

MICROSOFT®

WINDOWS MEDIA™ PLAYER 7 HANDBOOK

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How Does the Player Work?

In this chapter you'll learn how to operate Windows Media Player 7. You'll see how to play files, use the buttons to navigate, change the settings, use the menus, and switch to different views and modes. You'll also be shown how to find files on the Internet, copy music from CDs, and use playlists.

Playing a file in only three steps

Playing music or video on the Player is a simple 1-2-3 process:

1. Go to the **Now Playing** view.
2. Pick a song from a playlist and click the song title.
3. Then click the **Play** button to begin playing.

The three steps to playing a song are shown below in more detail.

Step 1: Start with the full mode Player

When you start Windows Media Player 7 for the first time, and you are connected to the Internet, you should see the full mode Player in the **Media Guide** view. Figure 2.1a shows a typical **Media Guide** view.

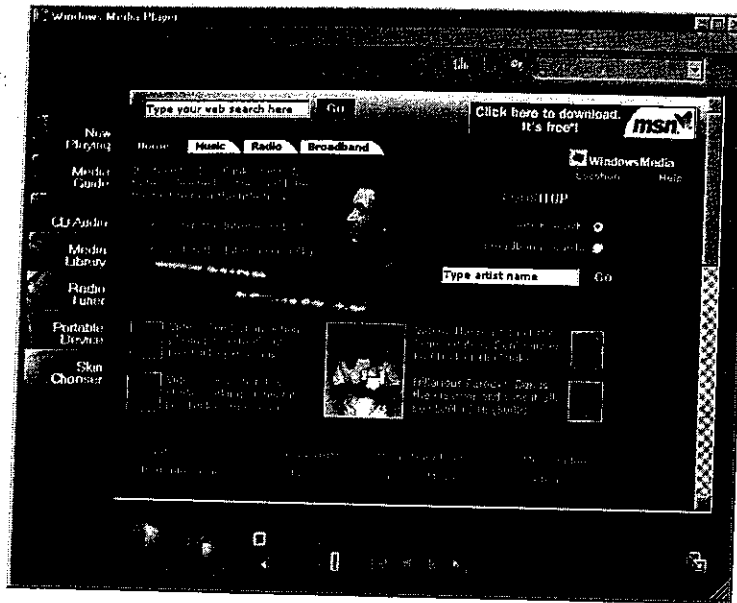


Figure 2.1a - Full mode Player in Media Guide view with Internet connection.

The **Media Guide** is a Web site that gives you a doorway into the world of audio and video on the Internet. The contents change nearly every day, giving you new audio and video selections, current entertainment news, and free downloads.

If you are *not* connected to the Internet, you'll see a screen similar to Figure 2.1b.

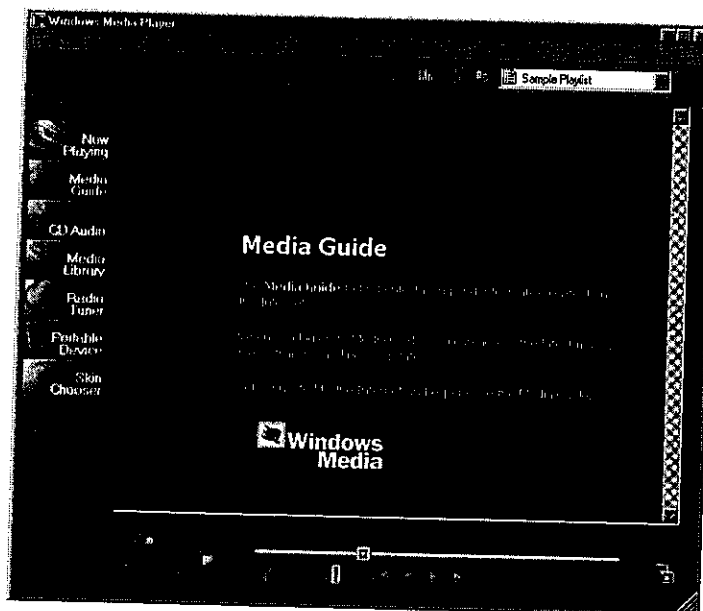


Figure 2.1b – Media Guide view without an Internet connection.

You can now get started using Windows Media Player. Click **Now Playing** on the left side of the full mode Player. You should see a view similar to Figure 2.2.

