

Top 5 Podcasting Microphones And Buyers Guide

Every good podcaster needs a good microphone. It doesn't matter how great your message is, if your audio sucks, nobody will listen. The microphone is the first link in your audio chain, and if you start off weak, there is little that can be done to remedy the situation later. Buying the wrong microphone can be a costly mistake, resulting in sub-par audio, and even worse, empty pockets.

Fortunately, we're here to help. With this quick and easy guide to microphones, we will demystify some of the confusion around microphones, and give you our Top Five Picks for podcasting microphones. No matter what your budget, this guide will help you pick the microphone that is right for you, and have you podcasting like the pros.

Condenser Vs. Dynamic

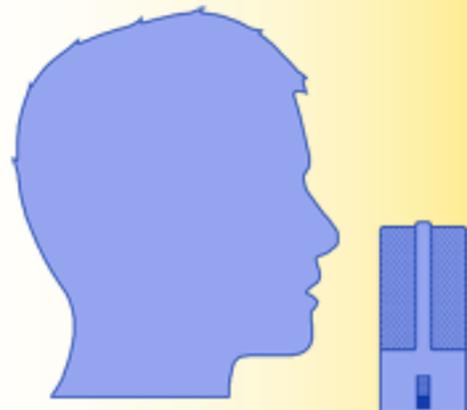
We'll start by exploring the two main types of professional quality microphones, Condenser Mics and Dynamic Mics.

The main difference is that Condenser Microphones need an outside power source, like a pre-amp or a Phantom Power unit. Dynamic Microphones do not require this additional power supply, and can be hooked directly into your mixer or computer, ready to record. You can still use a pre-amp or processor with a Dynamic Mic, but it is not required.

Another main difference between the two is how you speak into the mic. Most often, when using a Condenser Mic, you speak into the face of the microphone. When using a Dynamic Mic, you speak directly into the top of the microphone.

While Condensers work great for recording vocals for music, Dynamics are typically better for podcasting. For that reason, all of the mics featured in this guide will be Dynamic Microphones.

Condenser



Dynamic



Pickup Pattern

Next, we'll briefly explain the Pickup Pattern, sometimes called the Polar Pattern. The Pickup Pattern refers to the area around the mic in which sounds will be "picked up", thus the name, Pickup Pattern. Sounds outside of the Pickup range will not be "heard" by the microphone, and will not be recorded. This is important because you don't want sounds from your computer keyboard, your squeaky chair, or any other background noise being picked up in your recording.

There are three main types of Polar Patterns for most vocal microphones. They are Omni-Directional, Bi-Directional, and Cardioid. We will explain each one below.

Omni-Directional

Omni-Directional Microphones pick up sounds in all directions. This is not ideal for podcasting, as you will get a lot of unwanted sounds trapped in your recording. It is advised to avoid Omni-Directional microphones. They will not destroy your podcast, but they are not the most ideal microphone for podcasting.



Bi-Directional

Bi-Directional Microphones pick up sounds in front of and behind the microphone, while tuning out sounds from the left and right sides. This can be good if you have one mic and two speakers. But, as soon as one of you moves slightly off axis, your audio quality will drop off significantly.



Cardioid

Cardioid Mics get their name from their Pickup Pattern, which resembles a heart shape, in front of the mic. This is the most ideal mic for the job. It will pick up sounds directly in front of the mic, and slightly to the left and the right, while completely cutting out all unwanted sounds from outside its pickup zone.

As long as you stay inside the cardioid pattern, your mic will pick up a consistent sound.



Affordable Starter Mics

\$35

LogiTech ClearChat Headset

This headset is great for a beginner. It plugs right into your computer, via USB, and combines a mic and headphones, all in one. This mic works well for people who do not yet have good mic control, as it stays a consistent distance from your mouth, even when your head is moving around. It also picks up a nice frequency range, considering its low price.

The only real drawback to this headset is that it is Omni-Directional. This means that it will pick up lots of nearby sounds. Keyboard strokes, mouse clicks, computer alerts, all will be picked up in your recording.



\$50

AudioTechnica AT2005USB

This microphone is deceptively cheap for the audio quality it produces. It has a Cardioid Pickup Pattern, which means it will pick up your voice, and not much else.

Another great thing about this mic is all of its outputs. You can hook it to your computer with USB, to your mixer with XLR, it even has a headphones jack with an adjustable volume control.

This mic rivals the more expensive microphones in this guide, and for the price, you can't beat it. I would recommend this mic as the best place to start, and even suggest it to more serious podcasters as well.



High Quality Mics

\$325

Heil Sound PR40

This is the mic that a lot of top podcasters swear by. It has a Cardioid Pickup, and gets a crisp, clean signal that podcasters love. It's about mid level in price, but can give you a pro sound without draining your bank account.

It does not have a USB output, so it will not hook directly up to your computer. You will need a USB mixer or other type of audio interface in order to record on your computer.

It is a little more pricey, but for a mid-level microphone, it's well worth the money. If you end up purchasing this mic, you will not be disappointed.



\$350

Shure SM7B

I really like this next mic. It has been a staple of professional broadcasting studios for years. It has a wide audio frequency pickup, meaning it will capture all the tones in your voice. Like others on this list, it is a Cardioid Pattern microphone, making it ideal for podcasters.

The extra \$25 you will spend on this mic, as opposed to the last one, is money well spent. This is a real studio quality microphone. There are not many others I would recommend above this one. It has an XLR output, so it will hook right up to your mixer or audio interface.



Top Of The Line

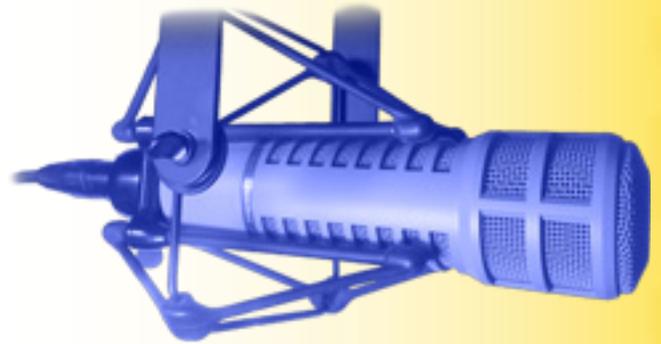
\$450

Electro-Voice RE20

This is the microphone I use in my own studio. It is, hands down, the best microphone out there for podcasting. I have recorded with too many mics to count, and none have felt as great as this one.

It has a Cardioid Pickup Pattern, and an XLR output. It delivers a smooth, consistent frequency range, even if your head moves a bit while you're recording. This has become the industry standard for professional broadcasters, and rightly so.

When suspended in a shock mount, it will not pick up any bumps or shakes to your computer desk. If used properly, this mic will capture your voice, your whole voice, and nothing but your voice.



So There You Have It

With this crash course in hand, you are now ready to make an informed decision about what microphone is right for your podcast and your budget. We hope that you found this guide valuable, and we're confident that it will help make your podcast sound the best it possibly can.

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