

The Digital Download Music Lovers

Guide

Introduction

Music has become even more portable within the last 25 years. First we had the Cassette Walkman, which served us well until the portable CD player came along in the 1990's. Then came Mini Disc, which had a short but very useful life. Now we have entered the Millennium and the format of digital music compressed into a very small space is now a reality.

Since 2003/4 a flood of MP3 (MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3) music players have arrived from the far east, where these things fly out of stores as fast as manufacturers can make them. These small, stick-like players are no bigger than your thumb, however, their solid state memory can hold up to 120 minutes of MP3 tracks or up to 240 minutes of WMA (Windows Media Audio) tracks.



These players, instantly work with Windows ME/2000/XP (drivers are needed for 98/98SE). The Drivers can either come supplied as a CD-Rom or can be downloaded from your MP3 player's manufacturer's site. All you need to do is just plug the player into your PC with the cable provided, or just plug directly into your PC. Then just drag and drop the music files you want directly into the music player's

folder. These players can also be used as portable storage devices, further increasing their value. Some even have built-in FM Radios and voice recording facilities.



You can even plug your MP3 player into your Hi-Fi and listen to your MP3 collection through your Hi-Fi's main speakers. If you can't plug directly into your Hi-Fi you can buy separate speakers for your player.

Audio File Formats Explained

Not all audio files are the same – I will explain what each of the formats represent and what they can be used for

There are many different audio file formats, and if you look around your My Music folder in the hard drive you should see evidence of this. The most popular format is the MP3 format, which has almost single headedly kick started the digit music revolution. But there are many more besides this, offering their own set of advantages and disadvantages. Audio file formats can be split into two broad categories – LOSSY and LOSSLESS. These reflect whether or not a compression process is used to save space at the expense of quality. Audio buffs stick to lossless formats so that the overall sound quality isn't reduced, but most users are happy to sacrifice some 1s and 0s for better compatibility, portability and speed.

Each format employs a different compression algorithm, a way of cramming the data inside a file into a smaller space, which is known as a codec (short for depression decompression). To shrink the music down, some parts are missed out or 'guessed at', which is where the loss in quality happens – Each audio file codec tackles this differently, as we will see below.

Most formats give you several options when it comes to encoding your music, so you can choose the level of compression (and how much sound quality is lost as a result).

MP3 (MPEG – 1 Audio Layer 3)

MP3 has played a major role in the digital revolution. It was the first file format to combine high quality with low file size (thanks to the advanced compression it employed), meaning that songs could be stored on a hard drive and swapped over the internet. It is currently the most popular format for digital music, though other file types are now starting to supersede it – while it does use lossy compression, the sound quality remains almost identical and the format still manages to deliver near cd sound quality in a file that is about a 10th the size of a corresponding uncompressed WAV file. Whenever you encode an MP3, you will be able to choose what bit rate to set it at, and thus how much sound quality you are prepared to sacrifice for file size. 128Kb/s is generally regarded as producing the sound quality that is almost as good as an audio cd and anything above this is an improvement but more file space will be needed as a result.

WMA (Windows Media Audio)

Windows Media Audio is Microsoft's attempt at music file format that challenges MP3. It actually out performs MP3 in several areas, primarily when low bit rates (such as 32Kb/s or 64Kb/s) are used, which makes it ideal for portable audio players where space is at a premium. Support for encoding WMA files is built directly into Windows XP, so if you are using that particular operating system then you should have no trouble in creating your own music files however; WMA is a proprietary format for Microsoft, which means that not every media player will be able to accept it.

WAV

WAV is one of the oldest audio files formats and is the standard lossless way of storing digital audio. It can take up large amounts of room on your hard drive because of its lossless nature – Up to 10MB for 1 minute of music – but there is no reduction in sound quality. Audio cds use a special form of WAV file, which is why official compact discs can only store around 80 minutes of music, whereas cds burned as data discs and filed with MP3s can hold closer to 12 hours of music.

