **New** to create an empty project window. This will be the working environment, into which you will import your audio files.

Tap **File Menu > Save Project** to save the file as an Audacity Project File.

Load your audio

- Click on **File > Import > Audio**

*Note: You can also use **Open** but this will open each audio file in a new tab*

This is what you'll get:

Note: This audio is recorded in stereo. If you have a mono recording, you will only see one track.

Noise reduction

This is used when you have instances of hiss, background noise, hums, fuzz or otherwise continuous unwanted sound on the recording. It's not always entirely removable, but modern software certainly gives it a good try and can often save a recording! Planes and cars can be difficult as they will have a fluctuating pitch, but when you have a consistent noise (like a laptop fan), it will be easier to remove.

You should have a few seconds of just 'silence' at the start of your recording.

- Tap the **Selection Tool (or press F1)** and highlight that part of the track
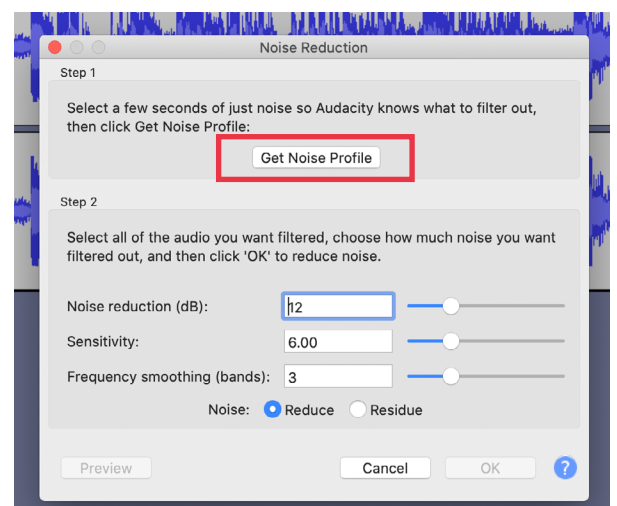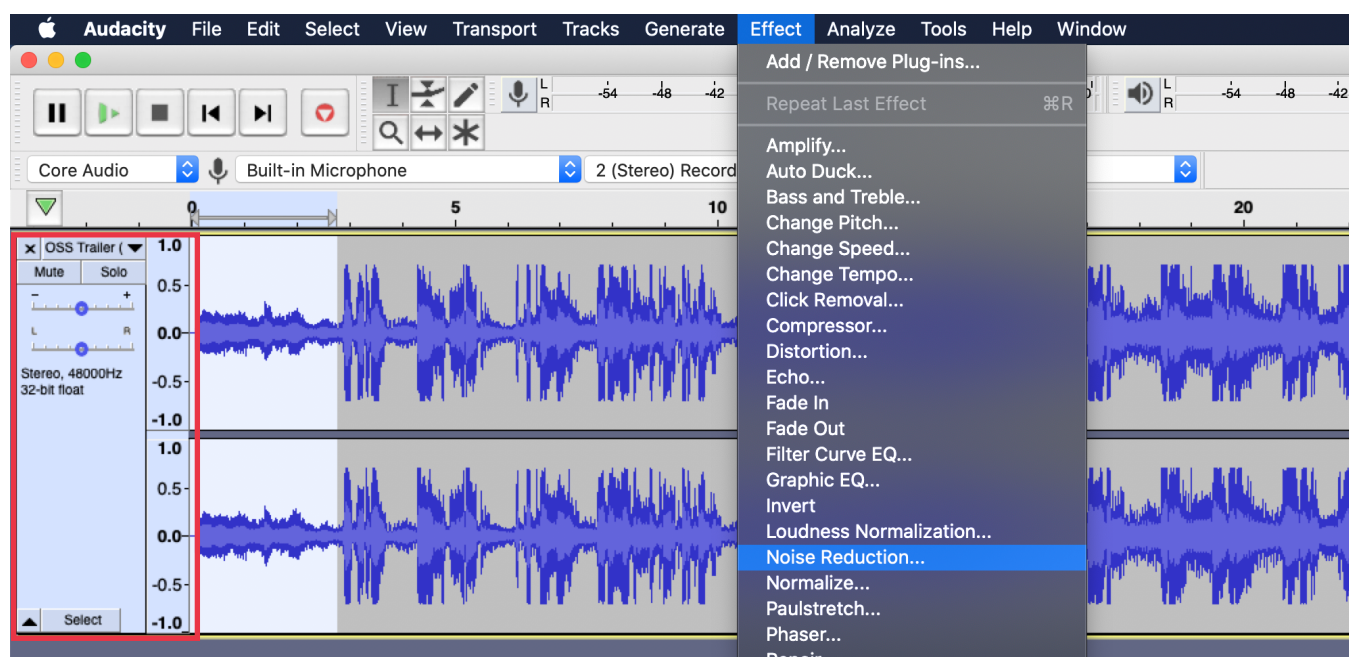
- Click **Effect** > **Noise Reduction**

- Select **Get Noise Profile** – this will take the selected 'silence' and mark it as background noise

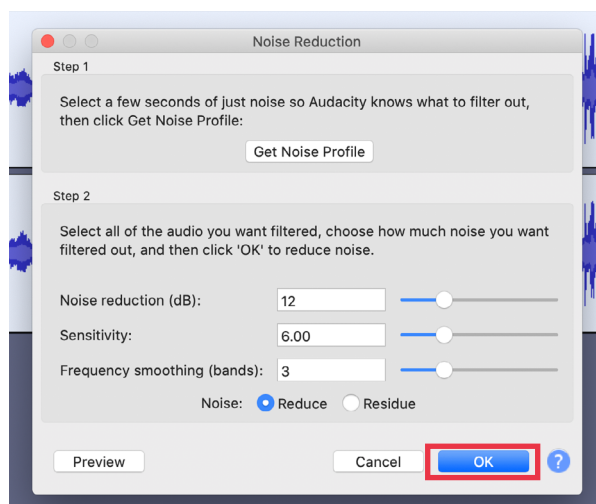- Highlight the whole recording (click on the info box to the left of the track)

- Click **Effect > Noise Reduction > OK**

This will remove all the background noise in your recording.

Deleting audio
For any audio that needs cutting or removing entirely, you can use the Delete function.

