



## *ACTIVIST CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING*

### *EDUCATE HANDBOOK*

*Earning your ACT Education Tag, the first step towards your Youth Activist Certification, means taking on a project to raise awareness in your community. Raising awareness is an essential part of being an activist – no one can take action about things they know nothing about! Whether you teach people in your family, school, temple or church, or any other community organization, you'll need to figure out two important things: how to educate yourself and how to educate others.*



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## ***EDUCATING YOURSELF***

As Youth Activists, you're going to need to understand what genocide is in general, and what is happening in Darfur. Just being a part of an Activist Circle means that you probably know more than most people about these two things. But if you don't, then you soon will! When we add your knowledge to the knowledge of your fellow Activists then you can probably paint a pretty good picture of what's going on.

But to be able to teach others about genocide and Darfur, you're going to have to know enough to answer some main questions. And that means doing a little research.

Here are some of the main questions you're going to want to find answers to. You may want to research each of these as a group, or you might want to assign one or two questions to individual members of your Activist Circle, and then report back at your next meeting.

1. What is genocide?
2. How often does genocide happen?
3. What is the conflict in Darfur about?
4. Who are the parties to the conflict in Darfur?
5. Is what's happening in Darfur really genocide? How do we know?
6. What is the UN, and what can it do about Darfur?
7. What can the US do about Darfur?
8. What can other international actors (like China, UK or France) do about Darfur?
9. What can individual Activists do about Darfur?
10. What can be done to prevent future genocides?

Another more long term question you should begin thinking about is: What can our group do about Darfur?

There are a lot of really good sources out there. A good place to start is the Jewish World Watch website ([www.jewishworldwatch.org](http://www.jewishworldwatch.org)). JWW's Educate section is pretty helpful. You can download a fact sheet on genocide, a fact sheet on preventing genocide, look up primary sources and other resources on genocide and Darfur, and read a history of the conflict.

But you should never trust just one source! While JWW's website is a good place to start, you should keep looking. Each one of you should make sure to read at least three opinions about each question. Keep track of where you're getting your information – you'll need to let people know that you're collecting information from credible sources.

Here are a few to get you started:

### **Resources on Genocide and Genocide Prevention:**

1. UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>
2. 8 Stages of Genocide (Gregory Stanton): <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stages.htm>
3. Risk Factors of Genocide (Barbara Harff): <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/harffriskssofgenocide.htm>
4. Genocide Watch: <http://www.genocidewatch.org>
5. Prevent Genocide: <http://www.preventgenocide.org>

### **Resources on Darfur:**

1. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Genocide Emergency – Darfur:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/darfur/contents/01-overview/>
2. Human Rights Watch Q&A – Crisis in Darfur:  
[http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/05/darfur8536\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/05/darfur8536_txt.htm)
3. Council on Foreign Relations – Crisis Guide: Darfur (interactive):  
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/13129/>
4. ENOUGH Project: <http://www.enoughproject.org>
5. Save Darfur Coalition: <http://www.savedarfur.org>
6. Genocide Intervention Network: <http://genocideintervention.net>

## ***EDUCATING OTHERS***

Now that you've done all that work to educate yourself, you're ready to spread the word. There are many different ways you can raise awareness in your community about what is happening in Darfur. We've got detailed handbooks (or: plans) for how to do three sample projects below, but please remember that you can ALWAYS design your own project as well. Activism is all about innovation! What exactly does innovation mean?

### **IN·NO·VA·TION:**

1. The act or process of inventing or introducing something new
2. Something newly invented or a new way of doing things

In other words, don't be afraid to make your activism your own!

The sample projects below have varying degrees of difficulty and technology. We recommend that you choose the tool that you believe you can use most effectively in your community. If you're comfortable figuring out technology (or if at least one person in your Activist Circle is), try making a PSA for YouTube or even recording an Activist Podcast. If this sounds dramatically overwhelming, never fear – a presentation to a school or community group can be just as effective.