ATRAC3 (Adaptive Transform Acoustic Coding)

Every now and again a company releases its own format in an attempt to promote its own products and squeeze others out that ATRAC3 is Sony's proprietary format, introduced to support its own range of portable audio players and online music download service. This format was originally used on mini-discs as the format supports a range of different bit rates and is still being developed by the Japanese giant. Despite the high quality and good compression, it is not of much interest unless you own Sony hardware.

AAC (Advanced Audio Coding)

This format was designed by Apple with the intention of being the next step up from MP3. AAC is sometimes called MPEG-4 AAC. It is a higher quality Kodek than MP3, requiring less data to achieve the same level of quality (so a 96Kb/s AAC file will sound as good as a 128Kb/s MP3 file). Though it was brought into the mainstream by Apple and is the format of choice at the iTunes store, the AAC format is used by other services and companies and it not associated solely with Apple. AAC is expected to become the main digital music format because of its high encoded capabilities and files will appear on your system with .m4a extension.

Choosing an MP3 Player

MP3 players come in all shapes and sizes. You can even get free MP3 players to play your music collection on your PC. This way you can make yourself comfortable with loading files, cataloguing them etc. WIN Amp (see www.winamp.com) is capable of playing just about every music format you care to throw at it – MP3, WMA, WAV and much more. You can even play your cds and favourite internet stations through it. It has flexibility combined with ease of use and this has made WIN Amp the most popular digital music available today. You can even change the look of your player by adding various 'skins' which are also available at winamp.com. This will enable you to have your player looking exactly the way you want it.

Choosing a Portable MP3 Player

This is probably the hardest part of moving into MP3. Most people go for price. This usually means sacrificing storage space, sound quality, features, etc. First of all decide what you will be using your player for. For example, short journeys to work on the bus or the train, holidays, or wanting to carry your whole music collection with you everywhere you go. If the latter is the case, you will need to consider purchasing an Mp3 player with large storage capabilities.

Here is a list of some of the best MP3 players available.



Apple iPod - 30GB – Black or White [with video playback]

Price: Around £199.99

Features

- Holds up to 7,500 songs and full-colour album art
- 10.4 x 6.1 x 1.1 cm
- Bright 6.35-cm (2.5-inch), 320 x 240 pixel TFT display
- Up to 14 hours of music playback
- Up to 3 hours of slideshows with music
- Up to 2 hours of video playback
- Holds up to 12,500 photos
- Holds up to 75 hours of video
- Plays video or photo slideshows on TV via the optional Dock

- **Apple Click Wheel**
- **Accessory-compatible Dock connector**
- **Dock works with the new Apple Remote**
- **Charges and syncs via USB**
- **Works with Mac OS X or Windows 2000/XP**
- **Syncs contacts, calendars and to-do lists**
- **Browse, buy and sync video to your iPod with iTunes 6**

iPod is a music player and more. Use iTunes to import music from your CD collection to your computer, and then connect iPod to your computer to download and play the music. You can also purchase songs and audio books (in some countries) and download podcasts from the iTunes Music Store.

If you have an iPod or an iPod nano, you can import photos from your digital camera to your computer, download them automatically to iPod, and then view them in a slideshow with music on the iPod screen. You can also synchronize contact and calendar information from your computer, view text notes; set an alarm; play games and more.

If you have an iPod with video, you can purchase videos from the iTunes Music Store and watch them on iPod.

***** i-Pod Hot Tips - <http://www.apple.com/support/itunes/hottips/>**

Manufacturer's Description

Witness the evolution of the revolution. First it held songs. Then photos and then podcasts. Now iPod adds video to change the way you experience your music and media. Again, the new lighter, thinner iPod is music to your eyes.

Time for the world's best music player to take the stage for another encore. Available in two colours, the 30GB ⁽¹⁾ model will hold up to 7,500 ⁽²⁾ songs and full-colour album art. Yeah, you've heard that tune before. Only now, you can watch it, too. With MPEG-4 and H.264 video support and a 6.35-cm (2.5-inch) colour display, the new iPod lets you watch up to 75 hours of video ⁽³⁾. Oh, and don't forget your photos. The new iPod stores up to 12,500 of them ⁽⁴⁾.