- Tap the **Selection Tool** and then click and drag your cursor to highlight the part of audio you want to remove

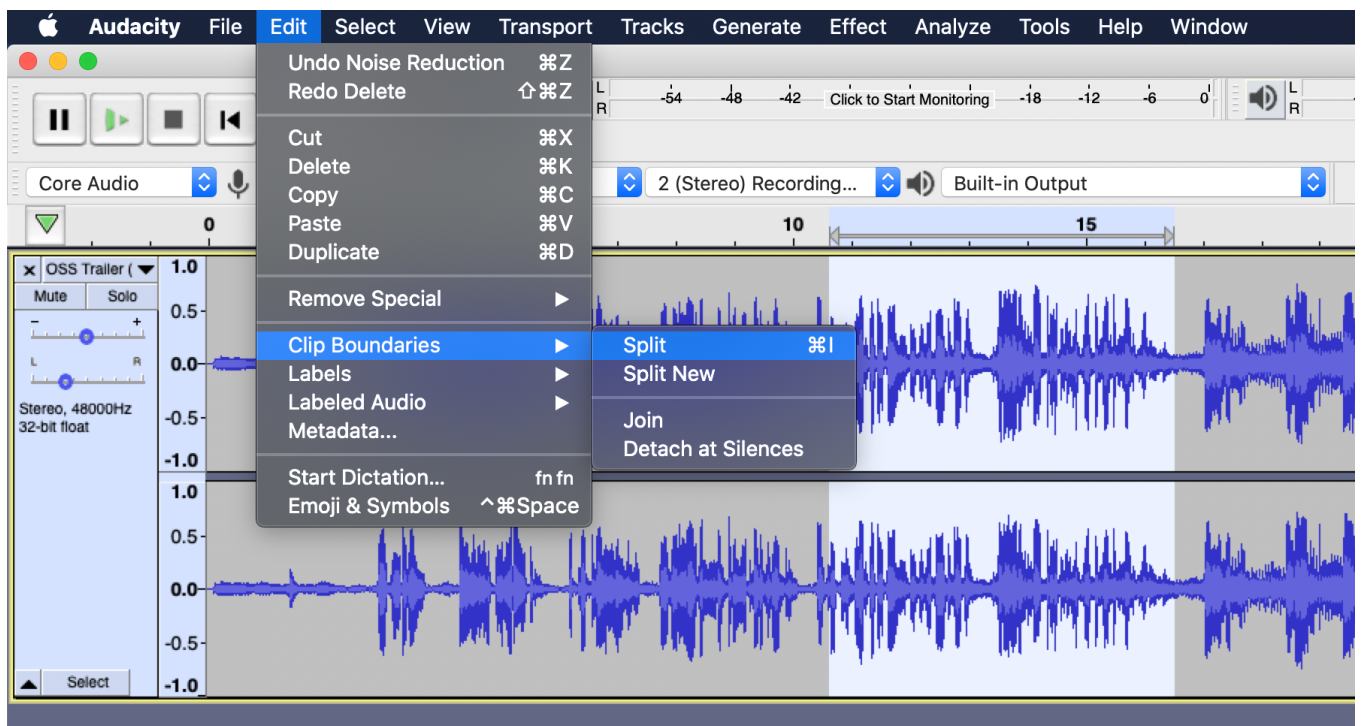- Press **Delete** on your keyboard (or **BACKSPACE** / **COMMAND + BACKSPACE**)

Splitting audio
A 'non destructive' edit – this basically means the file itself will not be permanently affected, it's only telling the software to see a break in the file. It's almost like cutting the file with some scissors – you can then move the cut part to another place in the file. This will be particularly useful if you used a format with multiple guests, for example a documentary style or roundtable discussion.

- Tap the **Selection Tool** and then click and drag your cursor to highlight the part of audio you want to split and move

- Click **Edit > Clip Boundaries > Split**
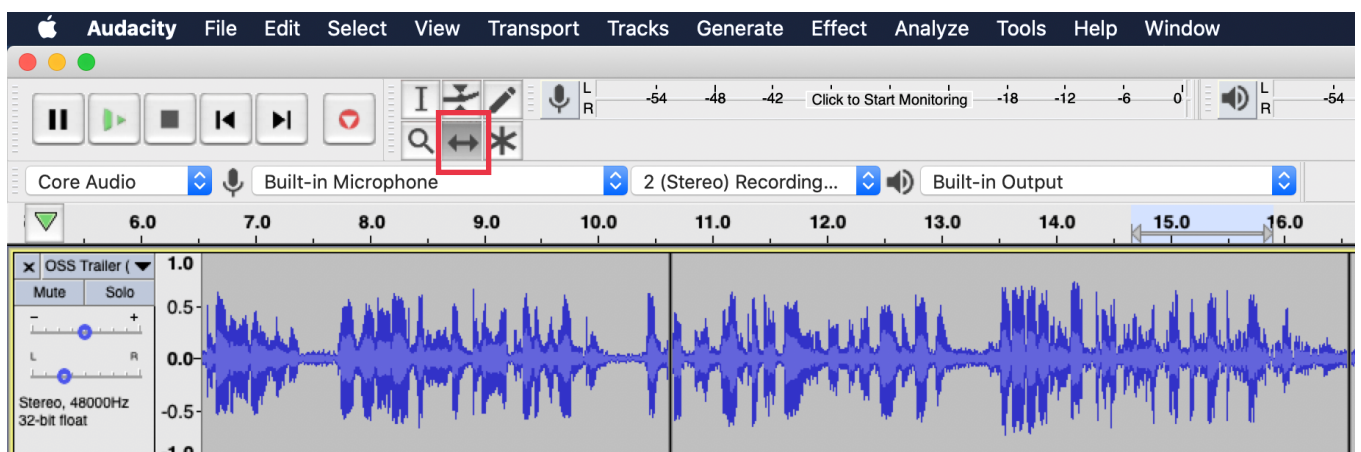
Moving audio

This function is most useful when adding music / joining different recordings, for

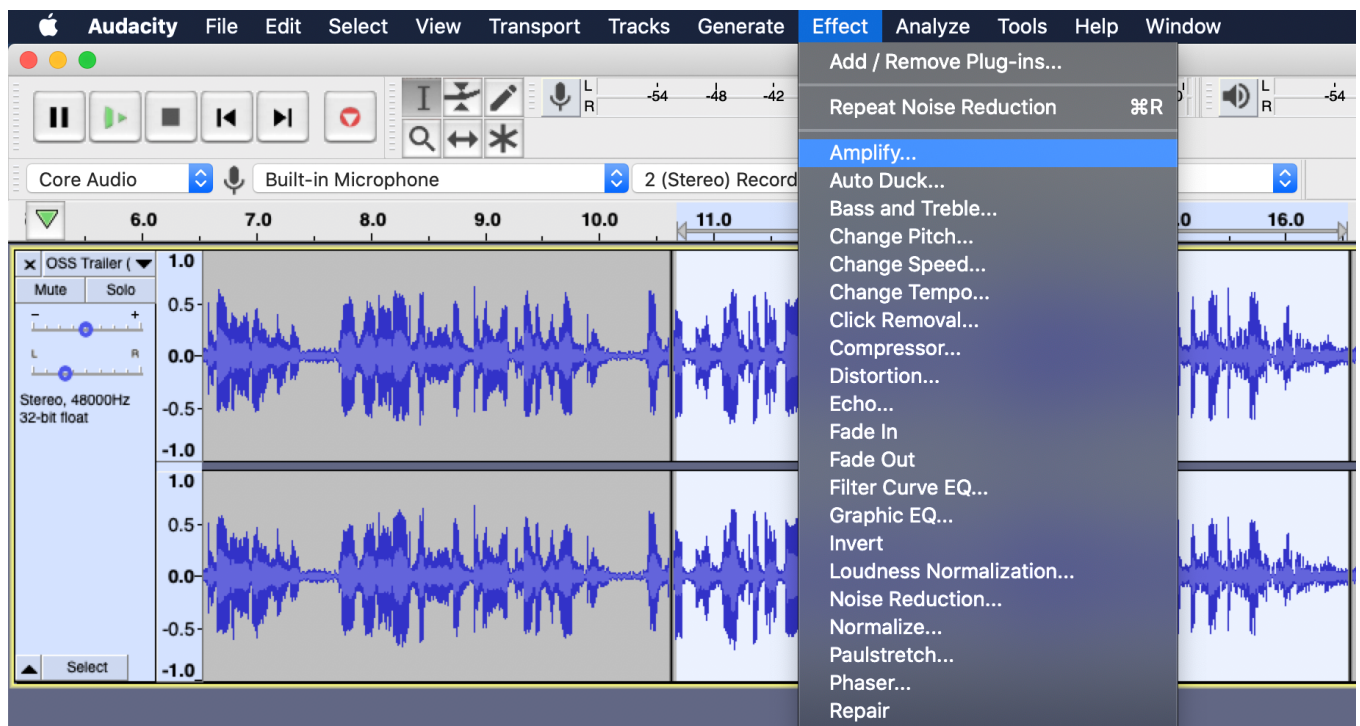example if you have included multiple guests, or where you are moving content around to suit your story.

