

## Podcasting for teachers: Q&A with Les Howles

For many teachers, the term “podcasting” has come to mean “online audio lectures.” But there is a difference. In podcasting, the audio file is automatically downloaded to the learner’s computer. Then the learner can listen to it “on the go” with an iPod.

LERN interviewed online media expert Les Howles of the University of Wisconsin at Madison about podcasting. Here’s his update:

This is a very fascinating topic. Podcasting is definitely a form of mobile learning combined with auditory.

Here are a few answers to your questions:

**Question:** *If one is doing audio lectures, they’re already posted and students can gain access anytime. Is that right?*

**Les’ Answer:** That is correct, but they can’t necessarily play it while “on the go” unless they download the audio file (in an MP3 format) and transfer it to their MP3 player. The biggest use of podcasts is when learners are on the go.



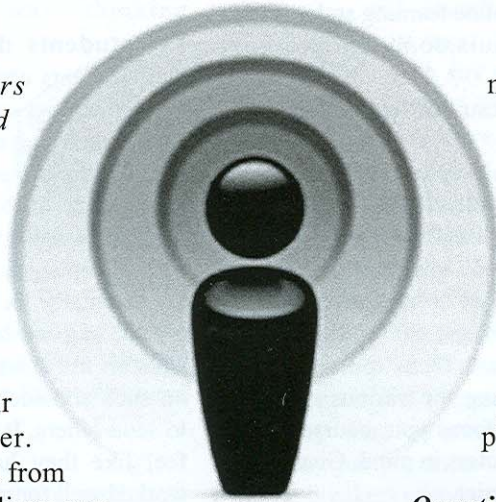
Les Howles

**Question:** *Learners can also download audios to an iPod already, right?*

**Les’ Answer:** Right, provided the audio file on the web site is in a compatible format for their portable MP3 player. When you download from a web site I don’t believe you can directly place the audio file onto your iPod. You need to copy it to your computer’s hard drive, then transfer it to the iPod. If you subscribe to the podcast it is automatically copied to your iPod when you connect it to your computer.

**Question:** *Does it make sense for teachers to record Podcasts weekly and Podcast. They’re all “prerecorded.”*

**Les’ Answer:** I know. This seems a little strange to me. It seems that many educators are playing the role of a weekly audio news



magazine reporter, so they create weekly podcasts for their supposed audience. The weekly podcast is completely arbitrary.

**Question:** *It doesn’t make sense to automatically download to a student’s computer. Isn’t it better to make students get into the online classroom?*

**Les’ Answer:** Yes, that’s correct. For some content it makes no sense to podcast it. For example, we have a communicative disorders course that tried podcasts of voice sample of vocal disorders. Students needed to compare different voices and fill out an evaluation form. The Podcast format was awkward. We’ve gone back to putting the audio links on a web site.

The big key here is mobile learning. Any material that someone can listen to while on the go will be acceptable, provided the content is not overly complex and not too lengthy.