

WBD Podcasts Best Practices

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Table of Contents

Podcast Deliverables: Asset List.....	3
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Content Best Practices & Specs

Podcast Audio Specs & File Naming Conventions.....	5
Ad Breaks & Dynamic Ad Insertion (DAI).....	7
Podcast Explicit Language & Content Warnings Best Practices.....	9
Podcast Credits: Language Guidelines.....	10
Podcast Trailer & Promo Best Practices.....	12

Delivery Process

Podcast Delivery Process	14
Episode Delivery Assets.....	16
Show Notes Template.....	18

Podcast Deliverables: Asset List

Episode Assets

Podcast Audio Specs and File Naming Conventions, Updated Nov 2021, (page 5)

- 8x:30min fully mixed podcast episodes [.mp3]
 - Each episode will have 4 versions: RC1, RC2, FC, LC
- All Multitracks & Stems [.wav].

Trailer and Promos

Podcast Trailer and Promo Best Practices (page 12) ; please also refer to Audio Specs.

- **1x Trailer**, 1:30-2:00 minutes [.mp3]

For HBO/Max Podcasts:

- **1x Podcast Promo**, :60 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Max, or wherever you get your podcasts.”
- **1x Podcast promo A**, :30 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Max, or wherever you get your podcasts.”
- **1x Podcast promo B**, :30 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Max, or wherever you get your podcasts.”
- **1x Podcast Promo**, :15 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Max, or wherever you get your podcasts.”

For US Nets Podcasts:

- **1x Podcast promo A**, :30 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.”
- **1x Podcast promo B**, :30 seconds
 - “Listen to [Series Title] on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.”

Paper Deliverables:

Podcast Explicit Language & Content Warnings Best Practices (page 9)

Podcast Credits Language Guidelines (page 10)

Episode delivery assets (page 16)

- **Pre-Production Documents:** All pre-production documents (prep, outlines, scripts, etc.) should be submitted to network point of contact ahead of episode recordings.
 - **Scripts or transcripts with timestamps of each RC and FC**
 - **Series Description:** A brief description of the program/episodes/series used for internal and external promotion of the program.
 - 1x long description: 100 words or more
 - 1x short description: 250 characters
 - **Episode Title for each episode**
 - **Episode Description for each episode:**
 - 1x long description: 100 words
 - 1x short description: 1 sentence
-

Podcast Audio Specs & File Naming Conventions

File Types / Encoding for Master Audio Files

Please review the following specifications for the final master audio files that will be published via all major podcast distributors including Apple, Spotify, Deezer and Amazon Music.

- **Stereo MP3 at 128 Kbps CBR (Constant Bit Rate):** Spotify does not support AAC, so please use MP3.
- **48 kHz/24 bit Stereo:** 48 kHz is preferred
- **-16 LUFS for stereo files** Loudness has a +/- 2 dB tolerance
- Broadcast radio and television uses -24 LUFS in the US, -23 LUFS in the rest of the world. That means that when working with clips from linear programming, volume must be increased to reach -16 LUFS.
- Audio bitrates affect audio quality but also increase file size. We recommend keeping the overall file size below 100 MB to keep streaming sites happy.
- We recommend using Constant Bit Rate (CBR) over Variable Bit Rate.

Audio File Formats for Audio Stems

Please deliver each audio element as a separate WAV file. Guests should be recorded on separate tracks whenever possible.

- **WAV files**
- **Dialogue stems** should be **mono** and all other stems should be **stereo**
- **48 kHz/24 bit Stereo**

File Naming Conventions for SharePoint

File naming conventions for audio: We will create and share your project folders when your project is ready to start delivering. Please name your file using the below conventions.

Folder Hierarchy

Network Podcast>Show Title>Season>Final Episodes>Episode #1 (or Title/Guest Name)

Audio Bitrates

Audio bitrates affect audio quality but also increase file size. We recommend keeping the overall file size below 100 MB to keep streaming sites happy.

- 320 kbps – Virtually indistinguishable from original CDs

- 128 kbps – Typical for musical MP3s and quality podcasts
- 64 kbps – Common bitrate for speech podcasts
- 48 kbps – Reasonably common for longer speech podcasts
- 32 kbps – Poor, usually used to reduce download times

LUFS (Loudness)

“Loudness Units Full Scale” measures average loudness over the length of the track.

