



**Putting Your Book  
Festival Online  
Three Step Guide**

# Introduction

Literary festivals and events are an integral and wonderful part of the bookish landscape and an unexpected outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic was that these events suddenly became accessible to all. Because there was a shift to online programming, anyone could watch or participate in a literary event. Whether disabled, on a low income, suffering social anxiety or on the other side of the world, at the click of a button anyone could access an event from which they may otherwise have been excluded.

The **#KeepFestivalsHybrid campaign** aims to encourage event organisers to consider ways in which they may be able to offer an online element to some or all of their events. Adding an online element improves accessibility for both authors and readers – and enables many more people to participate in and enjoy the occasion.

We appreciate that those working on smaller festivals may be anxious about the costs and practicalities around running hybrid events so we have created this guide to help you navigate the challenges and ensure that the online element to your festival is well planned and executed – even on a small budget. Look out for the funding tips at the end!



Photo by [Chris Montgomery](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Find out more about the **#KeepFestivalsHybrid** campaign online at:  
<https://www.reddoorpress.co.uk/pages/keep-festivals-hybrid>

# 1. Planning

## **Your event should be:**

- Accessible (as simple to book and join as possible)
- Simple to organise and invite participants
- Simple to record and upload to various platforms (if required)
- Of good sound quality to ensure your event is easy to listen to and enjoy.

## **Before you start planning, answer the following questions:**

- Is your event hybrid (i.e. people can attend in-person and online) OR online only?
- Will you run your events from a studio with all the participants in one place, on stage with a live audience, or with participants based in their own homes/offices?
- Do you want to stream your event live, record it, or both?
- What is your budget?
- What skills and time do you have for setting up and monitoring events?
- What skills and time do you have for post-production, if you are recording?

There is a common understanding in film-making and vlogging that sound is more important than video. If your picture is great, but people struggle to hear what you are saying, they won't connect. The good news is that setting up quality sound is much easier, cheaper and more straightforward than the video.

When you broadcast and/or record a live event there inevitably will be some background noise, however if you can reduce that, your editing will be minimal which saves time, money and energy. That's why investing in the right kit is crucial.

# 2. Technology and Kit

The easiest event to organise is online only with speakers gathered in one place, but many festivals have events in more than one location. The following kit will enable you to hold any type of event. Even better, the kit should serve you for several years.

Recording and broadcasting is usually quite simple but post-production can be more complex and that's why it is crucial that your original set up has disruptions minimised and the best sound and video solution that you can afford.

## **What you will need:**

- Booking platform
- Kit
- Broadcasting software
- Editing software (if required)
- YouTube or Vimeo Channel or space on your website.

Chances are you are already using a particular booking platform successfully. If not, check with your local authority as some offer reasonably priced on and offline ticket selling solutions. The most commonly used online platform is [Eventbrite](#). Alternatives are [Ticketsource.co.uk](#) and [SeeTickets.com](#)

Whichever platform you use, be cautious about setting it up to sending links to attendees in order for them to join the event. Platforms such as Eventbrite require everyone to have an account with them to see links and adds an extra layer of complication for your attendees. We suggest using the booking platform to collect attendees' details and then send them weblinks via email direct as a more straightforward and reasonably fail-proof system.

# Your basic broadcasting kit:

- Laptop
- Dynamic microphone(s)
- Microphone cable(s) – USB, XLR to USB or XLR
- USB Audio-interface
- Microphone stand(s)
- Headphones to monitor broadcasting
- Camera
- Camera tripod or mount
- USB multiport adaptor for your laptop.

**Please note that all the following links, prices and descriptions were correct in January 2022 but are subject to change.**

## Laptop

Make sure your laptop has a good number of USB ports and know which type they are: USB-A (bigger) or USB-C (smaller). You will usually need at least two or three spare ports, therefore consider investing in a USB multi-port adaptor (check it offers USB-A and USB-C connectivity).

### **Also consider:**

Memory and storage. Make sure the RAM (operational memory) is at least 4Gb and the hard drive (for storage) at least 512Gb. Consider purchasing an external hard drive of at least 1Tb for increased storage capacity. For both, the size matters.

