

Don't Mess Around with CDs! Create Playlists of Your Favourite Songs on Your PC

This article shows you how to:

- ✓ Copy music from audio CDs to keep on your PC
- ✓ Create 'playlists' containing any tracks in any order
- ✓ Make a homemade 'mix CD' from one of your playlists

They were all the rage 35 years ago, but in the age of computers, music CDs seem to be more of a curse than a blessing! Whenever you want to listen to your favourite songs, you have to go through the palaver of finding the right CD, opening its case, inserting the disc and choosing the song you want, then repeating the whole process for the next song. Surely there's a better way?



Indeed there is, and it comes in the form of the Windows Media Player program. Besides using it to play music, you can transfer audio CDs to your PC, build 'playlists' of your favourite songs in your chosen order, and even copy this homemade album to a blank CD. In this article I'll explain how it's all done.

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- **Copy Tracks from a Music CD to Your PC** M 934/2
 - **Playlists: Put Together Your Own Personal Albums** M 934/4
 - **Turn a Playlist into a Homemade Audio CD** M 934/7
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Copy Tracks from a Music CD to Your PC

From CD to PC

When you want to copy a music CD to your computer, the Windows Media Program makes surprisingly light work of it. Windows Media Player is included with every version of Windows, and somewhat remarkably you have exactly the same version of the program whether you're using Windows 10, Windows 8.1 or Windows 7.

To copy an audio CD to your PC, follow these steps:



First time?
Check these
settings

Copy music in
MP3 format

1. Begin by starting Windows Media Player:
 - In Windows 10, open the Start menu and you'll find it inside the Windows Accessories folder.
 - In Windows 8.1, go to the Start screen and start typing **media player** and click the program in the list of search results.
 - In Windows 7, open the Start menu and click **All Programs** and you'll find it near the top of the list.
2. If this is the first time you've copied a CD, let's make sure Windows Media Player is set up to copy your music in good quality, and to find album details such as artist names and track titles. Press the **(Alt)** key to make the program's menu appear, then open the **Tools** menu and choose **Options**. The Options dialog features a collection of tabs at the top, and we'll work our way through several of these tabs to check or change a few settings.

Library	Plug-ins	Privacy	Security	DVD	Network
Player	Rip Music	Devices	Burn	Performance	

- **Rip Music tab:** in the drop-down list headed **Format**, choose **MP3** (the most popular and widely-supported format for music files). Under **Audio quality**, drag the slider until it's one notch away from the right-hand end.

- **Burn tab:** in the 'Data Discs' section, choose M3U from the drop-down list, and make sure there's a tick beside the option beginning Use media information.
- **Library tab:** tick the box beside Retrieve additional information from the Internet and make sure Only add missing information is selected. This ensures that Windows Media Player will try to find all the details of your albums and tracks online and fill them in for you.
Click OK to close the Options dialog.

4. Now insert a music CD into your DVD/CD drive. (If an 'AutoPlay' dialog appears after you do this in Windows 7, click the x button in its top-right corner to close it.) After a short pause while your PC reads the disc, you'll see a CD icon appear at the left of the window and the name 'Unknown Album'. If your PC is online (or if you've played this CD before and your PC was online then), the correct album name will appear in place of 'Unknown Album'. This happens because Windows Media Player has looked up this CD's details online.



The best setting for data CDs

Ensure titles and artist names are found for you

Insert an audio CD to copy

Are there tracks you never listen to on this CD? If so, have a look at the track list in the main part of the window and you'll see checkboxes beside each song's name: remove the tick beside any song you don't want to copy to your computer.



Start the copying process

5. Right-click the CD item at the left of the window and choose **Rip CD to library**. Windows Media Player will begin copying the songs from the CD to your computer, one track at a time.



Each track is stored as a separate music file

Each track is saved as a separate audio file on your PC, and the process should take only a couple of minutes. When it's complete, click **Music** at the left of the window and you'll find this just-copied album in the list along with any other music already stored on your PC. To play this album from your PC, click the album's name and then click the 'Play' button on the control bar at the bottom of the window, or just double-click the picture of the album cover.



Done!

You can now eject the CD from your PC and put it away safely. If there are other albums you want to copy to your PC, go back to step 4 and repeat the process in the same way.

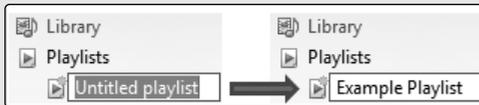
Playlists: Put Together Your Own Personal Albums

Your own personal mix of favourites

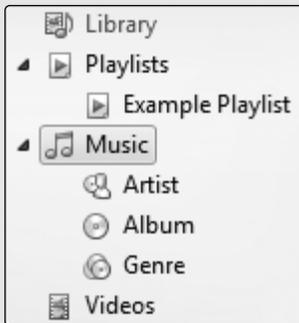
By following the steps above, you can copy whole albums to your PC (skipping any tracks you don't like), and listen to that album at any time in Windows Media Player. But how can you combine songs from different albums in a way you like – the equivalent of the 'mix tapes' you might have made in the old days of cassette recorders?