- Tap the **Time Shift** Tool > Click on the audio and drag left or right to move
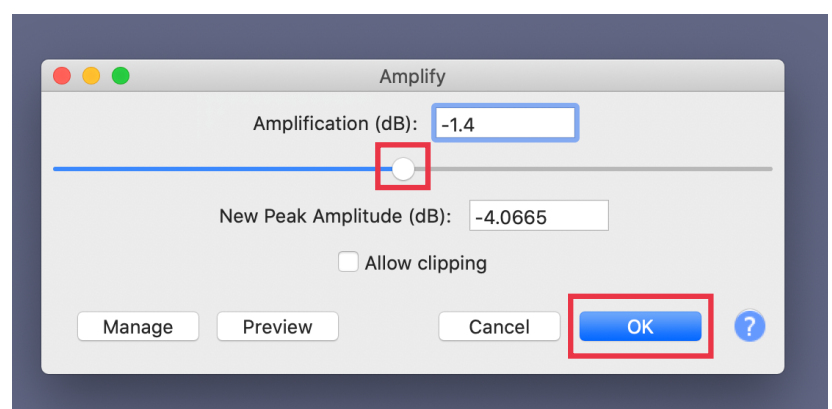
Adjusting volume

This is a really helpful function which you can use, for example, if someone sits too far from the microphone, or if there are there are background noises such as breathing. You may want to keep the main audio in but make them quieter!

- Highlight the selection > Click **Effect > Amplify**

- Move the 'needle' left or right (minus number = lower; plus number = higher)
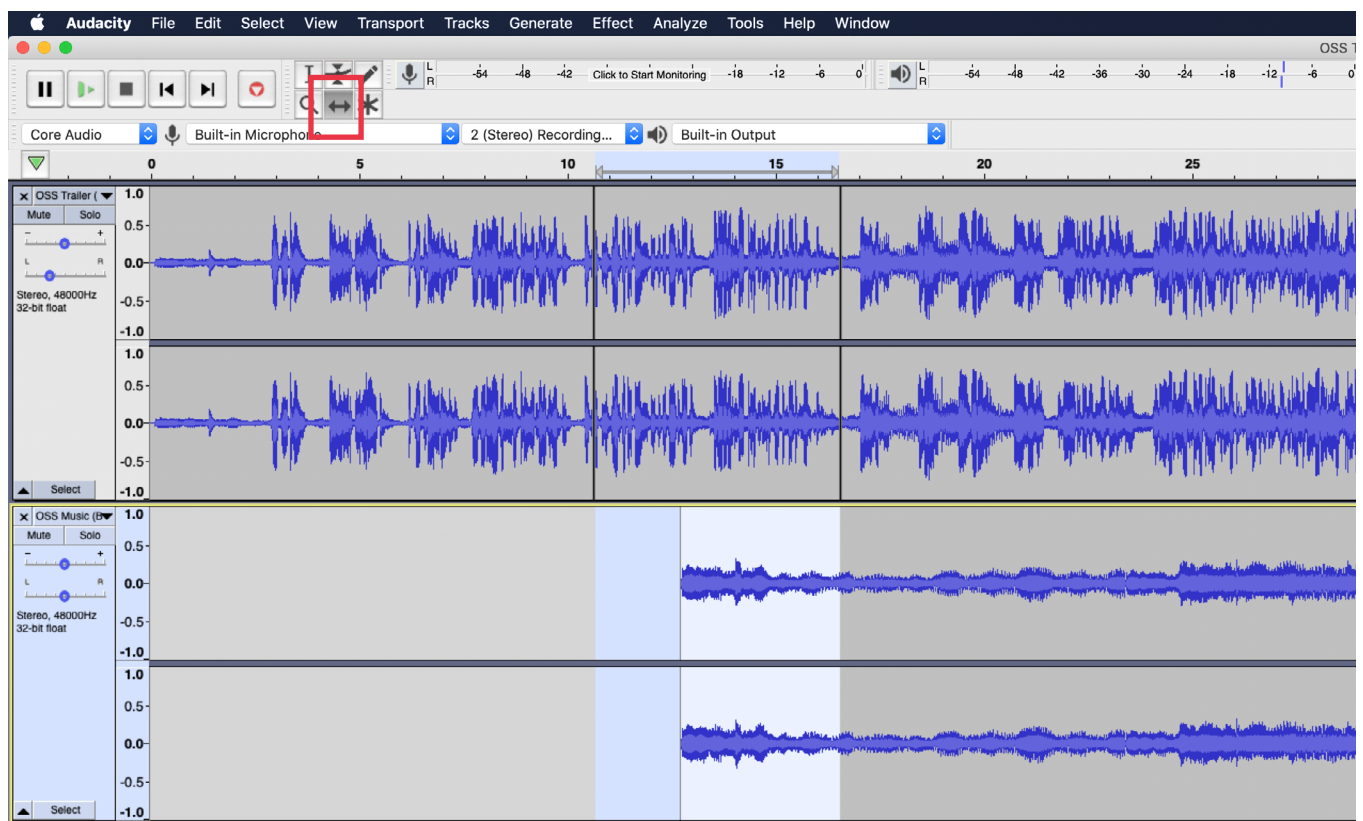
- Click **OK**

