

# VIDEO: Podcast news: get your videos on iTunes for maximum subscribers

iTunes podcasts offer the ideal way to build your audience – better still, they'll automatically download future feeds to your subscribers, too.

**T**here are lots of online destinations where you can upload video you've created so it can be viewed by anyone connected to the internet. YouTube is easily the biggest, with two billion views per day, and there are plenty of other sites with a significant number of users.

However, if you only concentrate on video sharing sites, you could be missing out on another sizeable audience, and one that frequently comes back regularly for more. iTunes has more than 160 million users worldwide and has a directory of podcasts that people can browse and subscribe to.

iTunes will also automatically download new episodes of podcasts to which a user has subscribed, so it's great if you produce regular content. Getting your videos into iTunes is a little more complicated than simply uploading them to a site such as YouTube, but all you need is a little know-how.

A podcast is basically an RSS feed that includes links to downloadable media files, such as audio or video. The media files can live anywhere that's publicly accessible on the internet, so if you can download them in a browser, you can link to them from a podcast feed. When a user subscribes to a podcast, either in iTunes or another compatible application, the latest entries in the feed are downloaded to their computer. In the case of iTunes, they could then load these files onto an iPod to watch on the move or access them from an Apple TV in their lounge.

Since a podcast feed can link to any media files, you don't need to create video

that can be played back on an iPod. If you're submitting the feed to iTunes, though, it makes sense to at least have one feed that users can watch on an iPod.

The best thing about podcasts, from a producer's point of view, is that once a user has subscribed, they'll automatically download all future episodes until they decide to stop. It's a very sticky medium and encourages repeat viewing. If you want to build a loyal audience, then a podcast is a great way to do that.

Podcasts existed well before iTunes supported them, but they're by far the easiest way for non-technical users to discover and subscribe to new feeds. If you want to make sure that your content is available to this audience, then the first stage is to create a suitable feed.

An RSS feed is simply a text document, which means you could – at least in theory – create a podcast feed by hand. It obviously depends on how technical you are, but it's not impossible.

However, as podcasts are designed to be updated regularly, you'd need to manually amend the feed each time you want to add a new episode. Not only is this something you need to remember to do each time you add new content, but you could also risk breaking the feed entirely if you make a mistake. RSS has a strict set of rules and if you mistype something, then applications could refuse to process the feed.

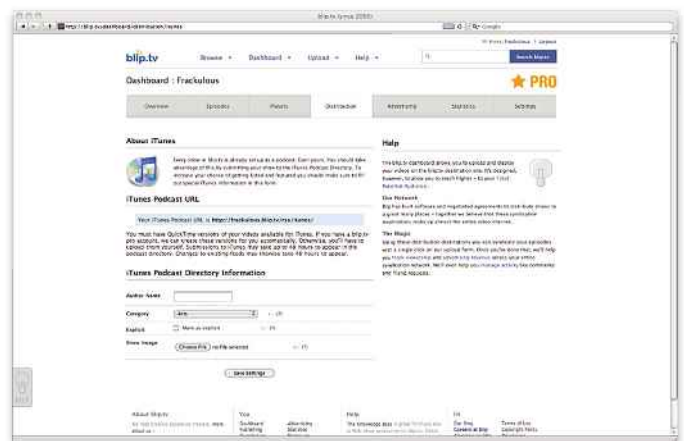


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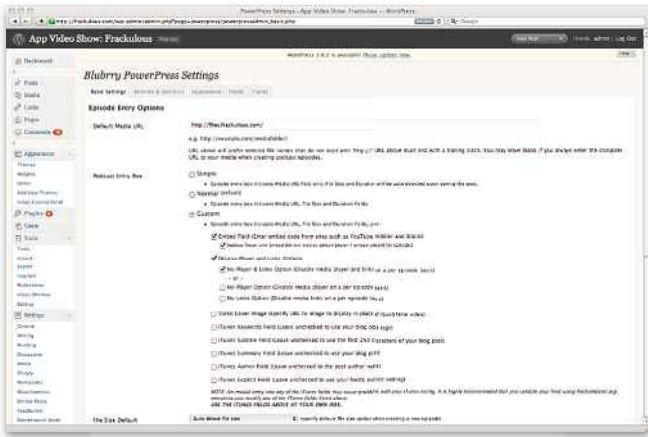
'The best thing about podcasts is that once a user has subscribed, they'll automatically download all future episodes'