0 dB is the loudest. -16 LUFS is actually quieter than 0 LUFS. Different distributors recommend different LUFS levels, but we optimize for Apple Podcasts:

- Spotify -16 LUFS
- Apple Podcasts -16 LUFS

Quality Control

- **Plosives:** Use a pop filter to eliminate the burst of air heard on p’s & b’s.
- **Mouth Clicks:** It’s easier to prevent noisy mouth-clicks than to deal with them in post Mic placement, the speaker projecting and being well-hydrated can help prevent mouth-clicks.
- **Noise reduction:** may be necessary in situations where the guest was recorded in a noisy area or didn’t have access to a quality microphone.
- **Music bed/intro/outro balance:** dialogue should be clear and unencumbered by music.
- **Stereo/Mono:** export in stereo with music in stereo and the dialogue in the center.
- **Channels:** use separate tracks for guest/host and make sure they’re balanced.
- **In/Out:** Be sure to trim remaining silence at the end of the final audio master.

*We recommend using professional noise reduction software such as [iZotope’s RX](#).

Ad Breaks & Dynamic Ad Insertion (DAI)

All WBD podcasts utilize DAI tools for our monetization. A dynamic ad is an advertisement that is not part of a podcast's audio file, but can instead be inserted, moved around, and deleted over time. If you've ever listened to a podcast in the summertime that you know was recorded around Halloween and heard ads for Memorial Day sales, you're most likely hearing a dynamically inserted ad.

Ad markers

Regardless of whether or not we currently monetize your podcast, WBD requires a midroll placement in each full episode of a podcast (we do not include midrolls in trailers). Ad markers allow for the ability to retroactively monetize a show with ads.

For US Nets podcasts (anything non-HBO or Max), we must include two midroll breaks.

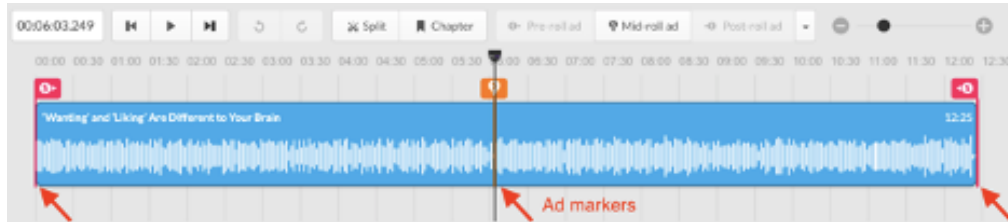
When delivering a podcast episode, please include/share the timestamp(s) of one, or if a US Nets show two, midroll ad insertion points in the following format: **Ad Marker: 00:00:00**

Ad positioning

There are 3 types of ads can be positioned in a podcast:

- **Pre-roll ads** play at the very beginning of an episode, before any of the actual episode begins.
- **Mid-roll ads** are placed around the middle of the show. Mid-roll ads should never be placed before the first full segment of a podcast (the first segment *after* the intro in the first 30-60 seconds of the show).
 - When placing a mid-roll marker between segments, **do not** pad it within more than 2.5 total seconds of silence ("dead air"). This will help maintain the pacing of a podcast episode in the event that an ad will not be dynamically inserted due to low inventory.
 - Please use a music or sound cue to mark the ad break, rather than the host saying "we'll be right back".
 - If a **US Nets podcast**, the first midroll should be placed at least 10 minutes after the pre-roll. The second midroll should be placed at least 10 minutes before the post-roll. There is flexibility with this timing depending on the content, but these are broad guidelines to follow.
- **Post-roll ads** are placed at the very end of an episode, after the podcast has concluded.

Example of ad placements:



Segmentation

Audiences must receive value from listening to WBD-quality content *before* they are served with an advertisement. This means that the first mid-roll ad should appear **after the show’s intro and first full segment**.

When recording a dynamic ad, it should sound “natural” — meaning, the average listener may not even notice that the ad was recorded at a different time than the rest of the episode. To do this:

- Use the same recording and editing style that you use for a typical episode of the podcast you’re working on.
 - For example, if two hosts banter back and forth in every episode, then they should share the responsibility of reading ad copy.
 - Host delivery style and energy level should match that of a typical episode.
 - Match production conventions. Make sure all loudness levels and dynamics match those of a typical episode.
 - If you don’t play music anywhere other than during the intro/outro of the show, then don’t add music to the ad break.