Adding multiple audio tracks and music

You can add more than one audio file, for example if you are adding recordings of multiple guests, or when you need to add the intro and outro for your episode. The process is the same as opening the first audio file.
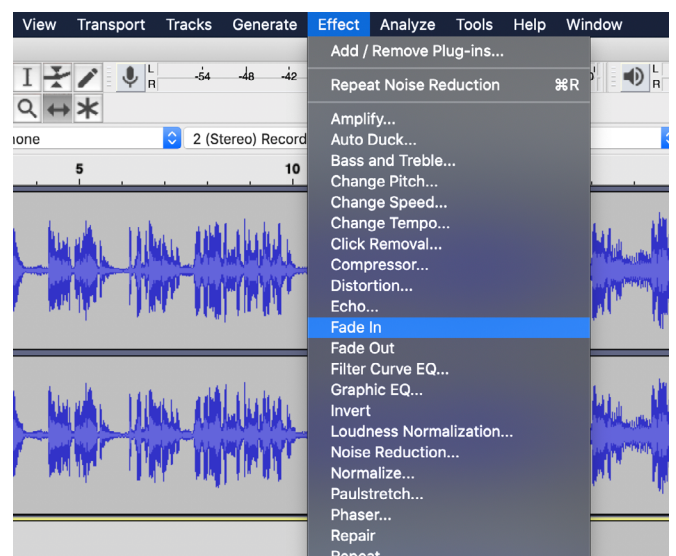
- Click on **File > Import > Audio**

- Each new file will open directly underneath the first one

- Use the **Time Shift Tool** to move them around (see *Moving Audio*)

Fade in and out

You might want to have your music (e.g. intro soundtrack) slowly fade in or out

- Highlight the part of audio that you would like to fade.

- Click **Effect > Fade In/Out**

Save and export your project

When you save an Audacity project you are doing just that - saving an Audacity project file, which can only be opened by Audacity. To save the project file:
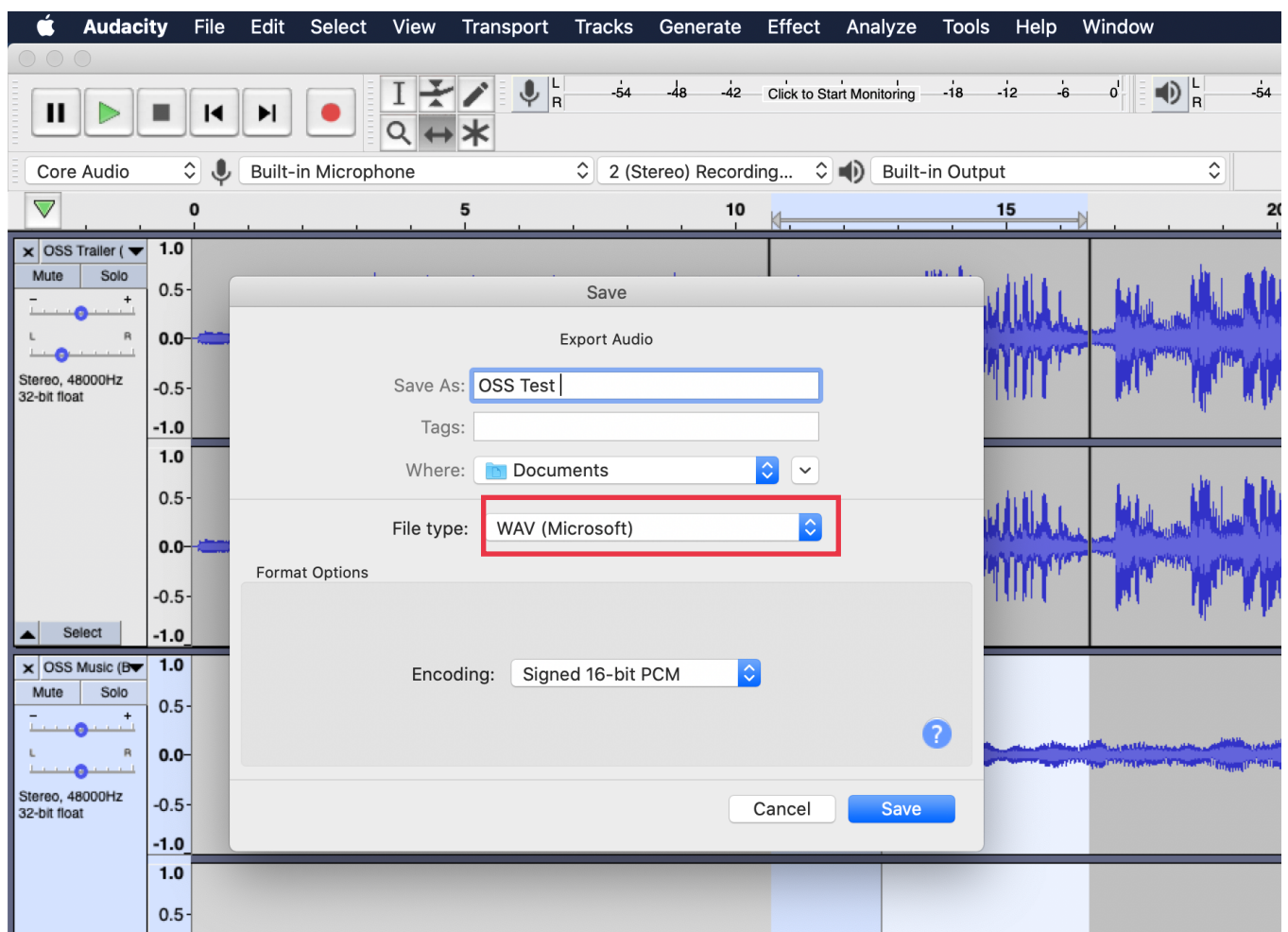
- Click **File > Save Project > Save Project**

To end up with a file to upload onto your podcasting platform, we need to export it.