More and Less

The new iPod boasts up to 14 hours of battery life ⁽⁵⁾. Plus, you get a bigger display and one more iPod colour — sleek black. But here's the kicker: at under one and a

half centimetres thin, the new 60GB model is thinner than the fourth-generation 20GB iPod. More features in less space? Sounds like iPod.

Hold Everything

Now you can put all your music in your pocket and still have room for, well, practically everything else. Catch up on your reading with audio books. Browse your memories with photo slideshows, complete with music. Watch video podcasts and your favourite music videos. Consult your calendar or look up an email address. Even check the time in another city or time your fastest lap. The new iPod keeps it all close at hand.

Spin some Tunes

The Apple Click Wheel gives you access to your entire music, photo and video library — from one thumb. Control volume and browse using the touch-sensitive surface. Play. Pause. Rewind and fast-forward. Rate your favourites. Create play lists on the go. Launch photo slideshows. The Click Wheel puts everything at your fingertips, so you can keep your eyes and ears on the music.

Sync, Look and Listen

Playing your iPod is only half the fun. Try filling it with downloads from the iTunes Music Store. Choose from over 1.7 million songs, 15,000 podcasts or 1,000 music videos, download them to your Mac or PC and sync them to your iPod. Add an optional S-video cable and use iPod to play VJ on your TV. You can perform the same big-screen feat with iPod photo slideshows. And you can do it from across the room using the optional Universal Dock and handy new Apple Remote.

1. *1GB = 1 billion bytes; actual formatted capacity less.*
2. *Song capacity is based on four minutes per song and 128-Kbps AAC encoding.*
3. *Video capacity is based on four minutes per video and 750-Kbps H.264 encoding combined with 128-Kbps audio.*
4. *photo capacity is based on iPod-viewable photos transferred from iTunes.*
5. *Rechargeable batteries have a limited number of charge cycles and may eventually need to be replaced. Battery life and the number of charge cycles vary by use and settings.*

Box Contents

- Apple iPod
- Earbud headphones
- USB cable
- Dock adapter for use with Universal Dock
- Case

- iTunes software for PC & Mac
- Documentation

Comment:

This is an absolutely amazing bit of kit especially the new video feature which is extraordinary. The only problem is the scratches that you get on the screen, very easily. All in all it is a great piece of kit to take with you anywhere!



Apple 2 GB iPod Nano White or Black

Price: Around £142.99

Features

- Holds up to 500 songs and full-colour album art
- Only 9.0 x 4.0 x 0.69 cm and weighing just 42 g
- Bright 3.81 cm colour LCD display
- Up to 14 hours of battery life
- Apple Click Wheel
- Charges and syncs via USB 2.0
- Accessory-compatible Dock connector
- Completely skip-free playback
- Works with Mac OS X or Windows 2000/XP
- Plays music, podcasts and audio books

- Holds up to 12,500 photos
- Syncs contacts, calendars and to-do lists

The 2GB iPod nano is a revolutionary full-featured iPod that holds 500 songs yet is thinner than a standard pencil and less than half the size of competitive players. The iPod nano features an ultra-portable, lightweight design with a gorgeous colour screen, Apple's patent pending Click Wheel and the ability to hold 500 songs or 12,500 photos. iPod nano works seamlessly with the iTunes® Music Store, the world's number one digital music service.

iPod nano is the perfect combination of innovative design, storage capacity and ease of use. iPod nano features Apple's innovative Click Wheel for precise, one-handed navigation, and its ultra-portable design fits into even the smallest pocket making it easy to take iPod nano to the gym, in the car, travelling, commuting or anywhere you go. The most fashionable and wearable iPod ever, the iPod nano features optional accessories including lanyard headphones, which integrate the headphone cables into the lanyard, so users can wear their iPod nano around their neck without dangling headphone cables. For customers looking to personalise their iPod nano with colours, an optional set of iPod nano Tubes in pink, purple, blue, green and clear offers fashionable protection in a sheer casing while enabling full operation of all functions including the Click Wheel. Optional armbands available in grey, pink, blue, red and green allow users to wear their iPod nano as the ultimate fashion and sports accessory.