Podcast Explicit Language Best Practices

Explicit Language and Content Warnings

WBD recommends that there should be no bleeping of curse words/swearing in a podcast episode. Podcasts are not governed by the Federal Communications Commission, but if the content contains sensitive material, WBD recommends including an explicit tag. The WBD podcast team will include this tag at distribution like below:

TUESDAY

Ep.2: Investigating Murder **E**



Examples of Sensitive Material

- "shit," "fuck," "cunt," "cocksucker," "motherfucker," "asshole," etc.
- Content such as racism, cultural sensitivities, murder, rape, sexual explicitness, suicide or self harm, or graphic acts of violence.
- No EAS (Emergency Alert System) tones are allowed in any part of the show, usage from either from news clips, in sound design, or as a bed, etc.
- If the episode includes any type of casual **hate speech, slurs, or insensitivities**, please flag to the WBD Podcast Team.

AUDIO

From a production standpoint, you may also include a recorded tag at the **top** of each episode. No musicbed, dry only.

Examples:

- "This episode may contain explicit language. Listener discretion is advised."
- "This episode may contain explicit language and themes such as [racism, murder, sexually explicit acts, and rape]. Listener discretion is advised."
- "This episode contains mentions of [sexual assault, self harm, explicit domestic violence, etc]. If you or anyone you know is struggling with [suicidal thoughts, or violence, etc], help is available at [insert resource]."
- "Content warning at minute mark 25:11 to 25:24, there is a brief mention of [suicidal ideation.]"

Podcast Credits: Best Practices

WBD will honor podcast/audio journalism standards and recognize the production teams' involvement in each podcast.

The following language for credits is required.

Seasonal or Limited Series

For seasonal or limited series, only a finale episode will contain full production credits in narration.

COPY FOR ALL EPISODES PRIOR TO FINAL EPISODE

"[PODCAST TITLE] is produced by [PRODUCTION COMPANY] for [NETWORK and/or MAX]."

*** LIST EITHER THE NETWORK and/or MAX.
If cobranded use both.**

"You can follow our show wherever you get your podcasts and we'd love it if you could take a second to leave us a 5-star review on Apple Podcasts."

COPY FOR FINALE EPISODE

"[PODCAST TITLE] is produced by [PRODUCTION COMPANY] for [NETWORK and/or MAX]."

*** LIST EITHER THE NETWORK and/or MAX.
If cobranded use both.**

NETWORK KEY ROLES

"[Network EP is TK, or another intimately involved network producer]."

EXTERNAL AUDIO-FIRST PRODUCTION COMPANY KEY ROLES

"[Hosted, written and produced by TK. Story Producers are TK. Producers are TK. Executive Producers are TK. Score is by TK, Sound Designer/Audio Engineer is TK.]"

***PRODUCTION COMPANY CAN CHOOSE WHO TO IDENTIFY AND ORGANIZE.**

"You can follow our show wherever you get your podcasts and we'd love it if you could take a second to leave us a 5-star review on Apple Podcasts."

Ongoing Series

For ongoing series, all episodes must contain the following production credits in narration.

COPY FOR ALL EPISODES

“[PODCAST TITLE] is produced by [PRODUCTION COMPANY] for [NETWORK or DISCOVERY PLUS].”

*** LIST EITHER THE NETWORK OR DISCOVERY PLUS, NOT BOTH.**

“You can follow our show wherever you get your podcasts and we'd love it if you could take a second to leave us a 5-star review on Apple Podcasts.”

Podcast Trailer & Promo Best Practices

Definitions

Trailer: A podcast trailer is an elevator pitch designed to quickly grab a listener's attention and convince them to listen to the show. Trailers are typically released in advance of a show's premiere or new season, and are evergreen to the podcast feed. The trailer should feature the series' most exciting content, sound bites, and quotes.

:30 Promo: A promo is an audio ad promoting our podcast to a new audience. It can appear on an external podcast network as a pre-, mid- or postroll ad, or as a house ad on our own podcast network.

Trailer Best Practices & Specs

A podcast trailer is an elevator pitch designed to quickly grab a listener's attention and convince them to listen to the show. Trailers are typically released in advance of a show's premiere or new season, and are evergreen to the podcast feed. The trailer should feature the series' most exciting content, sound bites, and quotes.