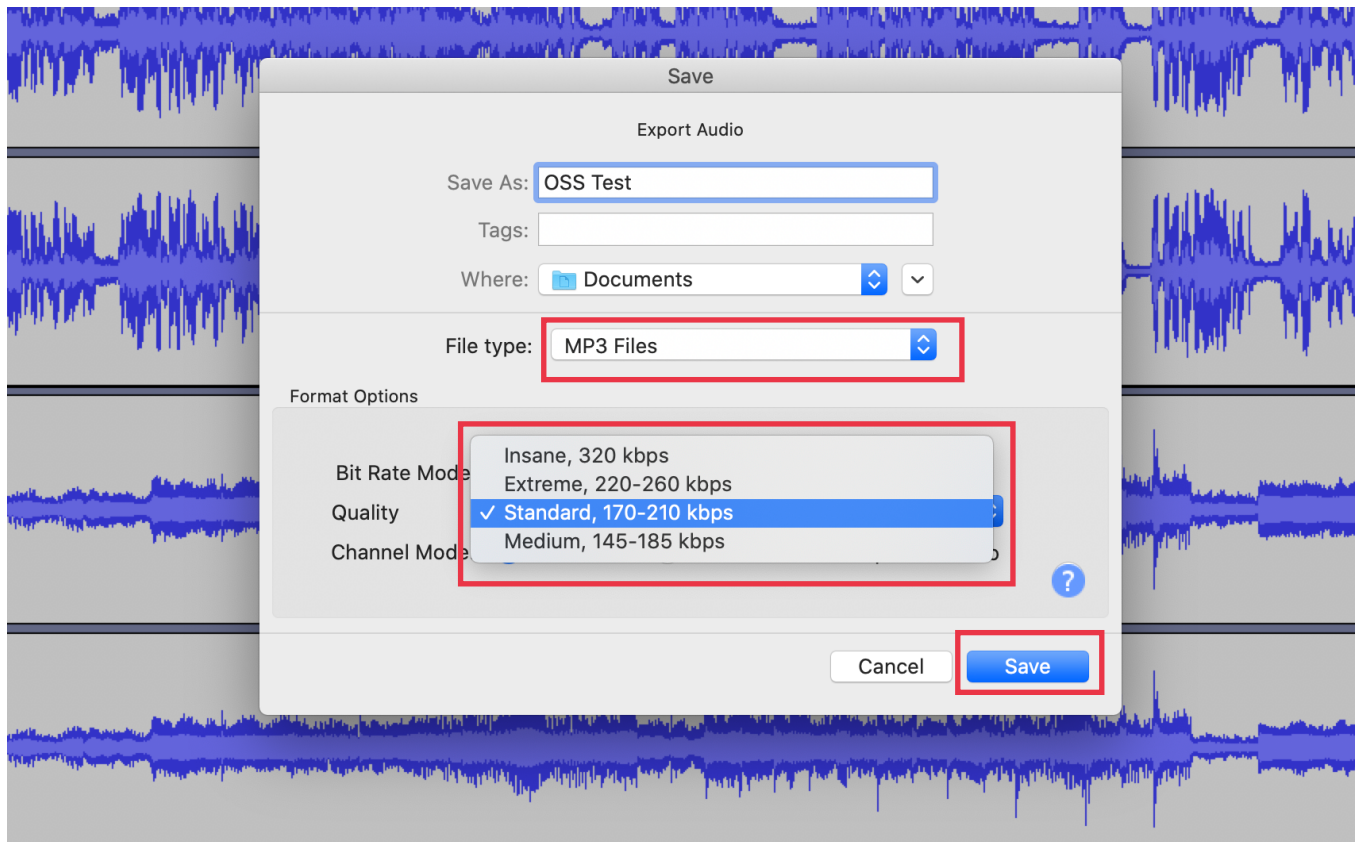- Click **File > Export > Export Audio...** - the standard Save dialog for your operating system appears.

- Give the file a different name.

- Choose a location to save the file.

At the bottom of the **Save** dialog is a dropdown menu labeled **Format**.

- If you have used high-quality audio files (i.e. higher than .mp3), you can save as a .WAV file. You do not have to change these settings. Tap **Save**.

- If you only have .mp3 files (usually via Zoom (S), you will need to save as an .mp3. You will need to adjust the quality settings by tapping **Options**. Pick the best option available! Tap **Save**.

🚏 For more detailed instructions, see the official Audacity Manual

✏️ Complete **Task M** on p67 to run through your editing checklists.

Section 6: Post-Production
Tools and Resources

M: Episode editing checklist:

Assets

	Trailer recorded and edited
	Intro recorded and edited
	Outro recorded and edited
	Music files created / downloaded and stored
	Episode audio files saved and collated

Process

	Transcriptions completed
	Paper edit prepared
	Paper edit reviewed and confirmed
	Host links recorded
	First audio edit prepared
	First audio edit reviewed
	Host links re-recorded (if needed)
	Final changes made
	Final edit signed off

Section 7: Going live

Once you have completed episodes lined up, and of course any consent forms signed and filed, we are now ready to go live!

Select a hosting platform
Our first step is to select a platform to host your podcast. Podcasts can be uploaded and distributed via a wide range of platforms, and the choice can be intimidating!

A popular choice for King's podcasts is Soundcloud. This is a site which originated in music sharing, but has since gained many users after introducing podcast distribution. A Soundcloud player for full series or individual episodes can be embedded onto King's web pages, which is very handy.

While a basic Soundcloud account is free, you may need to pay for a Pro account if you have over 3 hours of audio, or if you want to know a bit more about your audience.

Another popular platform for King's podcasts is Acast, which also offers various account options, but which cannot currently be embedded on the King's website.

Upload your trailer
This may feel like a strange step in the middle of setting up your podcast!

It is very important to have one 'episode' uploaded and live when setting up the podcast. This makes it easier to set up and validate the aggregator accounts (see below) to disseminate your episodes. Rather than launching the first episode, we recommend starting with your trailer which gives a chance to both build momentum, and iron out any issues with the platform!

RSS Feeds

When you set up your podcast hosting platform , you will also end up with an RSS feed. RSS can stand for, among other things, 'Really Simple Syndication' (the most easily understandable of the possible meanings!). Basically, an RSS feed allows users to subscribe and listen to your podcast on other platforms, known as aggregators or directories, such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Stitcher.

You will need to find the RSS Feed URL in your podcast hosting platform settings:

- Soundcloud - **Settings > Content > RSS Feed**

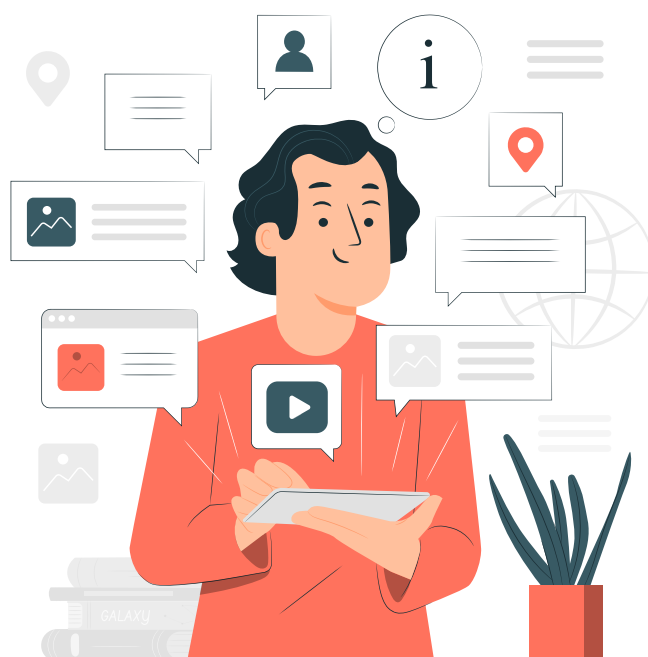- Acast - **Distribution > RSS Feed** (bottom of page)

Then you will need to link and verify your podcast on the aggregator platform. This is why uploading the trailer is important, as it confirms that you have content ready!

- Apple - https://podcastsconnect.apple.com/

- Spotify - https://podcasters.spotify.com/

- Stitcher - https://partners.stitcher.com/join

Complementary content

There are several types of content that listeners may want to look at after listening to an episode. Such as:

- **Resources mentioned in the episode:** Books, papers, reports, or projects referred to by guests.

- **Complementary resources:** Videos, other podcast episodes or news articles which are related to content.

- **Sources of support:** If you are covering a topic which is sensitive or potentially upsetting.

- **Transcripts:** For accessibility purposes.