Ensure you don't run other programs or open internet browsers etc. whilst broadcasting or recording. Ideally, use a wired internet connection or, if relying on WiFi, reboot (restart) the WiFi modem before use and be as close to it as possible.

# Microphone

A good microphone picks up only the sound you want and reduces background noise. The best microphones for the task are called dynamic (subtypes: cardioid or supercardioid) microphones. These are the ones used in radio stations and on stage. They are usually heavy and sturdy.



Photo by Sontronics

As dynamic microphones are heavy, choose sturdy microphone stands.

For example:

<https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/straight-microphone-stand/konig-meyer-23200-stand-base-plate-with-tube>

Or this lighter one (335gr):

<https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/table-instrument-microphone-stand/quiklok-a-188-table-microphone-stand>

## **Our recommendation:**

Sontronics Podcast Pro microphone (£89) - <https://www.sontronics.com/podcastpro>

This is a solid, sturdy professional dynamic microphone. It picks up a lot of detail from the voice and blocks most external noise. Extra benefits: it is designed and hand-built in the UK and comes in a variety of colours (to match your festival colour scheme!)

## **Alternatives:**

Shure SM48 or SM58, Rode MicPro, Sennheiser e835 or e945.

Don't fall for the marketing spin of simple USB-microphones. These are usually made out of plastic, so are less suitable for moving around and they are also not as good as dynamic microphones at cutting out background noise.

A microphone can pick up the best sound ever, but if it isn't transmitted to your laptop properly, the end result won't be great. Consider buying a quality microphone cable. These are usually chunky and sturdy and will serve you for many years.

There are two types of microphone connections: XLR and USB. The former offers the best sound but will need an adaptor (sometimes part of the cable called XLR to USB) to connect to your laptop directly or you will have to use a so-called USB audio-interface (essentially, a special device which does all sound processing outside your computer).

## USB audio interface



Photo by [Sven Brandsma](#) on [Unsplash](#)

An audio interface is the size of a book and weighs about 1kg. It connects professional dynamic microphones to your computer and facilitates processing of sound. It usually connects two microphones, though if you run panel discussions or interview more than one author at a time, you should buy an interface with more microphone ports. We would encourage you to invest in an audio interface if at all possible as this will provide better quality sound and ensure that your laptop doesn't have to do all the hard work processing it. This way, your broadcasting should go smoothly.

You will use XLR to XLR cables to connect the audio-interface with the microphones. The laptop will connect to the interface via a USB cable. Remember that your audio interface will be positioned next to your laptop, probably away from your speakers and thus you will need longer cables.

### **Our recommendation:**

Presonus Studio 24c (£111) - <https://www.presonus.com/products/Studio-24c> for two microphones or <https://www.presonus.com/products/Studio-1810c> for up to four microphones

The added benefit of buying Presonus is that it comes with the complementary market-leading recording and sound editing software Studio One. You can also use it for live streaming though it will require purchasing a special cable and training to use the software.

### **Alternatives:**

FocusRite Scarlett 2i2 (for two microphones) - <https://focusrite.com/en/usb-audio-interface/scarlett/scarlett-2i2> or FocusRite Scarlett 18i8 (for up to four microphones) - <https://focusrite.com/en/usb-audio-interface/scarlett/scarlett-18i8>

Behringer UMC202HD (for two microphones) - <https://www.behringer.com/product.html?modelCode=P0BJZ> or Behringer UMC404HD (for up to four microphones) - <https://www.behringer.com/product.html?modelCode=P0BK1>

## **Microphone cable**

**Important note:** if you decide not to buy an audio-interface, you will need an XLR to USB cable.



Photo by Sontronics

### **Our recommendation:**

3m long Sontronics XLR to USB (£19) - <http://www.sontronics.com/xlr-usb>

VanDamme XLR to XLR cable - <https://www.gear4music.com/G4M/Van-Damme-Classic-XKE-Microphone-XLR-Cable-3m/2RYH>

### **Alternatives:**

5m long Behringer MIC 2 USB - <https://www.andertons.co.uk/behringer-mic-2-usb-usb-audio-interface-000-bbq00-00010?>

3m long Roland RMC B-10 XLR to XLR cable - <https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/xlr-cables/roland-rmc-b10-black-series-balanced-microphone-cable-3m>



## Headphones to monitor broadcasting/ recording

You need quality monitor (or 'studio') headphones, which, as their name suggests, will allow you to monitor the quality of sound in real time and ensure there is no background noise. These are to be worn by the person in charge of backstage support.