### **Sample Projects:**

1. Speak Out – Designing and Delivering a Presentation
2. Seeing is Believing – Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on YouTube
3. Make Some Noise – Recording Activist Podcasts

### **Follow up instructions for ALL projects:**

#### **Wikispaces:**

While you're working on your projects, you should be logging in AT LEAST once a month to the A.C.T. wikispace, accessible at <http://ACT-JWW.wikispaces.com>. This will let all the other Activist Circles see what you're doing, and will let all of you share resources between Activist Circles as well. You'd be surprised at the collaboration that can happen just by logging in! You'll find all the info you need on the wikispace in our A.C.T. Wikispace Handbook.

#### **Portfolios:**

We look forward to seeing the work that your Activist Circle does to raise awareness about the genocide in Darfur. But remember that you, as an individual Youth Activist, are responsible for creating a portfolio piece based on your experience once you have completed your project in order to earn your Educate Badge. The portfolio piece can be anything you like: a journal entry, a poster, a collection of photographs, a poem – anything that you feel expresses what you accomplished and what you learned. Feel free to be as creative (or as innovative) as you want!

**SPEAK OUT**  
**Activist Skill: Creating and Delivering a Presentation**

One of the best, simplest and most effective ways to get the word out about genocide is to speak out, publicly. That means creating an effective, organized presentation that your audience – small or large, young or old – can easily understand. Many of you have probably had to give countless presentations in school on a variety of subjects. Here's how you turn those skills into an Activist Presentation.

### **1. Know Your Audience**

Knowing your audience is crucial to making and delivering an effective presentation. This is the most important piece of advice we can offer you about public speaking: **never forget who you're talking to.**

Are you planning on speaking to another class in your school? To a group of parents? To the whole school, or a community group? While it may be tempting to design a presentation first, and then figure out who you can deliver it to, figuring out who you're going to be talking to can go a long way to making your presentation as effective as it possibly could be.

You don't have to figure it out exactly. But ask yourself this: who do you WANT to talk to? Do you want to tell younger kids about what's happening in Darfur? They're certainly interested! Or are you hoping to get your peers interested and involved? Or maybe you think the best way to spread the word is to tell your parents or teachers. With whom will you have the greatest impact? Who will you feel most comfortable talking to?

Once you figure that out, design a presentation for the audience you hope to get. Keep in mind:

- a) **Language** – a room full of six year olds is not the place to pull out language like “preliminary peace negotiations” when what you mean is “sitting down to talk about peace.” Knowing your audience means knowing what they can – and can't – understand.
- b) **Graphics** – When we're talking genocide, we have to be extremely careful of the pictures we show people. Showing that room full of first graders graphic images of what's happening in Darfur isn't going to get you anywhere, and may only give the kids nightmares. But such information may very well be effective with an older audience. Visuals in general are good; but choose wisely.
- c) **Body Language:** Kids especially will need to feel comfortable with you, so smiles, and even sitting down on the floor with them, may be necessary to draw them in to your story. But your peers, or an older audience, will probably expect a more professional atmosphere – read your audience, and be prepared to be flexible with your body language.
- d) **Background Knowledge:** What does your audience likely know already? Don't assume too much, but don't bore them. Are they students at your school who saw a documentary about Darfur, but now you are going to teach them about activism for Darfur? OR, more likely, do they know very little? Do a little research to find out.

### **2. Organize Yourself**

Organizing your presentation is just like organizing an essay. You'll need an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. However you usually organize an essay, whether you use a formal outline or start out with a mind-map brainstorm, do it! Organization is key – the audience has to be able to follow your thoughts.

## **Introduction:**

There are a lot of ways to start a presentation off right. You'll want to grab your audience and get them interested right away. Again, look back at WHO your audience is before figuring out how to do this – would a story work? How about a picture, or asking your audience a question?

## **Body:**

There's a lot out there you could possibly tell your audience, so you're going to have to pick and choose. A good rule is to choose three main themes to tell your audience. When thinking about the whole complex story of Darfur, you might consider the following simple outline:

- I. How the conflict started (just the main points here!)
- II. What is happening now
- III. What is being done

With a little research, you should be able to figure out the main points for each of these themes pretty easily – in fact, you probably know a lot of what you need to know right now!