Listeners sometimes need to do a bit of digging to find links to external content, and some platform sites, as well as social media profiles only give space for one external link. One of the easiest and most popular ways of compiling and sharing multiple links is via a list app, which provides a single link to a page with a branded list of external links for your visitors to access. Our Sick Society uses linktr.ee but other popular alternatives include Campsite and Contact In Bio.

Additional content, as well as the podcast itself, can be shared on the King's website, either via a flat page on your departmental website (like Our Sick Society), or as a project page. Get in touch with your departmental communication team for more information.

Some podcasts also upload video of the podcast recordings to YouTube, which is also worth considering if the recordings can be made at a decent quality, though editing these can be a little trickier than audio. You will also need to obtain explicit content to distribute video of your guests. Click here for King's guidance on editing video.

If you plan to market your podcast as a King's product, you are bound to adhere to branding guidelines when designing your visual identity. You can find more information about King's Branding here.

Visual Identity

The creation of a standardised visual identity for your podcast will strengthen your brand and influence audience perceptions, which will boost visibility and appeal. You will need a selection of artwork to promote your podcast:

Logo and Cover art

Many podcasts use the same image for both their logo and their cover art (i.e. the image you see on the platform); but you may wish to develop these separately.

Your logo should be simple and easy to identify on a smart phone as well as larger device. Think about how the logo will be used in promotional materials and review versatility by overlaying it on a range of colours, patterns and images.

Where possible, use colours from the official [King's colour palette](#), or those used in your Departmental branding. If you want to use more than one colour, you can use the free [Canva Colour Wheel](#) to find complimentary colour combinations.

Make sure your logo is designed as a [vector file](#) - this will allow you to scale it up and down without losing quality.

Our logo uses colours from the Centre palette, and includes our name and a bird's eye view of a city. This image acts as both an abstract representation of the brain and as a picture of society itself! Unfortunately this is a tricky image to overlay due to all the colours, hence our emphasis on testing functionality first!

When it comes to designing your cover art - simplicity is key. The listener must be able to easily identify what your podcast is about, and ideally the overall style and tone.

If you are developing a podcast on a specialist academic subject, you may want to think about how that topics translates into art. [Take a look at the artwork used in these psychology podcasts on Soundcloud](#). Lots of the images use heads and brains in their visual identity – while this helps the listener to see what the podcast is about, using popular imagery can prevent your podcast from standing out. [Canva has some handy templates for podcast covers to help you get started.](#)

Look at [this list of podcasts for curious minds put together by The Wired](#). Many covers are simple and striking - but what can you determine about the show just from colour palettes, fonts and imagery used?

Platform Artwork

You will also need to develop artwork for your chosen streaming platform(s). These will usually consist of a profile picture, episode covers, and possibly a header image.

For those under the King's brand, your cover art should have the [King's logo overlaid](#). This will maintain consistency with other podcasts, as well as content across your platforms and social media account. This will also help people easily spot you!

For episode covers, you could re-use your podcast cover, which is what we do for [Our Sick Society](). Other podcasts - such as [Criminal]() - like to use different themed images for each episode. You should think about the capacity of the team to source or design different images for each episode – it is a nice idea, but easier and cheaper to use the same image each time!

Header images are required for Soundcloud, and you should be consistent in your use of imagery and branding. Our Sick Society uses the same image in our header that is used in our cover art, but with a wider crop. Each platform will have its own size and resolution requirements. You may also want to create a Hero banner image for King's web pages. Here are the requirements:

- Soundcloud banner image – 2480 x 520 pixels – [Canva template]()

- King's Hero banner image – 1903 x 558 pixels – [King's image sizes]()

Marketing the podcast

It is important to think about how people will find your podcast - this is where your marketing and communication (MarComms) strategy comes in:

- **Marketing**: the action of selling products or services, including research or, in this case, the podcast!

- **Communication**: the process of exchanging information and influencing perceptions, or what we want to say to people so they listen to episodes!

The good news is that you started developing your strategy in **Section 1**! A strategy should include:

- **Purpose** - what are we communicating and why?

- **Audience** - who are you targeting?

- **Key messages** - breaking down your objectives into messages for the audience

- **Methods** - how will messages be communicated?

- **Schedule** - when should messages be communicated?

- **Support** - who can help you share these messages?

Now we will work through a series of questions to prepare a formal strategy.

Purpose

Think creatively about how MarComms activities can help you achieve your wider objectives. Let's use an example objective from Our Sick Society:
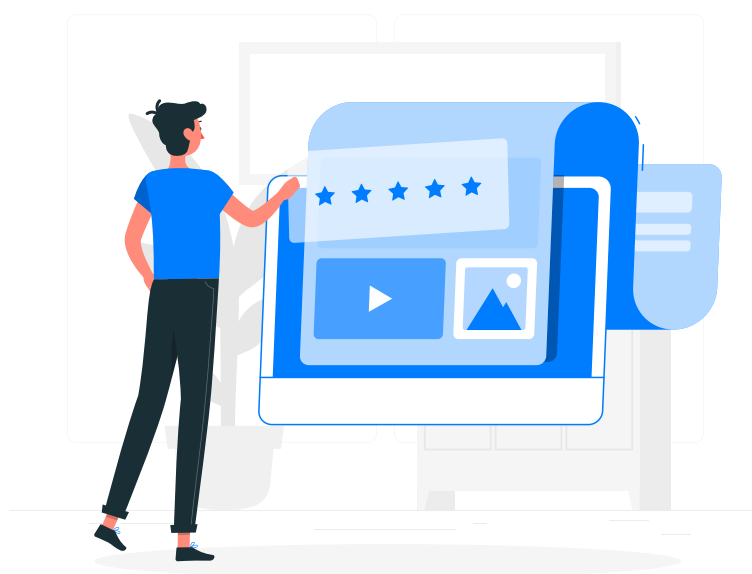
- To achieve 1000 listens by the end of August 2021

One obvious purpose of our strategy is to get our target audience to listen to episodes, but we also want them to share, subscribe and review to increase our reach and meet the objective. To make this easy for our audience, we can design content such as:

- Episode trailers

- Links to aggregator platforms

- Requests to review the podcast

- Campaigns to "round up" listen numbers

Some objectives may be a bit harder, though not impossible, to tackle, particularly those based on audience behaviours. Remember, qualitative data is just as (if not more) valuable as quantitative data when measuring impact. For example, if you want to find out if your listeners are more aware of mental health support you can create content such as:

- Polls and surveys

- Requests to share content / make recommendations

- Information sharing threads or blogs

You can then use both responses and engagement data to monitor and evaluate progress made in reaching this objective.

Audience

We have already looked at types of audience **Section 1** . While broad categorisations are helpful when we plan episode content, we now need to look at our target audience in more detail. This is because different audiences will find and engage with podcasts in different ways. Consider how your podcast, as well as individual episodes, will appeal to audiences based on the following criteria:

- **Age:** Either by age-group (e.g. 30 - 35) or by generation (e.g. millennials, Generation Z). Example: But Why is targeted at under 18s.

- **Gender:** Some podcasts are targeted towards specific genders, usually because the theme is gender related. Example: hey girl shares stories by women for women.