### Our recommendation:

Audio-Technica ATH-m40x (£95) - <https://www.audio-technica.com/en-gb/ath-m40x>



Photo by [Joshua Oluwagbemiga](#) on [Unsplash](#)

These are sturdy and comfortable to wear for prolonged periods of time, relatively compact when not in use, and offer very fine-tuned sound. The long cable is detachable, so, if it gets damaged, you can replace just the cable, not the whole set. You get two cables as part of the set.

### Alternatives:

Sony MDR-7506 (£84)

<https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/studio-headphones/sony-mdr-7506-headphones>

Presonus Eris HD9 (£52)

<https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/studio-headphones/presonus-hd9-studio-headphones>

## Camera

If your speakers take part in the event from the convenience of their own home, most likely they will be sitting in front of their laptop or web-camera. These work fine when one person is in focus.

Ask your speaker to have as much light in their room as possible when they deliver their talk or are interviewed. It would be wise to have a test run with them prior to the event. Also encourage your speaker to place their laptop on a stand (or a stack of books) so that the laptop camera is positioned level with their eyes.

If you broadcast a live event, you will need to rely on an external camera. The simplest option is a web-camera connected to your laptop via a USB cable. It won't provide the best picture and thus some might consider investing or repurposing a DSLR or mirrorless camera, though it usually involves fine-tuning, so more time for learning how and setting up.

For simplicity and given that you provide good quality sound, you might opt for a simple plug-and-play web-camera. Remember to check that you have a spare USB port for it.



Photo by [Deeterontop](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Hikarinoshita Hikari](#) on [Unsplash](#)

### **Our recommendation for a web-camera:**

Logitech C920e (£89) - <https://www.logitech.com/en-gb/products/webcams/c920e-business-webcam.960-001360.html>

### **Our recommendation for a mirrorless camera:**

Fujifilm X-T20 - <https://fujifilm-x.com/global/products/cameras/x-t20/>

### **Alternatives:**

Razer Kiyo, a web camera with built-in light

[https://www.technoshack.co.uk/razer-kiyo-streaming-camera-with-ring-](https://www.technoshack.co.uk/razer-kiyo-streaming-camera-with-ring-lighting?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4-)

[Da6dXA9QIVx49oCR3\\_MAxYEAQYASABEGKIOvD\\_BwE](https://www.technoshack.co.uk/razer-kiyo-streaming-camera-with-ring-lighting?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4-Da6dXA9QIVx49oCR3_MAxYEAQYASABEGKIOvD_BwE)

Sony Alpha A6000, a mirrorless camera

<https://www.jessops.com/p/sony/a6000-mirrorless-camera-in-black-16-50mm-power-zoom-lens-90345>

### **Also consider:**

You might need an additional source of directed light - <https://www.essentialphoto.co.uk/product/pixapro-2x-led308d-hot-shoe-mountable-led-video-light/#image-5>

Most lights will also need tripods and you may want a tripod to position your camera in the most convenient place.

Don't forget you will need a long cable to connect the camera and your laptop. Check that the type of cable connection works with your chosen camera.

Most of the kit above is plug-and-play, i.e. it doesn't require any additional software and thus should be recognised by your laptop straight away. Don't underestimate the power of restarting your computer if the kit doesn't work first time round!

## Where to buy

[www.bax-shop.co.uk](http://www.bax-shop.co.uk) usually offers good prices and has a wide range of B-stock products, which can be of use if you are on a strict budget. Alternatively, [www.gear4music.com](http://www.gear4music.com) or [www.absolutemusic.co.uk](http://www.absolutemusic.co.uk)



## Kit for remote speaking

When your speaker cannot travel to the event, you might want to lend them the kit. Here's our suggestion for a sturdy and relatively lightweight option for posting to your speakers:

- Sontronics Podcast Pro microphone, 335g  
<https://www.sontronics.com/podcastpro>
- Portable (lighter) microphone stand, approx. 350g  
<https://www.bax-shop.co.uk/table-instrument-microphone-stand/quiklok-a-188-table-microphone-stand>
- Microphone XLR to USB cable, 172g, 3m long  
<https://www.sontronics.com/xlr-usb>
- Headphones - optional, as most people tend to have their own headphones they are used to.  
Audio-Technica ATH-m40x  
<https://www.audio-technica.com/en-gb/ath-m40x>  
Note: Headphones are useful to eliminate interference from a laptop, where positioning of a microphone isn't ideal, so do encourage your speakers to wear them.
- Prepaid return label via MyHermes (£7.90 for next day, 2-5kg - Your particular set might well be below 2kg as in the example above, in which case it will cost £6.50)  
<https://www.myhermes.co.uk/our-services/our-prices>

### Tips for your speakers:

- Do not position the microphone directly in front of your mouth. Hold it slightly below or to the side of your mouth to avoid noise from breathing.
- Keep as close to the microphone as possible, ideally within three inches.
- Point the front of the microphone toward your mouth.
- Be careful not to move the microphone or your head suddenly.

# 3. Broadcasting and Recording Software

You've got the kit and the speakers, so how do you go about broadcasting your event online?



## **Our recommendation:**

Zoom (£11.99+VAT per month for up to 100 participants; £15.99+VAT per month for up to 300 participants) - [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)

Zoom Webinar (£64+VAT per month for up to 500 participants)

Zoom is familiar to most people and thus is easy to use; it is also the most affordable option.

People can access your event via a specialised app or a browser on any device. It can, however, require careful moderation to ensure that your attendees don't interrupt your event. On the flip side, it offers the most interactive experience for your audience, closely replicating what might happen in an in-person event.

There isn't much customisation that can be done during the event, so you will need to attend to it at a later stage. You can broadcast and/or record your event (Start your event, click on 'More' button, choose 'Record' and/or 'Live on Youtube'/'Live on Facebook').

## **Alternatives:**

Be.Live (£27.99 or £41.99 per month) - <https://be.live/multistreaming>

No need to download any applications, it works from your browser (Chrome or Safari work best, so make sure you have these).

Comments from various platforms (eg, Facebook, YouTube) are shown in one window so you can engage with your audience. Be.Live has its own editor and works well with other free and paid apps like Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) for post-production editing. It can also store your videos in the cloud.

You can have up to four guests and inviting them is easy with a personalised web-link you send them. You can also pre-record events using this software and release them at a later stage.

Remember you can sign up to broadcasting software for one month only to save costs. Give yourself enough time to have practice runs prior to your event.

Whichever software you choose, always have someone as a backstage support to help the host. Your support person will be able to let attendees in, answer their questions in the chat and remember to start broadcasting and recording whilst your host will concentrate on entertaining their guest(s) and audience. No specialist IT knowledge is needed to be backstage support, just familiarity with the software you're using. Practice runs with the chosen programme are a good idea.

## Live streaming and uploading channels

If you want to live stream your event and/or keep the recording available to the public after the event, [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) are by far the most popular options to present videos to your audience. These are mostly free and very easy to set up.

Both offer an option to do simple post-recording editing (like adding names, descriptions, cover images etc). On YouTube: sign it to your YouTube Studio, on the left sidebar find 'Content', click on the thumbnail of the video you want to edit, click Editor.

Live streaming on YouTube is free, but for Vimeo you need to pay (from £70 per month).

To further broaden your reach, you might consider simultaneous broadcasting to your social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, and even LinkedIn. Both Be.Live and Zoom offer these options. Remember, however, that you will need to promote all of these channels, which might confuse some people and adds to your workload of monitoring your broadcasts. As a result, we would suggest keeping things simple and having an event in Zoom and broadcasting it to just one platform – either YouTube, Facebook or Vimeo. Then you can share recordings on various social media platforms afterwards, if you so wish. Make sure you set up your YouTube or Vimeo accounts and link them to Zoom or Be.Live in advance. It takes time to enter passwords and tick all the relevant consent boxes, so it should be done beforehand. At the beginning of your event, start broadcasting and/or recording, then invite speakers to talk; this way, you will not miss a word they say. At a later stage you can cut out unnecessary parts of the video.