## **Conclusion:**

The difference between an Activist Presentation and most other presentations people usually give is that this time around, you don't just want your audience to learn something, you want them to actually be inspired to DO something.

In our experience, we'd suggest that you pick ONE thing that your audience can do immediately following your presentation, and one thing they can take home for later. You'd be surprised – people are going to want to join your cause right away, and will need to feel like they've at least done one thing to help immediately. Consider bringing along postcards to President Bush, or a petition, or having green Save Darfur bracelets handy to sell (JWW can provide you with all of these). You might also want to give people websites to go to for more information, or for other ways to take action.

### **3. Choose Visual Aids**

Visual aids are not always necessary, but they are good to include if they help you get your point across. The key is to make sure that they ADD to your speech. Maps and images of Darfur, for example, are usually pretty helpful.

A key to using visual aids well is to keep them simple. Images and uncomplicated graphs are best, but if you want to make a list of points to go over, keep each line of the list brief, and the number of lines just as short. We recommend five words per line and five lines per visual aid.

Remember – not everything you find on Google's image search is up for grabs. Make sure you give credit to wherever you got your images, just in case someone asks you where they can find them as well.

### **4. Tools of the trade – PowerPoint**

Using PowerPoint isn't essential, but it certainly helps. Understanding how to use any technology available to you is always a good skill for the future. As an Activist, moreover, PowerPoint lets you keep your images and helpful facts visible and organized both for you and your audience. Since everything is projected on a screen right in front of you, that means less memorizing or looking back and forth to your notes.

If you've never worked with PowerPoint before, it may seem a little overwhelming. Never fear! There are a ton and a half of PowerPoint tutorials out there on the internet. We found two to be particularly useful:

- Microsoft's Online Tutorial:  
<http://office.microsoft.com/training/training.aspx?AssetID=RC011298761033>
- Welcome to PowerPoint (this one is a little corny, but still helpful!)  
[http://www.actden.com/pp/unit2/2\\_main.htm](http://www.actden.com/pp/unit2/2_main.htm)

**PowerPoint Tip #1** – Treat each slide like a paragraph. That means each slide should have only ONE main idea. You may have more than one statistic or image as evidence for that main idea, but everything should work back to your larger point. Again – just like writing an essay, organization is key here.

**PowerPoint Tip #2** – Keep it simple. PowerPoint has lots of fancy transitions to get from one slide to another – anything from fading in and out to twirls and loop-de-loops. It's fun to play around with them, but again, consider your audience and your message. You may very well be speaking to a group that expects a certain professionalism; keep it simple, and your audience will understand you better. Take a look at all the effects you can use, but remember only to use them if it makes your presentation or your point more effective.

## 5. Practice and Prepare

Rehearsing can make the difference between a good presentation and a great one. The best speakers become that way through constant practice. Not only do you familiarize yourself with your material, but doing so gives you a confidence that your audience will definitely respond to.

People use various methods to rehearse presentations. You can stand in front of a mirror and speak, tape-record or (even better) videotape yourself delivering your presentation, or rehearse your presentation in front of parents or friends. Some things to keep in mind when you're practicing:

- If you're doing a group presentation, make sure everyone knows not only their own parts, but how to transition from one person to another.
- Be conscious of your posture, gestures and body language – you're practicing that as well!
- Ask friends or family to give you constructive feedback about your presentation – what you did well, and what you might need to work on.
- As you improve, see if you can memorize sections without relying on the notes at all. These memorized sections will give you prolonged time to connect to the audience.
- Once you feel very comfortable with the material, don't be afraid to ad-lib some parts when you feel like it. This is your speech and you can say whatever you want; as long as you're sure you can get back on track, try speaking off the cuff. It'll help you sound conversational instead of like a robot.
- Take note of the volume of your voice – you don't want to be too quiet, but you don't want to shout across the room either. Project your voice – find the object furthest away from you in the room, and deliver your speech to it.