Featuring seamless integration with the iTunes Music Store and the iTunes digital music jukebox, iPod nano includes Apple's patent pending Auto-Sync technology that automatically downloads a user's digital music collection, photos or Podcasts onto iPod nano and keeps it up-to-date whenever iPod nano is plugged into a Mac or Windows computer using USB 2.0. With its stunning, high-resolution colour screen, iPod nano allows users to display album art while playing music, view photo slideshows or play games in full colour. iPod nano features up to 14 hours battery life and completely skip-free playback, as well as new stopwatch, world clock and screen lock applications.

Pod nano features the same 30-pin dock connector as the iPod and iPod mini, allowing it to work effortlessly with a wide range of over 1,000 accessories developed for iPod, including home stereo speakers and iPod car adapters for an incredible music experience at home or in the car.

Box Contents

- iPod nano
- Ear bud headphones

- USB 2.0 cable
- Dock adapter
- Quick Start guide
- CD with iTunes for Mac and Windows and features guide

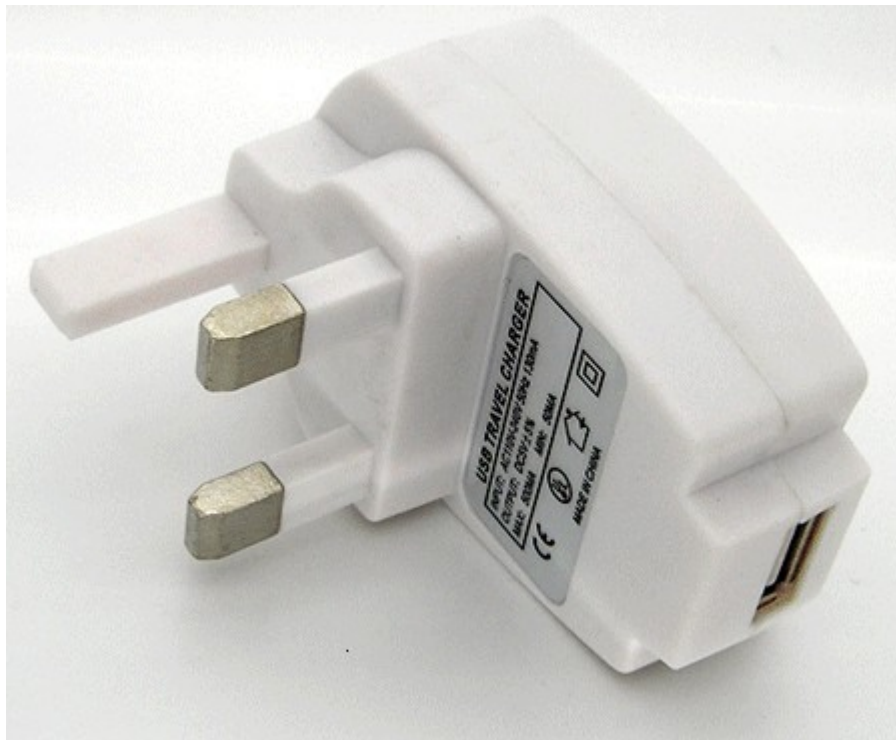
Comment:

Again this is an absolutely amazing player it looks & sounds great. You do get a problem with scratches on the screen and body. It has no mains charger and the battery doesn't last half as long as it says in the promotional ad's.

To get the most out of your battery, switch off the “clicker” wheel sound and turn off the screen display, or have it at the minimum setting!

I-Pod Accessories: USB Travel Charger.

