

Copy Audio Tracks from CD to Make Your Music Library More Accessible

This article shows you how to:

- ✓ Set up Windows Media Player for best results
- ✓ Copy (or ‘rip’) the tracks of an audio CD to your PC
- ✓ Find and play the music in your collection

Back in the 1980s, the Compact Disc was hailed as the convenient new music format we should all be using. These days, though, playing a CD can seem like quite a palaver, to the point that your collection probably sits neglected on a shelf.



The ideal solution is to copy CDs to your PC, where you can play your music easily with a couple of clicks whenever you like. Along the way, you can also skip any tracks you don’t like and never want to listen to. Read on to learn how to go about the process of copying (or ‘ripping’, as it’s termed) an audio CD to your PC.

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- **Before You Start: Set Up Windows Media Player** A 740/2
 - **Step by Step: Copying Music Tracks from an Audio CD** A 740/4
 - **Where to Find Your Music on Your PC** A 740/8
 - **How to Play the Music Stored on Your Computer** A 740/9
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Before You Start: Set Up Windows Media Player

We'll adjust Windows Media Player's settings

The program we'll be using in this article is Windows Media Player, and the same version of this program is included with Windows 10, Windows 8.1 and Windows 7, so you'll be following exactly the same steps whichever version of Windows you're using.

Before we copy our first audio CD, we need to make sure Windows Media Player is set up to create files in the right format and to save them in the right place, so let's set about doing that.

Start Windows Media Player

The first step is to start Windows Media Player:

- Windows 10 or 8.1: press the  key to open the Start menu or Start screen, then begin typing the words **media player**. Before you finish, you should see **Windows Media Player** listed: click that item to start the program.
- Windows 7: open the Start menu, go to **All programs** and click on **Windows Media Player**.



If this is the first time you've used Windows Media Player, you'll initially see a 'Welcome' dialog. In this dialog, choose the **Recommended settings** option and click **Finish**.

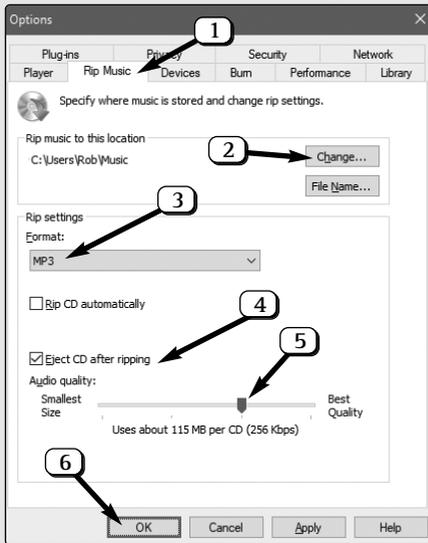
Now you'll see the main Windows Media Player window, probably looking rather bare (although that will change when you've copied some music). Follow these steps:



1. Press the  key on your keyboard (immediately to the left of the Space bar).

2. This makes Windows Media Player's main menu appear. On this menu, move the mouse to Tools and click on Options.
3. This opens the Options dialog, containing a collection of tabs at the top. Switch to the Rip Music tab (1), pictured below.

Select the **Rip Music** tab



4. Now let's work our way through this tab, starting at the top. Windows Media Player proposes to store your music in your personal 'Music' (or 'My Music') folder (as I'll explain on page 8), and that's probably fine. However, if you already have music stored on your PC and you've chosen to keep it somewhere different, it's best to keep your whole collection together: click the **Change** button (2) and in the dialog that opens, select the folder you've chosen for your music and click **OK**.

Choose where to keep music files

Choose your preferred music format



Select the music quality

- Next, choose the best format for your music. Open the drop-down list (3) and choose from the various formats available. Unless you have a particular reason to choose something else, my suggestion is to choose **MP3**: this is a standard audio format that will let you play your music on your PC (of course) but is also supported by any other device you might want to use to play music – tablets, smartphones, and so on.

Don't tick the box beside **Rip CD automatically**: if you do, Windows Media Player will start copying the tracks from a CD as soon as you insert it, which would be annoying if all you wanted to do was listen to it!