Most importantly, **BE CONFIDENT!** Even if you're not, the better you fake it, the more comfortable the audience will be with you, and thus, the more positive vibes they'll throw your way.

## 6. Get a Gig!

If you haven't already done so, you'll need to find an audience to listen to your presentation. Here are some pretty simple options:

1. **Guest Speak in a Classroom:** A younger class in school may very well be interested in the subject of your presentation. Teachers often invite guest speakers, and will probably be thrilled to invite some of their own former students to inspire their current ones to action.
2. **Hold an Assembly:** You've taken the time to educate yourself about genocide and what is happening in Darfur – believe us, you know more than most of the people in your school, and probably more than most of the teachers. Don't think for a second that you're not expert enough to talk to your whole school about what's happening and what can be done – you are! Ask your principal if a whole-school assembly can be arranged.
3. **Speak to Your Synagogue or Church:** Religious institutions almost always have a social action mission. Especially if your synagogue is already a JWW member, you may have an audience readily available that wants to learn more about what is happening in Darfur. Talk to your rabbi, priest or pastor to see if you can arrange a presentation for adults or children.
4. **Speak to Your Youth Group:** As a Youth Activist, you probably have more than one cause that's important to you. Are you a part of another youth group or club? See if you can arrange to deliver your presentation after school or during lunch to one or more of the youth groups the people in your Activist Circle belong to.
5. **Arrange a Community Meeting:** Your public library has meeting rooms that are always being used for public presentations. Talk to the person in charge of events or facilities rentals at your local library about offering a public presentation there. Bonus: They'll probably help you with putting flyers up and advertising your presentation.

**Reminder: Don't forget to publish your presentation on your Activist Circle's wikispace page!**

**SEEING IS BELIEVING**  
**Activist Skill: Recording an Activist Public Service Announcement**

Making a Public Service Announcement (PSA) is an effective way to get the word out about genocide and Darfur to a large amount of people in a short amount of time. The main thing to remember with PSAs is just that – timing. The skill in creating an Activist PSA lies in learning how to simplify your message; that is, how to say a lot in an engaging, but CONCISE, way.

**1. What to Say and How to Say it:**

Think about commercials for a second – the most engaging ones, the ones that work, are the ones that come up with gripping images paired with an effective slogan. They manage to say a whole lot – and convince us of even more – in just 30 seconds.

A PSA can be a little bit longer, or it can be as short as a commercial. What you're looking for is power – you want to create such a powerful, gripping visual display that everyone is convinced of your message, and everyone wants to take action. That means choosing your words, your images, and your music (if any) very wisely.

Activist PSAs take several different forms:

- Many people simply grab images from the internet about Darfur and set them to powerful music, with some text interspersed. A good example of that can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhoV5iF3TiM>
- Other PSAs interview people about their opinions, and have those people actually speak to issues. A good example of that kind of PSA can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrXRiktN3zw>
- Still others focus on just one person, an expert on an issue or a celebrity, like in this PSA with Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the UK: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woBFQdY58Cg>

As a group, you're going to make sure you think about three essential things:

- a) Your message: what do you want your audience to know?
- b) Your tone: what do you want your audience to feel?
- c) Your action: what do you want your audience to do?

Once you know these three things, you can start deciding on how to structure your PSA – what images, music, interviews or actors you want to use, and how you want to organize them.

Like a good essay, organization is going to be key if you really want to get your message across effectively. Two tools may be helpful for working out your organization.

- a) **Planning Sheet and Checklist:** a useful worksheet to help get you started in your group – printed below.
- b) **Story boards:** These let you sketch out the shots or images you want to use, and detail things like audio, dialogue, and transitions in and out. Printed on separate cards, you can reshuffle as necessary while you play with your organization. A good template can be downloaded at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ricky/etec/storybrd.pdf>

**Recording an Activist PSA  
Planning Sheet and Checklist**

Topic/Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Audience: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want your audience to know?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want your audience to feel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want your audience to do?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Audio (possible songs/music you could use)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Visual Images (photos, graphics, news clips, etc):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actors/Interviews:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Technology needed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Shoot Schedule:

Rehearsals: \_\_\_\_\_

Shoot Dates and Locations: \_\_\_\_\_

Editing Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Film your PSA

Depending on the kind of PSA you're interested in filming, you may need different equipment. It's possible you can get by just with your computer if, for example, you are planning to edit together different images you've captured from the internet and add sound and text. If you are planning to shoot interviews or scenes of actors, however, you'll want to consider your hardware a little further.