These can be bought from eBay for under £10, while the official Apple ones are around £40. Why you don't get one with your player puzzles me? How it works: Simply plug into a wall socket and plug the other end into your i-Pod dock connector, and watch it charge. ****Note: these also work with all other Apple i-Pods!*



Mobile Cassette Adapter:



Features

- Fits front- and side-loading cassette players
- Allows easy placement of your audio player with 4 ft. cable
- Includes a 3.5mm connector
- Plugs into your iPod, MP3, CD, cassette player, PC, or laptop
- Features inner-magnetic and shake-resistant design

These are ideal for playing your i-pod in your car. Just insert it into your cassette player, then plug the other end into your mp3 player and off you go! ****Note: This works with any mp3 player!!!*

You can buy these from Argos for around £10, or you can try eBay for an even better bargain!!!

iPod nano Case skin cover:

These are great to stop your Nano from getting damaged. They are usually made from silicone or very soft rubber & just slip over the bottom of your iPod. They are light and easy to keep clean. You can get these from eBay for around £5 + post. Apple charge around £20 for a pack, however you only need one pack.

MP3 Selection

iPod Nano Skin



Ebay purchase



Apple pack



Apple iPod shuffle - 512MB

Price: Around £49.99

Features

- **Store up to 120 songs**
- **Auto fill from your entire music library for a fresh mix via iTunes software (supplied)**
- **Auto fill from specific play lists via iTunes software**
- **Drag and drop songs**
- **Control your music with the simple button interface**
- **Take it everywhere - it weighs only 22 g (0.78 oz)**
- **Wear iPod shuffle with the included lanyard**
- **Run, jump or shimmy down to skip-free playback**
- **Enjoy up to 12 hours of continuous playback**
- **Play MP3, AAC and audio books**
- **Fill iPod shuffle in a flash via USB**
- **Charge in four hours via USB or optional Power Adapter**
- **Store files along with your music**

Manufacturer's Description

Time to mix things up. Meet iPod shuffle, the unpredictable new iPod. What will it play next? Can it read your mind? Can it read your moods? Load it up. Put in on. See where it takes you.

Random is the New Order

Welcome to a life less orderly. As official soundtrack to the random revolution, the iPod Shuffle Songs setting takes you on a unique journey through your music collection you never know what's around the next tune. Meet your new ride. More roadster than Rolls, iPod shuffle rejects routine by serving up your favourite songs in a different order every time. Just plug iPod shuffle into your computer's USB port, let iTunes Auto fill it with up to 120 songs⁽¹⁾ and get a new experience with

every connection. The trail you run every day looks different with an iPod shuffle. Daily gridlock feels less mundane when you don't know what song will play next. iPod shuffle adds musical spontaneity to your life. Lose control. Love it.

DJ Your Day

If you prefer cycling to a hip-hop soundtrack and snowboarding to a little electronica, Auto fill iPod shuffle from a specific iTunes Play list and roll. Download an album from the iTunes Music Store and listen to it in order before you Shuffle it into your collection. Or just drag and drop individual songs from iTunes onto iPod shuffle. With Play in Order mode, you manage the music. If things take a turn for the predictable, never fear. Turn iPod shuffle over, flip the slider to Shuffle and mix on the go.

Goes with Everything

iPod shuffle weighs as little as a car key and makes a tuneful fashion statement. Just throw the included lanyard around your neck and take a walk. Or run. Or ride. There's nowhere your skip-free iPod shuffle can't go, and with up to 12 hours ⁽²⁾ of continuous playback time, it keeps going as long as you do. A neat little cap protects the USB connector, and those signature white ear bud headphones tell the world you love to listen in style. You can even make your iPod shuffle splash-proof, arm-hugging and longer-running with optional accessories. Ready for anything from a transatlantic flight to a weekend at the beach, the iPod shuffle makes the perfect low-maintenance pal.

The smallest iPod yet, iPod shuffle fits neatly in the palm of your hand and looks just plain neat around your neck. Prepare to make friends and influence people when you wear it biking, hiking, snowboarding, dog-walking and anywhere else that could use a great soundtrack.

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Touch of Genius

Good things really do come in small packages. The controls on the iPod shuffle feel as intuitive and easy to use as those on every iPod model. Play, pause, skip, repeat, shuffle and hold at the touch of a thumb: The circular, ergonomic controls and one-click slider make it simple to listen without looking.

The Music Store in Your House

Add to the iPod shuffle mix with songs downloaded from the iTunes Music Store. Browse and preview more than 700,000 songs, then buy what you want, 24-7, from the comfort of your Mac or PC. With the iTunes Music Store and iPod shuffle, you'll always have music at hand--literally.