The secret is something called a 'playlist'. Here's how to make one:

1. Press the **(Alt)** key to display the menu bar, then open the File menu and choose Create playlist.
2. At the left of the window, a new item will appear named 'Untitled playlist', with the name already highlighted for you to type something better. Type a name for your playlist and press **(Enter)**.



3. At the left of the window, click on Music to see all the music stored on your PC. Look through your collection to find the first song you want to include in your playlist.



4. To add a song to the playlist, move the mouse pointer onto the song's name, press and hold the mouse button, and drag it over to the playlist item you just created and renamed. When the mouse pointer is over your playlist's name, release the mouse button to drop the song on it.



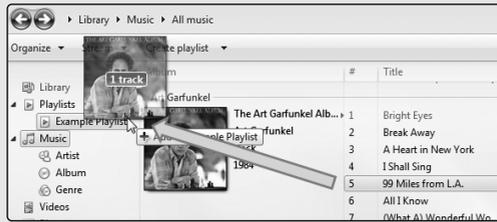
Create a new playlist

Switch to your music library

Drag songs from your library to the playlist



Adjust the order of songs in your playlist



All the songs you drag into the playlist remain stored in the same place on your hard drive, and you still have only one copy of each audio file. The playlist only contains the details needed to tell Windows which songs are included in the playlist, in what order, and where it can find them.

5. Drag other songs (from the same album, or from other albums) to the playlist to add them in the same way.
6. You can click the name of your playlist in the left-hand panel to see the list of tracks you've added so far. You'll see that the songs are listed in the order you added them (and, when you play the playlist, that's the order in which they'll be played), but you don't have to put up with that: if you want to adjust the order, just drag tracks upwards or downwards in the list.

#	Title	Length	Contributing artist
8	I Only Have Eyes for You	3:41	Art Garfunkel
5	99 Miles from L.A.	3:29	Art Garfunkel
3	A Heart in New York	3:13	Art Garfunkel
12	Sometimes When I'm D...	3:35	Art Garfunkel
13	Travellin' Boy	3:41	Art Garfunkel
14	The Same Old Tears on ...	3:52	Art Garfunkel

More tracks?

7. If you'd like to add more tracks to this playlist, click on Music in the left panel and repeat the earlier steps to drag more tracks into it.

You can create as many playlists as you like by following the steps above, and they'll all appear in the Playlists section of the left-hand panel whenever you start Windows Media Player. Since playlists don't involve making any copies of the song files themselves, there's no need to worry about how much space they may be taking up on your computer: you could create 100 playlists and they'd still take up less space than a single photo from your digital camera! To listen to one of your playlists, just double-click its name. Windows Media Player will begin playing the first track in the playlist, and then continue playing through the list in the order you've specified.

Create as many playlists as you like!

Listen to one of your playlists

Turn a Playlist into a Homemade Audio CD

Having all your favourite songs in your chosen order on your PC is certainly a good start, and it saves an awful lot of mucking around with CDs! So far, though, you only get this benefit in your home: why not create your own 'Car Tunes' CD containing your favourite songs so that you can listen to it on the road?

Your favourite tracks on a CD for the car

Here's how to copy one of your playlists to an audio CD:

1. Click the **Burn** tab **1** at the top of the right-hand panel.
2. Now insert a blank recordable CD into your computer's DVD/CD drive. (If an AutoPlay dialog appears after you've done this, just close it by clicking the x button in its top-right corner.) After a short pause while Windows examines the disc,



Insert a blank CD

Audio CD or
data CD?



Drag your playlist
to the 'Burn'
panel

Do the tracks fit
on a single disc?

Burn the disc

the 'Burn' panel at the right of the window will change to show the space available on the disc (2).

- Now decide what type of disc you want to create. Click the 'Burn options' button (3) and choose either **Audio CD** or **Data CD** or **DVD**.

If your car stereo is able to play MP3 music files on a disc, you can choose the **Data CD** or **DVD** option and you'll be able to fit many more songs on the disc. If your car has an ordinary (audio) CD player, choose **Audio CD**: you'll be limited to 80 minutes of music per disc.

- Now, in the left panel of the window, select the playlist you want to copy to the CD and drag it over to the 'Burn' panel at the right of the window and drop it there. The tracks in your playlist will appear in this 'Burn' panel.

- Now check the space still available on the disc (2). If the tracks in your playlist will fill more than a single disc, you have a choice:

- You can accept that you'll be creating two discs (and, perhaps, add a few more tracks by dragging them into this 'Burn' panel to fill up that second disc). After the first disc has been created, you'll be prompted to insert a second blank CD.
- You can remove tracks from the 'Burn' panel until the remainder fit on one disc. To remove tracks, right-click them and choose **Remove from list**.

- Finally, click the **Start burn** button (4) near the top of the panel. A progress bar will keep you posted on how much longer the job will take (it will only be a few minutes), and when the disc is ready, it will pop out of your DVD/CD drive automatically.