### Equipment:

If you already have a digital camcorder (one that captures in Digital8, MiniDV, HDV, or any of the DVD formats), then you're ready to start shooting your PSA. Your camcorder will just need some kind of direct connection to your computer, either through the USB or FireWire ports or by inserting the DVD you've recorded. Once you've downloaded the video from the camera, you can easily bring it into an editing program to play with it some more. Many cameras come with a specific editing software for your computer.

If you have an analog camcorder (one that uses VHS, VHS-C, SVHS-C, 8mm, or Hi8 tape), you can still get your videos onto the computer. It will require an extra step and some additional equipment, though, since these camcorders are not usually equipped with computer connections. You will need to digitize the video with a converter box, which will convert the analog signal from the camcorder to a digital signal that the computer can understand. After the video has been digitized, you can start editing it.

### Editing and Improving Your Videos

If you want to be a bit more hands-on with your video, most new computers come with basic video-editing software installed (like Apple's iMovie or Windows MovieMaker). Once you have copied the video from your phone, camera, or camcorder to your computer, you can bring the video into these programs. Most allow you to not only edit the video, but add effects, titles, and music to make your video look and sound more interesting.

Here are links to some handy-dandy tutorials for each of these basic programs:

#### iMovie (Apple) –

<http://www.apple.com/support/imovie/tutorial/index.html>  
<http://www.atomiclearning.com/imovie3x>

#### Windows MovieMaker (PC) –

<http://www.atomiclearning.com/moviemaker2>  
<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/create/1stmovie.mspx>

In general, the website Atomic Learning ([www.atomiclearning.com](http://www.atomiclearning.com)) has tutorials for hundreds of different programs. Just search their tutorials by name, and you're sure to find instructions for the software that is already uploaded on your or your school's computer.

## 3. Uploading and Distributing your PSA

The good news is that all the hard work is done – you've made and edited a strong, powerful Activist PSA. Now you just need people to see it – lots of people, and fast.

To the Internet! Posting your PSA on YouTube or Google Video can potentially reach hundreds of thousands of people in a matter of minutes. Bonus: it's beyond easy.

### Uploading to YouTube:

- a) Visit [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
- b) Start an account with them – it's free, you'll just need to provide an email address. If you don't want to use a personal address, you can set up a yahoo, hotmail, or gmail account for your Activist Circle, and use that to set up your account.
- c) Click "upload video" in the upper right-hand corner of the page
- d) Fill out the form provided, ensuring that your video is no longer than 10 minutes and no bigger than 100 MB
- e) Click the "upload video" button at the bottom of the page.

**Note:** YouTube recommends that you save your videos as either QuickTime .MOV, Windows .AVI, or .MPG files— these are the most common formats and they work well within their system. They specifically recommend the MPEG4 (Divx, Xvid) format at 320x240 resolution with MP3 audio. Resizing your video to these specifications before uploading will help your clips look better on YouTube.

**YouTube Help Center:** [http://www.google.com/support/youtube/?hl=en\\_US](http://www.google.com/support/youtube/?hl=en_US)

### Uploading to Google Video:

- a) Visit <http://video.google.com>
- b) Click the "upload your videos" link at the top right-hand corner
- c) Sign in with someone's gmail account, or click the link to create a new gmail account. Bonus: This is the perfect time to create a shared gmail account for your Activist Circle!
- d) Fill out the form provided
- e) Click "upload video" at the bottom of the page

**Note:** You may be asked to download Google's "video uploader" program – it's small, and safe, but if you're using a school computer you should tell your administrator what you're doing, and ask permission. Google also recommends that you keep your videos no bigger than 100 MB.