1. Music capacity is based on 4 minutes per song and 128Kbps AAC encoding.

2. Rechargeable batteries have a limited number be optional iPod shuffle Dock or a USB cable extender (sold separately).

Box Contents

- iPod shuffle hardware
- iTunes software
- Ear bud headphones
- Lanyard
- USB cap

Comment:

For everyday use just load it up with your favourite songs and press play. The battery lasts for over 15 hours and after about 500 charges lasts for 10 hours 15 mins which is fine. As with any apple product when you first open it and see it in your hand you can't help but appreciate its design. Simplicity is the key to the whole thing. There is no screen so it makes this useless for audio books and podcasts and it also normally loses its place when you turn it off. I use this for sports and short journeys 10-30 mins. If your lazy and travel a lot long distance this is not for you (try the iPod video).

When you buy this I advise you to invest in 2 things, an USB Power Adapter for charging and travelling although you don't need it if you're never away from your pc for more than a day. you might need a new pair of earphones, the apple ones are ok but try the "Creative Labs EP-630 Earphones" or "Sony MDR-EX71SLW Stereo Earphones - White" both available from Amazon or eBay.

iTunes comes with the shuffle or you can download it from www.apple.com/uk while you're waiting for it to arrive and start ripping your cds.

So if you want an mp3 player with a quality name but don't want to spend £100's on one buy the shuffle at £50 lay back and see where the music takes you.



Sony NWA1000V 6 GB HDD Walkman

Price: Around £130

Features

- 6 GB (4,000 songs) internal hard disk drive memory
- Measuring only 55.0mm(W)x 88.1mm(H) x 18.7mm(D)
- 1.5-inch Organic EL Display
- Beautiful and sexy body weighing just 109 grams
- Long battery life of upto 20 hours, rechargeable via AC adaptor and USB connection
- Unique 'Artist Link' feature lets you discover new artists of your favourite genre
- Shuffle the way you like it with the new 'My Favourite' and 'Time Machine' Shuffle modes
- Easy to find any Artist, Album or Song by using the new 'Initial Search' tool
- ATRAC and MP3 compatible
- New and improved application software 'CONNECT Player'
- Sony's unique 'G-sensor' technology limits the damage risk to the Hard Disk of the device when it's dropped

MP3 Selection

Manufacturer's Description

The brand new Sony MP3 WALKMAN is the most cutting-edge yet, combining high-end design with ease-of-use and advanced functionality which seriously upgrades your listening experience. The 6GB NW-A1000 has space for up to 4,000 songs with up to 20 hours battery life and is made from a futuristic translucent material, sexy to the touch and gorgeous to look at. As it comes to life, the luminescent Organic EL display lights up. The three buttons make operating the player a cinch. Naturally, because it's a Sony, the audio quality is impeccable.

Whether you've owned an MP3 player before or you're new to them, you'll find the new WALKMAN so simple to use. Just like a mobile phone, the display features nine navigational icons on the home menu from which you can manoeuvre up, down, left and right to search, shuffle and access all your favourite tracks. The search method is much simpler to use than other players as it's easy to jump straight to the artist, album or song via their initials, rather than scrolling up and down a long list.

The WALKMAN features a revolutionary new ARTIST LINK function. This means that if you're listening to an artist or track and you press the artist link button the new WALKMAN will search, find and display similar artists in that genre. What's more, you can also choose how to 'shuffle'. By selecting 'My Favourite Shuffle', the device automatically selects the most listened to 100 songs and plays them at random. The 'Time Machine Shuffle' function randomly selects a year and plays all of the songs from that particular year that are currently held on the device.

The WALKMAN will be accompanied by a whole range of design-matching accessories; a stylish remote control for easier navigation, various carrying cases, a docking station for convenient connection with the PC, as well as a docking speaker system giving the option to connect to a PC (data sync) and play music through the speakers

CONNECT Compatible

The WALKMAN comes complete with brand new software called "CONNECT Player". This software is necessary to store, transfer and update all your tracks on your PC. And with the CONNECT music downloads fully integrated into this software, it's easy to go on-line and download tracks from the Sony music service.