- Tick the box beside **Eject CD after ripping** (4). It's a small detail, but it means Windows Media Player will pop out your disc after copying it, saving you the trouble of doing that yourself.
- The final change is to choose the quality of the copied audio tracks by dragging the slider (5) left or right. The options here vary a little according to which version of Windows you're using, but my recommendation is to regard **192 Kbps** as the minimum, and ideally to choose **256 Kbps**. If you want the best quality possible (thus increasing the file sizes a little more), drag the slider all the way to the right.
- Finally, click the **OK** button (6).

Step by Step: Copying Music Tracks from an Audio CD

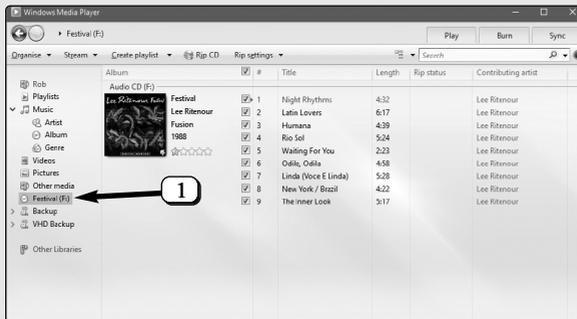
That's got Windows Media Player set up correctly (although, of course, you can repeat the steps at any time if there's

something you want to change). Now you're ready to copy your first CD to your PC, so follow these steps:

1. If it isn't already running, start Windows Media Player again, as explained on page 2.
2. Insert the audio CD you want to copy into your computer's CD drive and wait a few seconds for your PC to work out what it is. After a short while, you should see the name of the CD's album appear in the left-hand panel of the window with a little CD icon beside it **(1)**. Windows Media Player should select this item automatically, displaying the details of the album in the main area of the window, but if that doesn't happen, click the album name or CD icon.



Insert your audio CD



3. With a bit of luck, you'll also see that Windows Media Player has identified your album, as it has for me in the screenshot above: it's showing the album cover with the album title, artist, genre and year beside it, and, further to the right, the names of the tracks. If that hasn't happened, right-click the square where the album cover should be and choose **Find album info** from the menu that appears: hopefully, after a few seconds, the missing details should appear.

Has Windows Media Player identified it?



Windows Media Player uses your Internet connection to look up the details of your CD. Each CD contains an identification number and WMP looks this up in an online database. However, some rare CDs won't appear in that database, so you might have to fill in the details yourself as I'll explain below.

It's worth noting, too, that the database does contain the odd mistake, so even if WMP has found and filled in the details, check them over to make sure they're correct, editing anything as needed. In some cases you can find that even though the track details seem to be correct, they're actually listed in the wrong order.

Add or edit the CD details

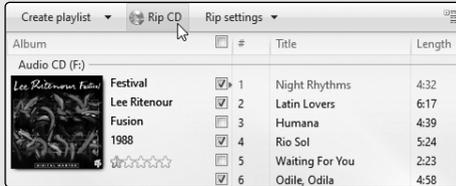
Untick tracks you don't want

4. If the CD details weren't found, or they contain mistakes, you'll have to fill them in or correct them yourself:
 - For the main album details, shown to the right of the cover, right-click an item (such as the album title) and choose **Edit**, type the text or edit what's there, and then press **Enter**.
 - To change the name of a track, click it once to select it, press **F2** to rename it, then make the changes needed and press **Enter**.
5. The next thing to do is to decide which tracks you want to copy from this CD. To the left of each track is a checkbox which is currently ticked. If there are any tracks you don't want to copy, you simply click the appropriate checkboxes to remove their ticks.

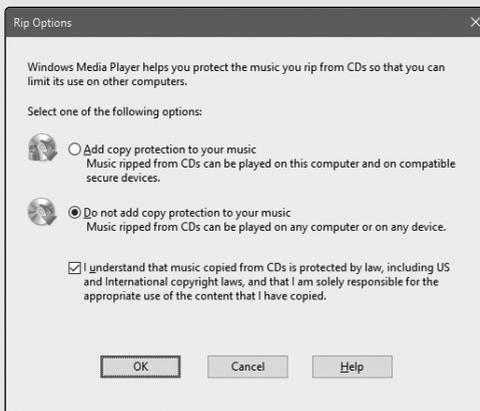
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Night Rhythms	4:32	Ripped to library	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Latin Lovers	6:17	Ripped to library	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Humana	4:39		Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Rio Sol	5:24	Shipping (80%)	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Waiting For You	2:23		Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Odile, Odile	4:58	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Linda (Voce E Linda)	5:28	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	New York / Brazil	4:22	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	The Inner Look	5:17	Pending	Lee Ritenour

6. Now you're ready to start copying the music from the CD to your computer, which is a neat, automatic process. To start it, click the **Rip CD** button on the toolbar above the CD details:

Start copying the CD



7. If this is the first time you've copied tracks from an audio CD, there's one little interruption you'll be faced with before the process starts. You'll see the dialog pictured in the next screenshot which offers to 'protect' the music you copy, limiting where and how the audio files can be used. You need to refuse this option of copy protection, so select the option labelled **Do not add copy protection to your music**, then tick the checkbox below this option, and finally click **OK**.