- **Location:** Could be a city, country or region. If your podcast is focused on say, London or England, then global appeal may be limited. Example: Bowery Boys explores the history of New York City.

- **Profession**: These could relate to broad categories such as academics or students, or could be more specific such as "senior school teachers", "mental health nurses" or "policy researchers". Example: Fast Track Impact was a podcast for researchers.

- **Specific interest**: All content relates to a particular topic or theme. Example: Making Gay History explores historical portraits of LGBTQ+ figures.

Key messages

Now we have an idea about our target audiences and their ideal responses, we need to identify key messages to communicate to them. These should be closely aligned to your podcast objectives, but be more centred on talking to the audience directly. Identifying key messages for each of our target audiences can help us to avoid miscommunication.

> Watch this short video to better understand what we mean by miscommunication: TED | How miscommunication happens (and how to avoid it)

Avoiding miscommunication will be particularly important if you are addressing sensitive or complicated topics and themes in your podcast.

The overarching objective of the Our Sick Society podcast is for listeners to better understand the relationship between social changes and mental health, and to shift emphasis away from individual causes. However, key messages vary for our different target audiences – we want policy makers to respond to our episodes in a different way than young people for example. A key message for our policy maker might be that "Policy makers and researchers at the Centre for Society and Mental Health can and should collaborate on mental health strategies", which may encourage a policy maker to reach out to one of our guests to hear more about their work. A key message for a young person might be "The Covid-19 lockdown has had a negative impact on the mental health of many young people, but support is available", which may encourage them to seek support.

Methods

You should plan to develop three broad types of marketing content about your podcast:

- **Podcast content:** focused on the podcast and your themes

- **Episode content:** specific content for each episode

- **Special content:** targeted one-off content, for example, for national holidays

When developing content, remember to consider your overall brand. What is your tone? What are your key messages? How do you want the audience to engage with the episode content? You may need to pull out quotes or key commentary for your promotional materials.

According to Sprout Social, 68% of content consumers want to engage with images, and 50% with video. We recommend preparing the following types of content:

- **Trailers:** Use small snippets of your episode to create trailers. Our Sick Society uses the free limited package from Headliner – here is an example.

- **Quotes:** Pull out very short quotes from the podcast and create visual "quote cards" for your platforms. Canva have lots of templates for different platforms.

- **Infographics:** These can cover what was discussed in each topic or can highlight data related to your episode. Canva have templates you can use.

The channels you pick to promote your podcast will largely depend on your target audiences. Here are some popular options and helpful tips:

Twitter
Twitter averages 396 million monthly active users. As of January 2021, most of its users are aged between 18 and 49 years, with 62% being men and 38% women. The platform is vastly popular for live commentary of events and or entertainment shows.

Twitter is widely used by academic researchers across the world and can be a very effective way to establish networks, participate in debate and discussion related to your research, and share information with colleagues. The platform can also be a powerful mobilization and campaign tool, as we have seen with the momentum behind the 2019 climate strike.

Here are some tips for posting on Twitter:

- **Word limit:** try not to cram everything into the 280-character limit. The shorter the tweet, the higher the engagement. Emoji's, in moderation, can boost clicks.

- **Hashtags:** include relevant hashtags for your chosen topic. Don't use too many and do your research to find trending or popular hashtags.

- **Media:** Tweets with photos, infographics and video (i.e. trailers or clips) have higher engagement. Ensure links have an image preview or replace with a relevant image.

- **Follow target audiences:** research and follow groups, organisations or individuals who specialise in your theme or specific topics covered by your episodes. Look at Lists and hashtags for inspiration. Ask guests for tips on who to follow.

Have a go at making some content using Twitter templates from Canva

Facebook
[As of July 2021, almost 2.89 billion people use Facebook every month](), although an estimated 5% of accounts are thought to be fake. In terms of binary gender, 56% of global users are male, with the biggest represented group being males aged 25 – 34 (almost 20%). Most adults check their account at least once a day, usually via phone.

Facebook is a tricky platform for academics, as there is personal information on individual profiles which you may want to hide from the general public. However, you could use a Group page as a "faceless" platform for your audience to come together and discuss themes from your podcast. Facebook is an appropriate platform if you are targeting non-professional or academic audiences. Here are some tips for posting on Facebook:

- **Research group pages**: see what other podcasts are sharing on their Group pages, and the level of engagement with different types of posts. Also review how much moderation may be needed to make the Group safe for all your users.

- **Visual content is key**: videos and images see more engagement on this platform, so you'll need to develop this type of content for your audience.

- **Utilise Facebook Ads**: Facebook Ads are a really effective, albeit sometimes costly, way of promoting your podcast . Review your budget to see if you can afford it.

> Have a go at making some content using [Facebook templates from Canva]()

Instagram
[As of July 2021, there are currently 1 billion active users on Instagram.]() Over two thirds of users are under the age of 34. Audiences are fairly even by binary gender: 51.4% female and 48.6% female. Here are some tips for using Instagram:

- **Visual content:** all content should be visual, so you'll need a plan specific content, using the correct dimensions for this platform.

- **Hashtags:** as with Twitter, make sure you research and include relevant and popular hashtags to expand your reach.

> Have a go at making content using [Instagram templates from Canva]()

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business and employment focused social networking site used by recruiters or professionals for collaboration and professional networking. It has around 610 million users, 57% of which are male and 43% female. 60% of users are between 25- 34. You can predominantly use LinkedIn to share posts about your podcast and related news of interest to your network. Here are some tips for using LinkedIn:

- **Written content and links:** Unlike other platforms, most content consists of a written post with links to external articles and resources. The ideal length of a post is around 100 characters, so keep it brief and direct the reader to action.

- **Utilise pages:** You can create a Page for your podcast, and link to relevant King's Departments where appropriate.

- **Be professional:** As you will need to link to your own profile to a Page or indeed add the podcast to your experience, ensure that content shared is professional and more formal than content for other platforms.

Have a go at making content using LinkedIn templates from Canva

YouTube

Almost 5 billion videos are watched on YouTube every single day! According to Hubspot, YouTube is available in over 90 countries in over 80 languages. There are 2 billion users, 45% of which are female. 21.2% of YouTube's global audience is between 25 and 34, and 17% between 35 and 44. YouTube is not only used by individuals, but also by businesses and academics to increase their reach. Here are some tips:

- **Complement don't replicate:** Instead of uploading your podcast as a video, create additional content which complements each episode. By posting the same content in two places, you will reduce the number of listens and lower your visibility.

- **Keep it short:** Videos created to support a podcast episode should be short – ideally no longer than 15 minutes.

- **Speak to King's Branding:** All videos need to follow the King's branding guidelines.

Have a go at making content using YouTube templates from Canva

Other platforms

For younger or specialist audiences, you may also want to explore platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok and Reddit. However, make sure you review privacy and account requirements before opening any new accounts.

