

I'm Walter Gajewski. Welcome to episode 17 of TechTips from the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB).

Today's episode is for people trying to make their own podcast but having trouble because of small, difficult to find errors in their XML file, also known as their podcast feed.

Something as small as a misplaced comma can cause Apple iTunes to reject your request to list a podcast in the iTunes Store.

The easiest way to check your file for these hard to find problems is to use a feed validator.

First, make sure your XML file is out there on your web server. If it isn't, place it there now using an FTP program as outlined in TechTips, episode 13: Create your own podcast (part one).

With your XML file out on your web server, you can now use the feed validator found at [www.feedvalidator.org](http://www.feedvalidator.org).

When you go out to that address with your web browser, you will see a pretty plain looking page that has a text box and a validate button.

Put the full address of your xml file in the text box. Your address should start with `http://` and end with the name of the XML file. Once you've entered the address of your file, click on the validate button.

After a few seconds, you will see a report on your screen. It will almost always say "Sorry. This feed does not validate." This is because the feed validator will find omissions from your file that aren't necessary for iTunes but are required for other systems like AtomFilms. However, in the list of your errors, Feed Validator will identify which errors are specific to iTunes and which are required for AtomFilms.

It is also possible that you might be missing some optional iTunes elements, for instance the `itunes:explicit` tag that only needs to be there if you have potentially objectionable language in your podcast.

For the most part, feed validator will try to explain how to correct any fatal flaws. Some of the most common mistakes involve the publishing date. Make sure you have a valid date and make sure it is listed in the proper format. Days and months can only be listed as three letter abbreviations. So, `Thur` or `Aprl` are not valid for Thursday and April but `Thu` and `Apr` are acceptable.

Often, the length attribute is flagged as invalid. Length is the size in kilobytes of the audio, video or PDF file that makes up the podcast episode. There should never be any commas or decimal points in the number.

Feed validator might point out that you have a missing description element. You can ignore that admonition if you've included the iTunes summary element.

iTunes is fussy about the element called iTunes category. There are only 16 allowed main categories. Some categories have a few allowable subcategories. To see a list of how to list a category along with some suggestions on other common mistakes, go to the Apple website at: [www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcaststechspecs.html](http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcaststechspecs.html)

Topic number four on that page is “common mistakes.”

Once you find your mistake, correct your XML file and move it out to your web server using an FTP program. The newly edited file will replace the erroneous file. Now you can check the new file with feed validator. However, you can't just click on the validate button again. You have to go to the feed validator home page and input the address to your XML file and then hit the validate button. Now you should see results based on the edited file. If all goes well, you will now have a file that is considered acceptable by the iTunes Store.

Good luck. This is Walter Gajewski for TechTips from CSULB.