Windows Media Player copies the tracks to your PC

8. Now the copying process begins and you can sit and watch (or go and do something more entertaining!) while Windows Media Player takes care of it. The tracks you ticked are copied to your PC one-by-one, and you'll see a little progress bar beside the track currently being copied, letting you see how the process is going. Tracks that are waiting to be copied have the word 'Pending' beside them, and those that have already been copied have the words 'Ripped to library'.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Night Rhythms	4:32	Ripped to library	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Latin Lovers	6:17	Ripped to library	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Humana	4:39		Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Rio Sol	5:24	Ripping (90%)	Lee Ritenour
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Waiting For You	2:23		Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Odile, Odila	4:58	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Linda (Voce E Linda)	5:28	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	New York / Brazil	4:22	Pending	Lee Ritenour
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	The Inner Look	5:17	Pending	Lee Ritenour

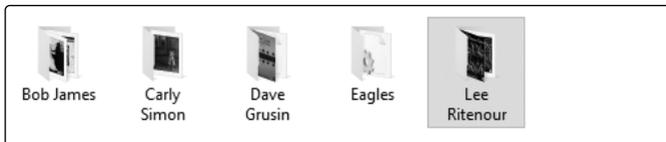
Finished!

9. Once all the tracks have been copied (and each has the words 'Ripped to library' beside it), the job is done. Earlier we set Windows Media Player to eject the CD automatically when it finished, so that should happen. If it doesn't, of course, and you're sure the job is finished, you can eject it yourself. You can now either close Windows Media Player or insert another CD to copy in the same way.

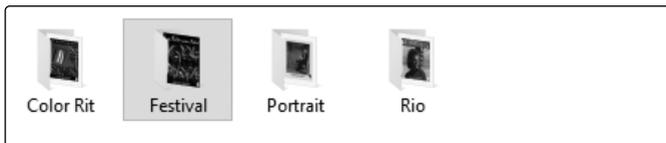
Where to Find Your Music on Your PC

How your music collection is organised

I mentioned earlier that Windows Media Player stores your music in your personal 'Music' (or 'My Music') folder, and that's a logical place for it. Whenever you want to see the music stored on your PC, press  +  to open File Explorer (known as Windows Explorer in Windows 7) and then click either Music or My Music at the left of the window. You'll see a folder for each of the artists in your collection:



Double-click an artist and you'll see a separate folder for each of that artist's albums:



Double-click one of these folders to open it and you'll see all the individual audio files that you've copied from that album, named with the track number and name:



How to Play the Music Stored on Your Computer

Having found your way to where your music is stored on your PC, one way you could listen to it is by double-clicking a track. This will open and play the track (either in Windows Media Player again or, if you use Windows 10, perhaps in a different program named Groove Music). However, as soon as that track finishes, the music stops.

You could double-click tracks

A better approach is to begin by starting Windows Media Player. When its window appears, click on **Album** at the left. That shows you one of the useful features of this program:

This way is better!

it keeps track of all the music in your 'Music' folder and presents it to you as a library, with a straight-forward listing of all your albums:



Select an album and click **Play...**

To play an entire album (less the tracks you chose not to copy to your PC, of course), click the album once to select it (1) and then click the circular **Play** button (2) at the bottom of the window. You can use the other controls on that bottom panel to adjust the volume, skip to the next or previous track, and pause, resume or stop playback.

...or pick a track to listen to

If you want to hear a particular track rather than the whole album, start by double-clicking the album containing that track. You'll see a similar view to that pictured on page 5, and you can double-click a track to play it. When that track finishes, the next starts playing automatically. To get back to the full listing of all your albums from here, just click on **Album** at the left of the window again.



If you prefer, Windows Media Player can list artists rather than albums. Click **Artist** at the left, then double-click an artist to see all their albums.