Schedule

You want to maintain a good momentum of interest in the podcast in between release of episodes. This can be tricky if you have limited capacity! You can use an external scheduling app such as Hootsuite (you will need some budget), or basic free scheduling in selected apps. Tweetdeck is a good option for Twitter, and if you have over 1000 followers, you can also use Studio to identify times based on traffic.

Sharing external content

As well as creating your own content, many communication specialists recommend utilising the Rule of Thirds to generate interest and followers:

- 1/3 = promoting the podcast (i.e. links to episodes or posting trailers)

- 1/3 = engagement with users (i.e. liking, sharing or commenting on content)

- 1/3 = sharing relevant content (i.e. news stories or papers on your podcast theme)

This is basically the comms version of not being the person who only wants to talk about themselves! It's really helpful to follow lots of accounts on your channels, or create a Google Alert using key words from your podcast plan. This will provide a regular flow of external content you can use to draw audiences to episodes.

Devices

It is important to consider which devices your audience will use to listen and engage with your podcast. If you expect most of your audience to view content on their mobile, make sure visuals are kept simple and limit the number of words used in content across all platforms. Research preferred devices for your target audiences and again, see what types of content your competitors are posting to get some ideas.

Networks for promotion

In order to boost the visibility of your podcast, seek promotional support from a range of networks and contacts. The best place to start is with your guests! They can promote the podcast through their employer, or other networks they are a part of. Ask them about supporting promotion in your follow-up emails and be sure to send them branded content for social media platforms.

You could also each out to groups or organisations who specialise in your episode theme or the work of your guests, including those based across King's.

Reviewing and adapting your strategy

The best laid schemes o'mice an' men, well, sometimes they just don't work! Gathering listeners can be a slow and frustrating process, which requires lots of patience and creativity. Your marketing strategy will most likely need adapting as episodes are released, and your audience grows. Here are some helpful things to consider:

- **Mix up content:** Use a wide range of audio, visual and written content

- **Utilise in-platform analytics:** Keep an eye on content which receives the most engagement via the free analytics with your chosen platform.

- **Schedule content:** Revisit your scheduling platform data to identify the most popular times for engagement with your content. Mix up your posting schedule and see if that helps to boost listens..

- **Review episodes:** if some topics are more successful than others, you may want to adapt your episode schedule to create links between, or even diversify, content.

Make sure you schedule in time with your team to review MarComms engagement alongside listener data from your hosting platforms, so that such changes can be discussed, planned and signed off together.

N: Platform checklist

	Boilerplate written
	Platform selected
	Trailer uploaded
	Aggregator accounts set up
	King's profile page / Website set up and player embedded
	Space for additional content created
	Link app account created

O: Visual identity checklist

	Logo
	Colour palette
	Cover art
	Platform art
	Episode covers (if using)

P. Marketing checklist

	Accounts decided and set-up
	Quote card templates made
	Trailer and clip template made
	Infographics template made
	Internal and external networks mapped and contacted
	Analytics programmes set-up
	Scheduling programmes set-up

Section 8: Evaluating success

A successful podcast is of course one with lots of listeners! However, an engaging podcast about research will also have its own definitions of success.

Meeting your objectives

The most obvious way of determining if your podcast has been a success is whether you have met your objectives. This is why it's important that these are SMART, and that you are able to log evidence which demonstrates how you have achieved them.

Remember that your objectives will likely change over time, so you may want to set milestones to assess progress throughout the project. For example, if you want to achieve 5000 listens over six months, but you only get 100 in month one, you may need to review how realistic the objective is, and how many listens you need to gain each month to meet it. This can inform content of future episodes, as well as your marketing and communication strategy.

For the Our Sick Society podcast, a mid-way review was built into the project plan. Halfway through our scheduled episodes, the team came together to discuss the process to date, successes and challenges, and progress in meeting objectives. It was a really helpful exercise and helped us to review future episodes and stay on-track.

Research impact

A good podcast can support research impact – which is becoming increasingly important for higher education institutions to evidence.

Each university is required to participate in a national research assessment exercise called the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which ultimately determines how much funding is received from the government.

Not only does the REF act as a helpful benchmarking tool, but it also helps us to provide evidenced accountability for public spending on research.

For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as **"an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia".**

In addition to the REF, there is also the [Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)](#) assessment, which measures the extent to which knowledge produced from research can be used for the benefit of the economy and society. This is a relatively new assessment but is a process which is being prioritised by King's alongside the REF, so it's good to get your head around these processes as early as you can!

The impact of research is usually assessed by its [Reach and its Significance](#), and so effective public engagement and marketing of a podcast can be critical in boosting visibility of our work and achievements. It can also strengthen partner relationships, and facilitate discussion for future collaboration.

Your podcast can directly contribute to increasing the impact of a particular piece of research, particularly when you invite researchers to lead their own episodes, as well as being a successful project in its own right. Perhaps it could even form part of a future [REF Impact Case Study](#)!

[Speak to your REF support representative for more information.](#)

Strengthening your skills

The ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health believes that research should not take place in a vacuum, and that effective, relevant and impactful research can only be developed through direct participation and co-production with non-academic contacts and those who have lived experience of issues being explored. Public engagement activities such as podcasting or social media engagement can be an important step in building awareness of such research and related engagement or collaboration opportunities, but relies on skills not traditionally prioritised in academia.

Academics are increasingly required to be savvy communicators, and to engage a wide range of audiences with their work (as we have seen with the increasing emphasis on the REF and KEF). By participating in a podcast, you are learning how to talk about your research in a different way, how to tie your research to current affairs, and how to demonstrate why your research can influences peoples' lives. You will also develop networking, presentation and facilitation skills. Success is not just for the podcast but

can also be measured by the skills developed by the wider team! Make sure you bring the team together to review and discuss personal objectives, expectations, challenges and achievements throughout and at the end of the project.

External review

It may be helpful to ask someone outside of the project team to review your progress. This can happen at the beginning, middle or end of your podcast project, and is a useful way of identifying pitfalls or opportunities which you may have missed. An external review can assess whether or not:

- Episodes are addressing your theme

- Objectives are effectively measuring the success of your podcast

- You are engaging appropriate networks for involvement and support

- You are communicating appropriate key messages about the podcast and King's more broadly

The review can be carried out by someone your department, by another King's podcast team, or perhaps a member of the KERN.

Capturing lessons learned

Finally, throughout your project, you may learn some important lessons about what works and what doesn't, which can be really useful for both your team and other podcasters across King's.

For your team, schedule regular meetings between episodes to discuss how things are going, and to see if any revisions to your project or marketing plans are required. It is also helpful to capture these lessons more formally, either via a written report, an evaluation meeting or... a toolkit!

Good luck with your podcast!

The Our Sick Society Team

This guide was developed by:

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Feedback

We hope you found this guide and the wider toolkit useful! If you would like to provide feedback or make content suggestions, please email csmh@kcl.ac.uk.

Further support

Email csmh@kcl.ac.uk to join the King's Podcast Producers Teams group.

Contact kern@kcl.ac.uk for more information about the King's Engaged Researcher Network.

[Visit the KERN website for other channels of support available across King's](#)

More in the series

- Developing a guest podcast episode

- Being interviewed for a podcast