CONNECT lets you access hundreds of thousands of tracks from old favourites to brand new cuts – and even more independent music that's usually harder to find. It also gives you access to the latest news, reviews and biographies, so there's plenty to keep you amused... All in all, the WALKMAN offers you the next level in MP3 players, combining the cutting-edge design you love with the sound quality and ease-of-use you demand.

Box Contents

- Sony NWA1000V 6 GB HDD Walkman
- Headphones
- USB Cable
- Rechargeable Battery
- AC Adaptor
- Carrying Pouch
- CONNECT Player Software



Creative Zen Micro 6GB MP3 Player

Price: Around £130

Features

- Store up to 3,000 songs on 6GB hard drive
- Micro-sized (3.3" tall, 2" wide, 0.7" deep)
- Available in 10 electrifying colours (Black, White, Silver, Dark blue, Light blue, Red, Purple, Citrus Orange, Lime Green and Pink)
- Features a removable lithium ion battery
- Get up to 12 hours playback time on a single charge
- FM radio to listen and record
- Integrated voice recorder gives up to 10 hrs of recording time

- Vertical touch pad for easy and intuitive navigation
- High fidelity earphones with dynamic bass response
- Contacts, Calendar and Tasks
- Plays MP3, WMA, WAV files
- Functions as an external hard drive for backup of computer files
- Backlit LCD displays track info
- 8 EQ settings (Acoustic, classical, disco, jazz, new age, pop, rock and vocal)
- Sleep and wake timers
- Customizable main menu, so the features you want are right at your finger tips
- USB 2.0 interfaces (cables included)
- Weight: 3.8 oz. (includes removable battery)

Manufacturer's Description

Introducing the most imaginative and eye-catching MP3 player to date! The exciting new Zen Micro offers 6GB capacities in a micro-sized player and treats you to an amazing array of electrifying colours to choose from, all with a captivating luminescent blue glow that will set you apart from the crowd. Winner of the prestigious "Best of Digital Life 2004" and "Editor's Choice" awards from CNET, the Zen Micro continues to offer the most variety, without any compromise in features.

You will never be without your favourite music with Zen Micro. Squeezed into its micro-sized casing is the capacity to store up to an astounding 3,000 songs¹, and keep your music going for up to 12 hours² on a single battery charge with its removable, rechargeable Li-ion battery.

There's no need to go round in circles with the Zen Micro's intuitive Vertical Touch Pad. Designed to let you easily navigate through your music collection, you can be sure to find any song or data file with ease.

Shuffle your songs or albums with the DJ feature, or tune in to the latest songs on the pop charts with the radio. Whatever you're listening to, enjoy the best sound quality and clarity of a hi-fi that fits easily in your pocket.

Have access to over two million downloadable songs on the Internet with, not just one, but the many music subscription or download services that the Zen Micro players support. Without being restricted to just one music provider, you have the freedom to choose from the widest selection of songs online from MSN Music and other music services. With PlaysForSure support, you will always be able to play any digital music you purchase.

Not only does it play music, the Zen Micro helps you keep your life organized too. The mini-organizer consists of a calendar, an address book and a to-do-list³. Keep

track of all your business appointments or classes. Sync up your Microsoft® Outlook® email addresses, calendar notes in your home or office PCs with Zen Micro. Need to record lectures, business meetings, or just love the sound of your voice? The built-in microphone lets you to create and store voice memos with the built-in voice recorder.

Created with a mesmerizing blue backlight glow, FM tuner and FM recording with 32 preset stations, USB 2.0 for fast transfer of files and 8 preset EQ settings, the Creative Zen Micro packs so much into something so small. Now, whoever said small had to mean minimal?

1 Based on 4 minutes per song at 64 kbps WMA

2 Actual battery life will vary with use

3 Requires Microsoft Outlook

Box Contents

- One Creative Zen Micro
- One set of High Fidelity earphones
- One Li-Ion battery
- One USB 2.0 cable
- One Pouch
- One Software Installation CD



Stick Mp3 Player.