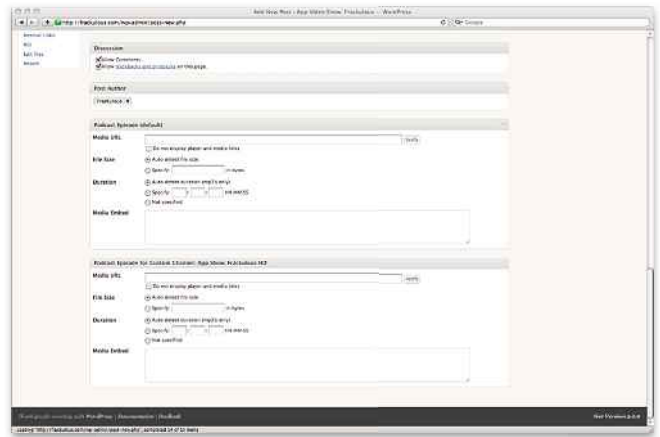
▲ Since a podcast feed is just an enhanced RSS feed, you could feasibly create one manually if you're technical enough, though there's a risk it might not work.



▲ Video sharing sites such as Blip.tv can automatically create an iTunes feed for you. Better still, the feed updates automatically to include the latest episodes.



▲ The PowerPress plug-in turns WordPress into a podcast CMS.



▲ To create a podcast, enter the media files' location in WordPress' custom boxes.



▲ Submit your feed to the iTunes directory so users can find it.



▲ When your podcast has been approved, it will show up in searches within iTunes.

At the other end of the scale, you could let a video sharing website create the feed for you so you don't have to worry about any of the technical details. Blip.tv, for example, is a video sharing website that also includes supports for podcast feeds. Any videos you upload to your Blip.tv account will not only be watchable on the web, but also via a dedicated podcast feed. The feed will update automatically so it includes the latest episodes, and you don't need to worry about ensuring it's in the correct format.

The main downside of using a third-party host such as Blip.tv, though, is the feed itself is hosted on a third-party server to which you don't have direct access. So, instead of the feed existing at youdomain.com/podcast, the actual address will be something like yourshow.blip.tv/rss/itunes.

This is fine if you intend to use Blip.tv forever, but makes it difficult to move to a different provider at a later date. Since the whole idea about podcasts is to build up a regular audience, you could lose all that hard work if you switch the feed to a different address and users have to manually re-subscribe. Many would either miss the announcement of the change of address or simply not bother to alter the details.

Somewhere in between creating a feed by hand and leaving it entirely to a third party is using a content management system (CMS) to do the heavy lifting for you. Since you control the CMS yourself, you don't need to worry about losing access to the feed's address at some point in the future.

WordPress is a great CMS for powering blogs or simple dynamic websites and, with a few tweaks, it can also host a podcast for you. The first step is to download and install the software from wordpress.org. You'll need a web hosting account that supports PHP and databases, and a little bit of trial and error to get it set up if you've never done it before, but it's relatively straightforward.

Once you've got WordPress working, the next step is to install the PowerPress plug-in from blubrry.com/powerpress. This

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'Once you've created a podcast feed, the final step is submitting it to the iTunes directory'

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takes WordPress' regular RSS support and enhances it to support both podcasts and iTunes-specific enhancements. It also lets you do advanced things such as create multiple feeds in different formats – SD and HD podcasts to cater for different audiences, say.

To create a new episode, make a new blog post in WordPress and the title and body will form the title and episode description for your podcast feed. PowerPress then adds an extra box where you specify the location of the media file for your podcast. This is then used to create a podcast-specific RSS feed that combines the text description from each post with the media links. You don't need to tweak anything, as it's all created automatically.

The benefit of using the WordPress and PowerPress setup is the software is free, so you can try it out without wasting money. WordPress is a very stable platform, so you can be confident the system will work even if your podcast attracts a lots of subscribers.

Once you've created a podcast feed, the final step is submitting it to the iTunes directory so users can find your podcast by searching within iTunes. As Apple is picky about the format of feeds it accepts, it's best to run your feed through a feed validator first, such as the one at feedvalidator.org. If your feed passes without any errors, then you're ready to submit it to iTunes.

You'll need an iTunes account before you can submit your podcast, but it's free to set one up. Then click iTunes Store in the left-hand pane. Click the Podcasts tab in between App Store and Audiobooks on the bar at the top. Next, over on the far left in the Podcasts Quick Links section, click on Submit a Podcast and follow the instructions.

Once you've submitted your feed, you have to wait – Apple reviews all submissions before they're added to the directory and it can take a couple of weeks. If you're successful, you'll receive an email from Apple and your podcast will then be visible in iTunes when users search for relevant results.

It takes a little bit of effort to set up an iTunes feed, but once it's listed in the directory, it'll be available to more than 160 million users and any who subscribe will automatically receive your latest episodes, so it's a great way to build an audience.