

# 10 Production mistakes podcasters make

## 1. Having bad volumes

Whether audio or video, every podcast has multiple pieces of audio where volume should be either consistent or contrasting.

- **Volume between hosts** should be consistent. A compressor is a great way to smooth this out.
- **Volume between voice and background** should contrast well enough that the background never makes the foreground hard to hear. If you want people to hear the background better, stop talking and turn up its volume. Foreground and background shouldn't be competing.
- **Volume between segments**, like your intro music, segues, and studio versus interview audio should be consistent. Don't blast your audience's ears with your music and then force them to turn up the volume for your voice.
- **Overall volume of the episode** should be consistent so that the beginning isn't quieter than the end, or that people don't have to adjust the volume while they listen or watch.
- **Volume across episodes** should reach a standard of -16 LUFS and maximum true peak of -1 dB. As more podcasters adopt this proposed standard, listeners/viewers won't have to reach for the volume controls when switching from one podcast to another.

## 2. Publishing poor audio quality

The audio quality is the most important production quality for audio *and* video podcasts. You could get poor audio quality from several things.

- **Bad equipment**—a cheap microphone, faulty preamp, etc.
- **Bad environment**—it's too noisy because of something nearby, or you can't control the background sound.
- **Ignorance of the tools**—misuse of a compressor/limiter/gate can ruin your audio, so can software and other hardware tools.
- **Other problems**—keep audio cables away from power cables, try to convert the audio signal to digital before it reaches your computer, etc.

### **3. Writing few or no show notes**

Try to have at least 300 words in your show notes. I like to write my show notes like a blog post. This helps me be findable by search engines and be more accessible to people who need help but don't have time to listen to a full episode. Some content, like comedy, can get away with simpler notes. But most podcasters could use more thorough show notes.

### **4. Editing and processing too much or too little**

Editing is deleting, moving, and mixer audio. This could be adding intros, outros, or segues; blending voices; or removing sections to improve the presentation. You can over-edit by making awkward cuts or removing too much silence. You can also under-edit by not removing the distraction.

Processing is enhancing or de-emphasizing frequencies, amplifications, and other dynamics of audio. This could be compression, noise removal, equalization, volume normalization, and other effects. You can over-process and literally cause headaches (like bass boosting or some multiband compression), and you can under-process and make the audio difficult to hear in different environments.

### **5. Talking over each other**

You may be able to understand a conversation in person when multiple people are talking, but this doesn't work for the end consumer who hears everything in the same audio position and at about the same volume level. Talking over each other can create an editing nightmare if you need to save any of the content.

As much as possible, see the face of the person you're talking to, so you can pick up on subtle cues that they have something to say or that they're finished talking.

### **6. Recording onto the same track**

Recording everything into the same track isn't always a bad thing, but it can greatly reduce your flexibility. For example, if your remote guest or cohost is coughing while you're talking, you can't clean that up in a mixed track. But if you're on separate tracks, you can remove the other person's noise while you're talking, or vice versa.

This is also great for your soundtrack—sound clips, intro and outro music, and such. This gives you the freedom to end your podcast in your own way without rushing to finish before the music, or stalling as the music plays.

With either need, simply splitting your recording between left and right channels can be an easy way to get multi-track recording. Just remember to make the tracks mono before you publish!

## 7. “Buzzard-circling”

You have probably seen vultures and other scavengers circling a dead animal. They'll fly around and around and around before they'll land. Don't talk like that in your podcast!

Watch out for unnecessary “introductions” where you're wasting time filling the air with words while you figure out what you want to say. For example, one might respond to a question with, “I think that's a great question and I appreciate your asking it. It's a really important question to consider because there could be many answers. I've researched this a lot and have come to the conclusion that the answer is yes.” All that time, you could have paused and just said, “Yes,” and *then* expounded as necessary.

## 8. Including unwanted noises

Your voice is the most important thing of your podcast, so don't let background or other unwanted noises distract from it! These things can make listening difficult, or make you sound entirely amateur.

Here are some examples of unwanted and background noises.

- **Headphone feedback**—Your headphones are too loud or leak too much audio. This will be especially noticeable if you have to shift the alignment of tracks.
- **Mouth noises**—Lip-smacks, breaths, and other weird noises can gross out some people and be a major distraction.
- **Background noise**—Move away from any noise that could make it into your recording.
- **Device sounds**—Mute your computer, set your phones to “do not disturb” or turn them off, and try to eliminate the chance of any unwanted and distracting audio.

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## 9. Not allowing for editing

Stuff does go wrong sometimes. You can make your editing a lot easier if you let yourself correct the mistake and move on. If you stumble over an important word, just pause and try the sentence again. That will be much easier for editing than trying to splice just that correct piece in with everything else.

You can try any of the following to help you mark the places you know will need editing.

- Place a marker with your recording device or application.
- Record 5 or 10 seconds of silence.
- Make three loud claps and look for that in your audio track.
- Write down the time of the mistake and edit from your list going from end to beginning.

## 10. Using poor mic technique

You or your guest may not know what all the microphone records. Poor mic technique is a quick giveaway to someone who may not know what they're doing. Ensure that you educate unfamiliar guests on some basics to avoid.

- **Bumping the mic**—General rule: never touch the mic or anything connected to it while recording (unless you have appropriate shock treatment).
- **Plosives**—Talk at an angle from the microphone instead of directly into it to avoid the amateur pops from letters like T's, P's, and S's.
- **Too far from the microphone**—You'll have to jack up the gain and pick up more room noise, reverb, and reduce the clarity of the voice.
- **Too close to the microphone**—You'll increase the mouth noises, plosives, and potentially cause destructive clipping in your audio.