

HOW MP3 FILES WORK¹

Downloading and Listening

If you would like to download and then listen to MP3 files on your computer, then you need:

- A **computer**
- A **sound card** and **speakers** for the computer (If your computer has speakers, it has a sound card.)
- An **Internet connection** (If you are browsing the Web to read this article, then you have an Internet connection and it is working fine.)
- An **MP3 player** (a software application you can download from the Web in 10 minutes)

If you have recently purchased a new computer, chances are it already has software that can play MP3 files installed on its hard disk. The easiest way to find out if you already have an MP3 player installed is to download an MP3 file and try to double-click on it. If it plays, you are set. If not, you need to download a player, which is very easy to do.

There are literally thousands of sites on the Web where you can download MP3 files. ([Click here](#) to do a search for MP3 download sites.) Go to one of these sites, find a song and download it to your hard disk (most MP3 sites let you either listen to the song as a streaming file or download it -- you want to download). Most songs range between 2 and 4 MB, so it will take 10 to 15 minutes unless you have a high-speed Internet connection. Once the song has finished downloading, try to double-click on the file and see what happens. If your computer plays it, then you are set.

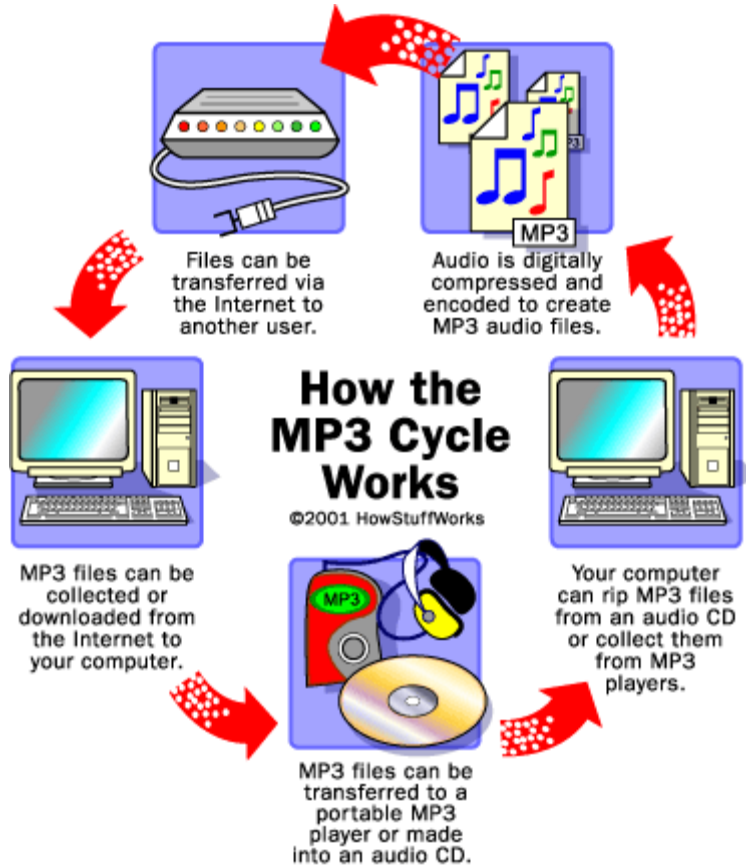
If you find that you cannot play it, then you need to download an **MP3 player**. There are dozens of players available, and most of them are free or shareware (shareware is extremely inexpensive). One of the most popular is WinAmp, which you can download from www.winamp.com.

You are now ready to begin collecting MP3 files and saving them on your computer. Many people have hundreds of songs they have collected, and they create jukebox-like playlists so that their computer can play them all day long!

Taking the Files With You

Many people who start collecting MP3 files find that they want to listen to them in all kinds of places. Small, [portable MP3 players](#) answer this need. These players are like portable cassette players except that they are smaller.

These players plug into your computer's [parallel](#), FireWire or [USB port](#) to transfer the data, and a software application lets you transfer your MP3s into the player by simply dragging the files. See [How MP3 Players Work](#) for details.



¹Brain, Marshall. "How MP3 Files Work." 01 April 2000. HowStuffWorks.com. <<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/mp3.htm>> 06 May 2008.