**Google Video Help:** <http://video.google.com/support/>

**Reminder: Don't forget to embed your PSA on your Activist Circle's wikispace page!**

### 4. Check in!

It's not enough just to post your PSA and end it there – check in on it! At both Google Video and YouTube you can check to see how many people have viewed your PSA, and even ask for comments. Send emails to everyone on your email list, asking people to watch your PSA, and to act by passing the PSA on to everyone they know. You may also consider burning your PSA onto DVDs or CDs and distribute them at your school.

**MAKE SOME NOISE**  
***Activist Skill: Recording an Activist Podcast***

You know about genocide and Darfur, in fact, you're positively brimming with information and ideas. Now you want the world to know as well. Recording an Activist Podcast – a sort of "radio" broadcast available for download on the internet – may very well be for you.

### **1. What to Say and How to Say it**

People record podcasts about anything and everything – political views, mock interviews with their pets, or something practical like a "live" trade-show report to share with coworkers. Same goes for Activist podcasts – you can find podcasted interviews with important politicians and activists, you can find sharing the latest news, or you can find podcasts that ask people to take specific action.

Now that you know as much about Darfur as you do, it can be a little overwhelming to figure out what exactly you want to say. So before you pick up the microphone, you're going to want to do some planning.

As a group, you're going to want to make sure you think about three essential things:

- a) Your message: what do you want your audience to know?
- b) Your tone: what do you want your audience to feel?
- c) Your action: what do you want your audience to do?

Once you know these three things, you can start deciding on how you want to get your message across. There are a lot of different ways you can broadcast information, such as:

1. **Interviewing Activists:** Finding a local activist to interview – whether a fellow student, a teacher, a religious leader or someone who works for the cause full-time – can bring an interesting context to your podcast. By interviewing someone who works on the issue every day, you can make the both the issue and the action you're hoping to inspire more personal.
2. **Up-to-Date News:** You may choose to structure your podcast as a news program, offering the latest news about Darfur for a wider audience. This will give your audience a lot of information to back up any action you ask them to take.
3. **Mock Interviews or Sketches:** Don't be afraid to make things up! So long as you keep the facts straight, and have a disclaimer at the beginning and end of your podcast that your interviews or sketches are "dramatizations," feel free to write a fictional script. This could be anything – from mock interviews with key players, to a radio play dramatizing stories of refugees – any thing you can dream up.

You may be thinking of adding music to your podcast – it can in fact be very effective. But please remember that you need permission from the owners of that music – often easier said than done. Even if you're not making money off of your podcast, copyright rules still have to be respected. Luckily, there's an alternative – you can use Creative Commons-licensed music, which gives you permission to use it how you want to. Go to [www.creativcommons.org](http://www.creativcommons.org) to learn more.

**Podcasting Tip #1:** Don't be afraid to use humor! Genocide, and specifically what is happening in Darfur, is a serious subject indeed. Certainly you do not want to broadcast anything offensive or insensitive to victims or survivors of genocide, or to anyone at all. But tastefully done, humor or satire can be a great tool for educating the public. It makes the information accessible, even as it points out the absurd.

**Podcasting Tip #2:** To get a feel for the style or content used by different podcasters, there's nothing better than to listen to a few yourself. A good place to start is Podcast Alley.  
<http://www.podcastalley.com/>

**Podcasting Tip #3:** If you don't have a precise script, you should at least write an outline to help you avoid long, awkward silences in your show.

## 2. Record Your Podcast

Now that you've figured out what you want to say and how you're going to say it, it's time to contemplate hardware. You can get pretty fancy about equipment, but really you'll need only a few basic things:

- a) **A laptop computer with an Internet connection:** It's not required, but most podcasting gurus recommend that your computer run a recent version of Windows (Windows 2000 or newer), Mac OS X (Mac OS X 10.3 or newer), or Linux (such as RedHat Linux 6.0 or newer).
- b) **A microphone:** If you have a laptop, you may very well have a built-in microphone. This is a fast and cheap way to get started, but you might not get the best sound out of it, as these mics usually pick up a lot of background noise. If you have an MP3 player, many of them these days also have built-in microphones. You may want to check yours, if you have one. For a higher quality recording (or if your computer doesn't have an internal mic), you can get an external mic that plugs into your computer. They're easy to find at any electronics store, and can be found pretty cheap.
- c) **Sound recording software:** There are a lot of programs out there – free and paid – that you can use to record your podcast. But most podcasters agree that Audacity, a free software downloadable at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>, is a good bet.
- d) **An MP3 encoder:** This software is what is going to let you convert your podcast into an mp3 file. Again, there's a lot of both free and paid programs out there, but most people seem pretty happy with the LAME MP3 Encoder, downloadable at [http://www.free-codecs.com/Lame\\_Encoder\\_download.htm](http://www.free-codecs.com/Lame_Encoder_download.htm). iTunes for both Mac and PC can also convert recordings to MP3 format for free – get iTunes at [www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com).
- e) **Headphones:** These will let you monitor the levels of your recording without re-recording the sound coming out of your speakers. Again, you can get fancy with the headphones, but for starters the little ear buds that come with your portable music player will work fine.

Before you record, make sure all your hardware (microphone, headset) is plugged in, and all your software is downloaded.

Next, you'll want to set the levels for your recording. In Audacity, click File > Preferences, then click the Quality tab. If you're just recording voice, you won't need anything higher than 44.1KHz and 16-bit sampling, unless you're relying really heavily on music. In that case, you'll need to play around a bit.

For a nicely audio-geeky tutorial on setting up your software for a podcast, check out this tutorial:  
[http://www.jakeludington.com/podcasting/20050222\\_recording\\_a\\_podcast.html](http://www.jakeludington.com/podcasting/20050222_recording_a_podcast.html)

There's also some great tutorials on how to use Audacity in general at:  
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/tutorials>

Try to keep your show casual, conversational, and continuous. Remember, if you make mistakes, you can always edit them out later.

After you've finished your show, save it as a WAV file. That will give you a "master" file to work from and a backup in case you have a problem exporting to MP3.

## Editing

Nobody's perfect, and no podcast is going to be either. Luckily, the software you've downloaded will let you cut out mistakes and long stretches of silence, and tweak a couple other things as well. In Audacity, as in most audio editors, you can find and remove silent patches easily. Just look for areas where the waveform becomes an almost straight line. Select that area (much the same way you select text in a word processor) and hit Delete.

Ideally, you should now save your recording as an MP3 file, preferably using a 32Kbps to 64Kbps bit rate. In Audacity, if you've installed the LAME MP3 encoder, this is also the chance to add ID3-tag info: your name, the name of the podcast, and so on. Without this, listeners won't be able to find your show on their MP3 players.

## 3. Publish Your Podcast

Hard work officially over – now it's time to get your podcast out there in public.

You'll need to find a site that will host your podcast. A good place to start is [www.OurMedia.org](http://www.OurMedia.org). For now, it's free and doesn't limit file bandwidth, but the site screens all podcasts and will remove any content it deems inappropriate.

Follow OurMedia's instructions for registering an account – again, it's free, you'll just need to provide a valid email address. You may consider creating a yahoo, hotmail, or gmail address specifically for your Activist Circle just for this sort of thing.

Once you create an account, just hit the "upload" button and follow the instructions on the screen to upload an audio file.

The last thing you need to do is upload a *podcast feed*, an RSS file that includes a description of your podcast, a link to the corresponding MP3, and other information. You can create this file in a number of ways. The free ways are to use the free podcast RSS-feed generator at TD Scripts.com ([http://www.tdscripsts.com/webmaster\\_utilities/podcast-generator.php](http://www.tdscripsts.com/webmaster_utilities/podcast-generator.php)), or to use the generator available to OurMedia users.

Now that you're all published, you can start getting the word out on your podcast. Link to your podcast on directories like Podcast.net (<http://www.podcast.net/>), Weblogs.com (<http://audio.weblogs.com/>) and Podcast Alley (<http://podcastalley.com/>).

**Don't forget to link to your podcast from your Activist Circle's wikispace page!**