- 1:30-2:00 minutes
- Trailers follow the same production guidelines as series episodes.
- Include the word “**podcast**” and the name of the podcast at the **top and tail of the trailer**.
- CTA at the end of the trailer should be “Listen to [Podcast Name] wherever you get your podcasts.”
- No ad-breaks
- Listen to [an example on Spotify here](#).

The trailer for each show should incorporate the following:

- **Introduce the show name.** Introduce the show and hosts to let people know what and who they're listening to. Provide a brief explanation of what the show is about. Make the trailer about the listener and what *they* will get out of listening.
- **Share highlights.** Find moments from the show that reflect what the listening experience is like. If the show features guest interviews, then include clips from the show of engaging, memorable quotes. If the show is narrative/scripted, lead with details that help establish your narrative.
- **Make the listener want more.** Near the end of the highlights, build some tension or curiosity by introducing the problem in a story, providing a sudden twist, or leaving them with an unanswered question by a guest.

- **Incorporate parallel audio elements.** Please use clips, archival audio, or clips from recorded episodes if possible.
 - Ex: If one of the podcast's strengths is the dynamic between multiple hosts, then include a clip of their banter in the trailer.
- **Do not include a launch date in the trailer audio**, as it will be evergreen, and new listeners will continue to find and listen to the trailer after launch.

:30 Promos Best Practices & Specs

Promo A and Promo B should be slightly different in their creative/clips they use. This helps keep the creative fresh and make sure we have two different spots we can use to promote the show without falling into repetition with our promos.

- Trailers follow the same production guidelines as series episodes.
- State the series title at the top **and** tail of the promos if possible.
- Include the word "podcast" at the top or tail of the trailer.
- Trailer and promos should include a music bed.
- Include the following CTA at the end of the trailer and promos:
 - "Listen to [Series Title] wherever you get your podcasts."
- **Do not include a launch date in the audio**, or time markers of any kind (i.e. No "coming soon," "next week."), as these promos should be evergreen.

Podcast Final Episode Delivery Process

All final episodes are published to our hosting platforms and RSS feeds by the WBD podcast team. In order to ensure that all episodes get uploaded and scheduled on time, please follow the guidelines for final episode delivery.

Deadlines

All final episode assets should be uploaded to SharePoint a week before the episode is set to publish. If an episode is late, please notify the podcast team.

Assets to Include For Delivery

Every final episode delivery must include the following assets, all uploaded to the relevant Final episode folder in the SharePoint (more below).

- **Master audio file** (.mp3)

MP3 format is preferred. If possible, please include metadata in the ID3 tags of the file itself (i.e. episode title, description, episode number when applicable) so that it auto-populates when uploaded to a podcast host. There is an option to edit ID3 tags within most audio editing programs as well as iTunes and Windows Media Player.

- **Show notes** in a doc
 - Episode title
 - Episode description/show notes
 - Episode rating (Clean or Explicit)
 - Ad break timestamp

- **Transcript** in a doc

Where to Deliver Assets

Every podcast has a folder nested under a larger shared SharePoint. You will be shared on the folder to upload final audio and show notes to when your project is ready to start delivering.

Folder hierarchy: Network>Show Title>Season>**Final Episodes**

When you have been shared on the Final Episode folder, simply create a folder for each final episode, where you should upload the master audio and show notes document.

How to Deliver Assets

- 1. Upload final audio and show notes to the “Final Episode” folder in SharePoint** (specific to your network/show). We will create and share your “Final Episode” folders when your project is ready to start delivering.
 - Please upload audio and show notes in the following to Season #>Final Episodes>Episode #1 or Title/Guest Name)
 - If you need additional members of your team/production company to be added to the SharePoint folder, please email margaret.kelley@wbd.com, emily.servodidio@wbd.com, and millie.christiedervaux@wbd.com.
- 2. Notify the WBD Team that master audio file and show notes have been uploaded to folder.** Please add links to the files in the email.
 - To: margaret.kelley@wbd.com, emily.servodidio@wbd.com, millie.christiedervaux@wbd.com, and lisa.decanio@wbd.com
 - CC: Network/WBD EP and relevant network social teams (comms, social etc). If you are not sure who to include, ask your Network/WBD EP.
- 3. Email Subject Line:** “FOR DELIVERY: [Show name] - [Episode #] - [Episode name if relevant]”.
- 4. If there are no episodes in a given week,** please still send an email specifying that there will be no delivery that week.

