

BUYER'S **guide**

Low-Cost MP3 Players

Digital communications are getting more sophisticated. The latest craze is podcasting. A word created by mashing together broadcasting and Apple's iPod, it is essentially the sharing of audio content.

A podcast is virtually any audio content placed on the Internet for dissemination. The wide acceptance of the highly efficient MP3 compressed audio format enables virtually anyone to create and share these files. Furthermore, low-cost and highly portable MP3 players allow users to quickly download a file and listen to it at their leisure, in the setting of their choosing. Educators are already finding numerous ways to use podcasting effectively as both a dissemination tool (e.g., recording lectures, providing detailed instructions) and as a format for student submissions.









Although virtually all modern computers, including many handhelds and cell phones, are quite capable of playing and recording MP3 files, they can't compete with the ease, low cost, durability, and portability

of a flash-based MP3 device. The gadget factor can't be ignored either—MP3 players are among the hippest things in any student's backpack.

Despite the common purpose, playing digital audio, the MP3 market is incredibly diverse and somewhat daunting to the neophyte. Essentially there are two distinct classes of player—disk drive-based and flash memory-based models. High capacity disk drive players cost hundreds of dollars and are larger and somewhat less rugged than their flash-based counterparts.

We've profiled eight popular flash-based MP3 players. We chose only those that include voice recording features, at least 256 MB of memory, and a list price of approximately \$100 or less, (Most are available at steep discounts).

Because the market is currently overheated, this is far from a definitive listing. Models with more features or lower prices seem to arrive weekly. The time to begin experimenting with audio in the classroom is at hand—or perhaps, in hand.

	Model	URL	Size (w x h x d, inches)
COBY	 MPC-841	http://www.cobyusa.com	3.69 x 1.18 x 0.8
CREATIVE	 MuVo TX FM	http://www.us.creative.com	1.4 x 2.9 x 0.6
GO RAVE	 AMP 256	http://www.rave-mp.com	1.9 x 2.8 x 0.9
iRIVER	 iFP-790	http://www.iriver.com	3.4 x 1.3 x 1
RCA	 Lyra RD2312	http://www.rcaaudiovideo.com	1.46 x 3.3 x 1.1
SAMSUNG	 YP-MT6V	http://www.samsungyep.com	1.0 x .95 x 2.39
SANDISK	 SDMX1	http://www.sandisk.com	1.28 x 2.96 x 0.82
SORELL	 SF2000	http://www.sorell.co.kr/eng_new/	1.25 x 3.15 x .6

Weight (grams)	Power/Life (Hours)	Record Format	Microphone Type	Raw Voice Capacity (Hours)	Price	PC Connection	Equalizer	Notes
42	1-AAA alkaline/ Unknown Battery Life	Mono	Built-In	16	\$77.95	Direct USB 2.0	Presets only	No FM
42.5	1-AAA alkaline battery/~18	Mono	Built-In	8	\$89.99	Direct USB 2.0	5 band	FM tuner
39	1-AAA alkaline/16	Mono	Built-In	8 + SD/MMC flash expansion slot	\$99.99	USB 2.0 cable	5 band	FM tuner
37	1-AA alkaline battery/~26	Mono Voice Compression	Built-In	~64 w/full compression settings	\$99.99	USB 2.0 cable	Yes	FM tuner. Does not show as drive in Windows.
36.3	1-AAA alkaline battery/~20	Mono	Built-In	8 or as many as 40 hours with optional SD/MMC memory card.	\$99.99	USB 2.0 cable	Yes	FM tuner
45.4	1-AA alkaline battery/~42	Mono	Built-In	8	\$109	USB 2.0 adapter	Yes	FM tuner. Line-in cable.
39.7	1-AAA alkaline battery/~15 hours	Mono	Built-In	8 hrs	\$99	USB 2.0 cable	No	FM tuner
44	Rechargeable lithium-ion/16–20, 2–3 Hour Recharge	Mono Voice Compression	Built-In	~64 w/full compression settings	\$89.99	USB 1.1, direct & cable	Presets only	FM tuner, Color Electro Luminescence display