Price: Around £20-£30 ***Note: If you look on eBay you can get one of these really cheap. Features

- Listen to MP3 & WMA,
- LCD screen, blue back light
- Voice record meetings and notes
- Store any data
- 8 hours playback with 1*AAA battery
- Ergonomic design
- Scratch resistant glass

Manufacturer's Description

The A203's definite design is only one of the features of this player! Add that to the ability to play MP3s, be able to voice record wherever you are, and the ability to act as a USB mass storage device, it's no wonder that this player is so appealing!

Box Contents

- MP3 Digital Audio Player
- AAA Battery
- Earphones
- USB Cable/Lead
- User Manual
- CD-ROM (containing tutorial presentations & driver software for Windows 98SE only)

Where to find free music to download

There have been many music file sharing programmes available over the internets which were free to the general public. This enabled you to download files from like minded music fans and swap your music collections. Whilst this was free and you could obtain a good collection of music, this was illegal and would open up your computer to the risks of unknowingly downloading a virus onto your hard drive.

Napster was one of those file sharing communities that created a lot of controversy in its inception and has since become a legal and responsible place to down load music (more on this later).

There are many places to legally down load free music. MP3.com features plenty of tracks that can be listened to for free. iTunes also has a facility where you can down load and sample free music (in their single of the week section). You can also download free music from the artists own web sites.

A link for you to try:

<http://www.mp3.com>

Hot Tips!

1. As you add and remove tracks the space on your iPods hard drive may become fragmented. To get around this the iPod is forced to split up the files and fit them into the available space. When it comes to playing back these tracks it then has to search for the separate pieces and pull them back together again which takes time. This will slow your iPod down. The more tracks you have added or removed the longer it takes for your iPod to play them back. To get around this reformat your iPod every 6 months or so, you will have to refill it each time but it is well worth the effort as it will be faster and more efficient.
2. Converting WMA files – Using a PC compatible audio file converter such as dB power AMP (<http://www.dbpoweramp.com>).
3. Converting streaming video files to play on your iPod – There are programmes that you will need to let you record streamed videos. Though this can be time consuming it is well worth it. First you will need
4. to download real seven time converter (<http://www.r7cproj.euro.ru/indexe.htm>). This programme turns real play streams into AVI audio visual files which you can save on your hard drive. To play them on your iPod, you will then need to change these into MOV files. To do this, you will need another programme, such as Rad's Bink Tools (<http://www.radgametools.com>).
5. If you download any tracks from Napster they cannot be transferred onto Apple iPod because the file format is not supported.

Downloading MP3. Check these sites out:

[In Music Advance](#)

[MP3 Selection](#)

[Imp3 Download.com](#)

iTunes.com

This site is probably the best site for downloading music files. You can download a free version of iTunes which has loads of interesting features, a store where you can buy music from 79p per track or complete albums for £7.99p or EPs for £1.49p. You can even check out artists and play lists of your favourite bands. You can also download free tracks from unsigned artists and up and coming bands. Also available on iTunes is a service which makes available Podcasts from various radio shows and other interesting broad casts.

Web site info:-

<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>

Napster

Formerly an illegal file sharing site, Napster was devised by an internet wiz kid in 1999. Later shut down in 2001 following a law suit filed by the RIAA. The website resurfaced again in 2004 as a legal downloading facility complete with a vast library of music.

Napster uses files which are not compatible with Apple iPods. See the link below to view players which are compatible.

<http://shop.napster.co.uk/>

http://www.napster.co.uk/compatible_devices/not_ntg_compatible.html

Wippit

With 600,000 recordings from over 400 record labels Wippit presents the smaller alternative to Napster and iTunes. However, it does offer a range of genres from punk to classic and spoken word as well as mobile phone ring tones. Wippet is one of the best value music stores around at 29p for selected tracks.

<http://www.wippit.com>

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<http://www.cuccurullo.tv/download/summary.html>

**Please note: You will need WinZip to download the files,
Thanks!**

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