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## Using Anchor to Create Podcasts for Youth Audiences

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## Using Anchor to Create Podcasts for Youth Audiences

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**Abstract.** The Anchor podcasting tool provides an innovative way for Extension professionals to deliver information to youth, as well as promote further engagement. This article describes the process our team followed to create a series of career podcasts for middle school students using Anchor. We discuss benefits and considerations to keep in mind if you are considering launching a podcast of your own.

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### INTRODUCTION

Podcasts are uniquely suited as tools to engage youth audiences. This usefulness is due mainly to three specific attributes (Donnelly & Berge, 2006). First, podcasts include the voice of the host(s) and guests. This often feels more personalized and conversational than written information. Second, podcasts provide young people with more control. They allow listeners to tune in while engaging in other tasks, such as physical activity. Third, podcasts allow youth to download files and listen when and where it is convenient.

Our podcasting team consisted of an Extension professor, a graduate student, an undergraduate student, and a middle school student who worked together to create a series of podcasts designed to help middle school students learn more about career options. This article shares our podcasting team's experiences with creating our podcast series using the Anchor podcasting tools (<https://anchor.fm>). There are a variety of podcasting tools available, but our team found Anchor to be particularly user-friendly for beginning podcasters.

### HOW IT WORKS

Anchor provides a free avenue for Extension professionals to successfully create a podcast or podcast series that is relevant to their audience—even if they have not podcasted before. The program includes free, unlimited hosting, and the user owns the rights to their own content. The platform also contains built-in uploading, recording, and editing tools and provides the option to import audio or video. The recording tools can capture audio from a variety of devices, including phones, computers, and tablets.

One of the most user-friendly and intuitive aspects of Anchor is that the Extension professional developing the podcast can build blocks of audio sections without editing. Users simply record segments, arrange them, insert transitions and music (both of which are also included in Anchor), and publish. Anchor also makes it easy to distribute podcasts to all major listening apps, including Apple Podcasts and Spotify. Another helpful addition to Anchor is a cover art creator, which allows users to create a design for their podcast or series.

### STEPS TO CREATING A PODCAST

We created our podcast series to help middle schoolers learn about a variety of careers from members of their community. Our podcast team used the following steps to design the series:

1. First, our team conducted a needs assessment of our target audience. Including a middle school student on our team to helped us to better understand middle school students' career interests.

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2. Our graduate student and middle school student designed the podcast's cover art in Anchor. This cover is used for each podcast episode.
3. Next, our team designed open-ended, semi-structured interview questions for our podcast guests that focused on career paths and preparation.
4. Our team brainstormed potential podcast guests: professionals who represented a variety of career paths and would be interesting to middle school students.
5. Our team emailed our selected podcast guests the interview questions ahead of time and shared information about what they could expect during the Zoom interview.
6. A graduate student and middle school student conducted and recorded each podcast interview via Zoom.
7. After each interview was conducted, our podcast team uploaded it into Anchor for editing.
8. We arranged the podcast segments, which included music, transitions, the interview itself, and announcements about upcoming 4-H opportunities.
9. Finally, we published each podcast on Spotify.

### BENEFITS

Although podcasting is becoming more integrated as an additional means of teaching and learning in higher education (Ormond, 2008), researchers have not thoroughly explored the use of podcasting with K-12 students (Parra, 2016). However, benefits to consider include:

- Youth are more likely to use podcasts than some other learning tools because they are portable and not time sensitive.
- Podcasts are easy to access and can be used by children and adults of all ages and from any location.
- Podcasts are free, which eliminates cost as a barrier and allows listeners to return and access them over and over.
- The analytics tools built into Anchor can be used to report and evaluate the impact of the program. For example, Anchor provides data on listeners' age, gender, and geographic location.

### CONSIDERATIONS

We recommend that Extension professionals carefully weigh whether podcasting is an appropriate tool that aligns with the purpose of their program and their target audience. Ask yourself and your team the following questions if you are considering creating a podcast:

- *Who needs to be on your podcast team?* Podcasts can be an excellent tool to highlight youth voices or promote youth-adult partnerships. Two of the members of our podcast team (who are co-authors of this article) are university students. A middle school student also joined us on this project and provided some fun ideas and a great deal of insight about middle schoolers' preferences. What could youth bring to your podcasting project?
- *Who can you learn from?* We found it helpful to connect with an experienced local podcaster who provided us with tips for getting started. This experienced podcaster, who is also an involved 4-H volunteer, was happy to help us learn. She even joined us as a guest on the podcast to discuss her communications career!
- *How will you help youth reflect on the podcast's content?* Our podcast team designed a reflection worksheet with prompts for individual listeners to work through on their own. Other podcast teams (Gonzales et al, 2021) have found discussion guides to be effective.

## CONCLUSION

Creating podcasts allows Extension professionals to reach youth in a new and exciting way. Podcasting can be a free and fun way to provide new information and promote further involvement. They can provide an opportunity to elevate youth voices or enhance youth-adult partnerships. If your 4-H or Extension program is looking to attract more youth or further nurture relationships with involved youth, it may be worth considering adding podcasts to your youth engagement toolbox.

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