# Using Voice Memo to record audio

## Essential tip:

If your speaker is joining you via zoom it is a good idea to ask them to record themselves using the voice memo function on their phone/device during the session as the recording can then be used in post production and can provide better sound quality to the inbuilt zoom option. This is fairly straight forward and instructions for your speaker are set out below.

- Check that the voice memo app is downloaded on your iPhone (it's free and is usually automatically on the iPhone)
- Set up for the recording by placing the mobile phone around 10 inches from your face (for example on a pile of books) in a quiet place.

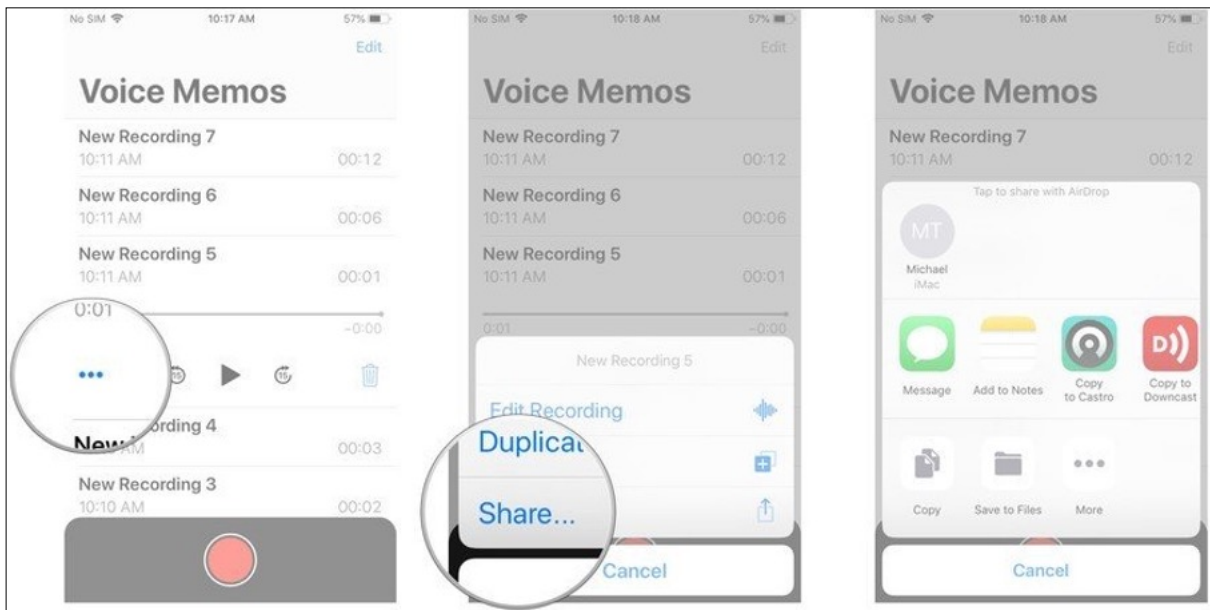
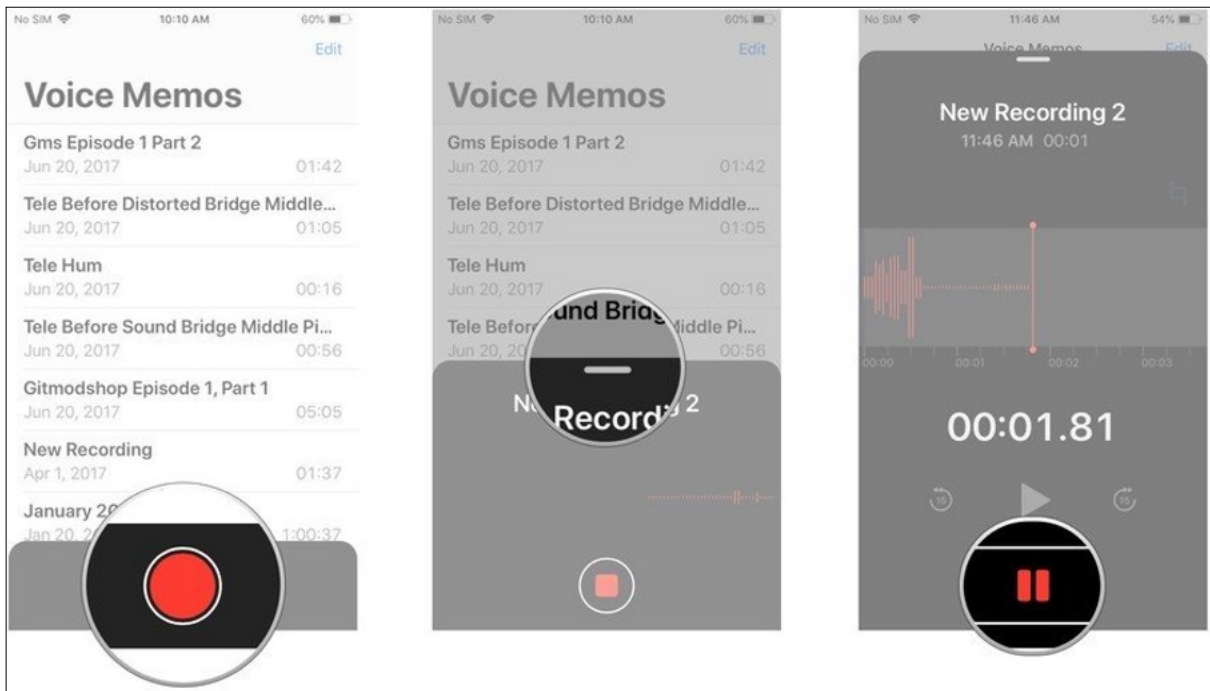
## Follow the below instructions:

1. How to record Voice Memos for iPhone
2. Launch the Voice Memos app from your Home screen.
3. Tap the record button. It's the big red circle.
4. (Tap the white button on the top of the record tab to reveal the pause option.
5. Tap the pause button to pause the recording. You can then optionally hit resume to keep recording in the same file.)
6. Tap Done when you're finished.

The recording will now appear in the list above the record tab.

## How to share Voice Memos on iPhone and iPad

- Launch the Voice Memos app from your Home screen
- Tap the recording you'd like to share
- Tap the more button on the bottom left of the recording. It's three horizontal dots.
- Tap Share.
- Tap the method by which you'd like to share your Voice Memo and proceed as normal with your chosen method.





# Finding funding

This is all very well but we all know that most festivals and literary events are operating on a very tight – even non-existent – budget so how can you raise the funds to cover some, or all, of the costs? Here are some ideas that might help.

1. **Check out your local council.** Most councils offer [community grants](#), or [Town Council](#) grants that offer around £500-£1000 for community projects. Also they may have [a page that lists funding](#) that is available in your area. Google '[your area name] council community grant' to find out what your local council can offer.
2. Staying with local councils, you may also be able to tap into **the Mayor's Fund**. This is a fund that is available to the mayor's chosen charity. If your festival is set up as a charity then you could consider contacting your local mayor to discuss.
3. **Arts Council Funding** [National Lottery Project Grants](#). These grants are for a minimum of £1000, but are specifically aimed at 'Arts, museums and libraries projects that engage people ... with creativity and culture.' Accessibility is a key requirement when applying for funding for large-scale projects so you may have a good chance of success in applying for some funds to facilitate this.
4. **Crowdfunding.** If you have a good-sized mailing list, why not try crowdfunding for your kit? [Kickstarter](#) and [Indiegogo](#) are good platforms to take a look at to see how this works. You could offer tickets or discounts as rewards in return for donations, but you don't have to offer anything more than a shout-out of thanks in your next newsletter.
5. **Local donor.** There may be someone on your mailing list or in the local community who would be willing to cover some or all of the cost of equipment. Put the feelers out and see what you can find. You could offer free lifetime access to your festival in return.

# And finally...

This document was prepared by Ignaty Dyakov-Richmond, Penny Batchelor and Clare Christian and was made possible by a donation from author Kit de Waal.

We hope it is useful and encourage you to contact us with ideas and suggestions that we may include in the next edition. Email [hello@reddoorpress.co.uk](mailto:hello@reddoorpress.co.uk)

Thanks!

**Ignaty, Penny and Clare**  
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