Example Delivery Email

Email subject: “FOR DELIVERY: HGTV Obsessed - Ep.23 - David Bromstad”

“Hi all, sending over the final audio for DB’s episode.

- **Release Date:** 6/10/21
 - **HGTV Obsessed David Bromstad FINAL AUDIO:** *Linked*
 - **Show Notes:** *Linked*
 - **Transcript:** *Linked*
 - **Mid-roll Timestamp:** 11:29
 - **Rating:** *Explicit”*
-

Episode Delivery Assets

Best Practices and Guidelines for Delivery

The following components need to be delivered together in order to publish an episode.

For more information on how and where to upload final assets for each episode, including the master audio file and accompanying show notes, please see our Episode Delivery Process (*page 8*) guide.

Audio file

MP3 format is preferred. If possible, please include metadata in the ID3 tags of the file itself (i.e. episode title, description, episode number when applicable) so that it auto-populates when uploaded to a podcast host. There is an option to edit ID3 tags within most audio editing programs as well as iTunes and Windows Media Player.

Episode title

- Episode title format should be consistent throughout the season
- **Aim for 60~ characters** (must be under 255 characters).
 - Ensure first 60 characters are impactful to avoid truncation of critical information in some mobile views.
- **Include any keywords or guest names** that would be valuable for SEO
 - Ex. If your episode features a famous guest or a household name, include it in the episode title so that it will show up when listeners search for that keyword in their podcast app.
- Please indicate the episode's title in the show notes *as it will appear when published*
 - I.e. don't include any quotation marks if you don't want them to actually be included in the published episode title.
- Do not include the podcast title, episode numbers, or any HTML/formatting (i.e. bold/italics, bullets, etc).

Episode description

- **First 120 characters of the description** should include the most important information about the episode, or high level information.
 - This is the information a listener will see before the description is truncated.

- **Include relevant keywords and guest names for SEO**, as the description will help boost the episode’s relevance when listeners are searching for similar topics.
- **Include any content warnings** about sensitive topics including suicide, self harm, sexual assault, etc. For more information on how to write a content warning, please refer to our full guide (*page 18*).
- **Do not include any HTML/formatting** (i.e. bold/italics, bullets, etc).
- If using links, **do not hyperlink**. Paste the entire URL, as hyperlinks do not always translate on podcast platforms.

Explicit / Clean Rating

Explicit: Y/N

Individual podcast episodes can be marked with an “explicit” rating that is displayed in Apple Podcasts. If your episode is uncensored or contains adult themes/language, please indicate that it should be marked “explicit.”

For more information on what qualifies as explicit, see the section on Explicit Language & Content Warnings.

Ad markers

Ad Marker: 00:00:00

Ad markers allow for the ability to monetize a show with ads or promo spots.

When delivering a podcast episode, include the timestamp of one midroll ad insertion point.

Show Notes Examples

Podcast: And Just Like That... The Writer's Room

Episode Title: Sex and the City: Celebrating 25 years with Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon and Kristin Davis

Description: And Just Like That...The Writers Room is honoring the 25th anniversary of Sex and the City with an exclusive, special episode featuring stars Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon, and Kristin Davis in conversation with writer, director, and executive producer Michael Patrick King. For the first time ever, the four publicly discuss the origins of the groundbreaking series, the evolution of the iconic characters, and never-before-told secrets behind the show. Plus, they reminisce about guest stars, the clothes and, of course, the sex.

Rating: Explicit

Midroll Ad Stamp: 11:29

Transcript: [Link](#)

Podcast: Shark Week: The Podcast

Episode Title: From Shark Bite Survivor to Shark Advocate - Mike Coots

Description: Luke Tipple welcomes professional photographer Mike Coots, who lost his leg to a tiger shark attack when he was only 18. But after his horrific injury, he came to love sharks, and became a lifelong advocate for their safety. Luke and Mike discuss his career, his love for photographing sharks, and how to positively approach the big life-changing moments that can happen to any of us.

Rating: Clean

Midroll Ad Stamp: 07:17

Transcript: [Link](#)