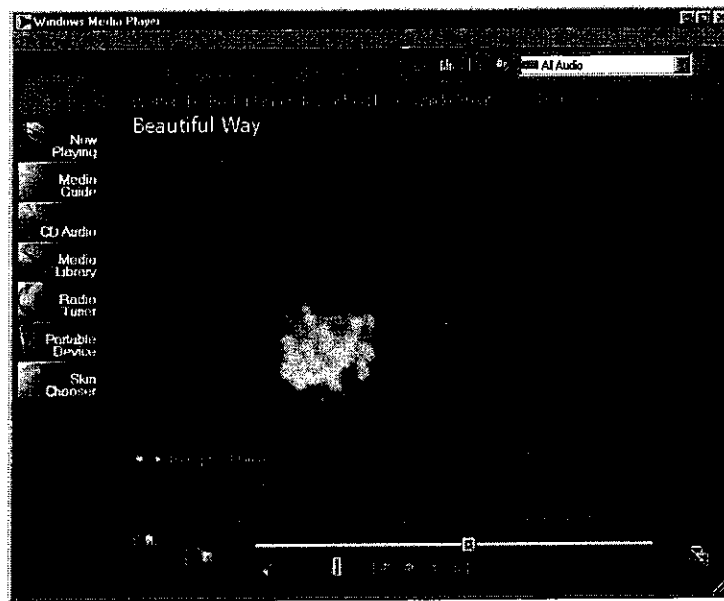


Figure 2.2 – Windows Media Player in full mode in the *Now Playing* view.

If you don't see something like Figure 2.2, you're probably looking at a skin. A skin may have been loaded by the last person to use the Player; you won't be able to see the **Now Playing** view when a skin is running. If you are viewing a skin, you will want to return to the full mode of Windows Media Player.

Windows Media Player comes in two modes: full mode and compact mode. The compact mode is used to display skins, and the full mode displays the standard Player. To return to full mode from any skin, right-click anywhere on the skin and then click **Return to Full Mode** on the shortcut menu that appears.

The full mode has several different views it can display. Right now, all you want to do is play a file, so click **Now Playing** at the left side of the full mode Player. You should now see something that looks close to Figure 2.2. You probably will have a different visualization or a different playlist loaded on your computer, but you're ready to start.

Step 2: Choose a song

There are several ways to choose a file to play, but the easiest way is to use a playlist. Playlists will be covered in greater detail later in this chapter, but to get you started, use the playlist that should be visible on the right side of the **Now Playing** view.

Figure 2.3 shows a **Now Playing** view with a playlist named “All Audio” that contains all the songs that the Player has information about. The third song, “Laure”, is selected and playing. You can double-click any item in the playlist to start playing that item.

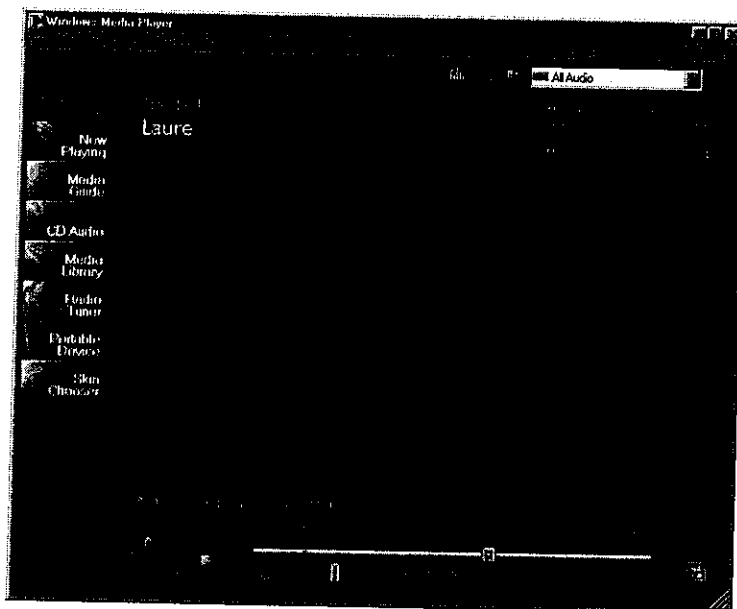


Figure 2.3 – *A playlist with more than one item.*

You can learn more about using playlists later in this chapter. There are other ways to choose audio and video files as well, and they will also be covered in this chapter.

Step 3: Click Play

Now that you’ve selected a song title, click the **Play** button. It looks like an arrow that is pointing to the right. You can see it in Figure 2.4.



Figure 2.4 – *The Play button of the full mode Player.*

When you click the **Play** button, two things happen. The music starts playing and the button changes. The button now looks like Figure 2.5.



Figure 2.5 – *The Pause button of the full mode Player.*

This new button is the **Pause** button. Any time you want to stop the Player, just click the **Pause** button. That will stop the music playing and change the **Pause** button back to a **Play** button.

Using the navigation buttons

Windows Media Player has several other buttons you can use to enhance your playing experience. The following buttons are always at the bottom of the window in the full mode Player and are listed here from left to right:

- **Play/Pause**
- **Stop**
- **Seek**
- **Mute**
- **Volume**
- **Previous**
- **Fast Reverse**
- **Fast Forward**
- **Next**
- **Switch to compact mode**

If you hover over a button with the mouse pointer, the name of the button will appear.

Figure 2.6 shows the navigation buttons for the full mode Player. These buttons are also called transport buttons and use symbols that are common to the electronic industry for controlling tape recorders, VCRs, and CD players. You'll often see the same button symbols in skins, but because every artist designs skins his own way, and the artwork varies widely, you won't necessarily find all the same buttons in each skin, or the buttons may not be in the same order.



Figure 2.6 – *Navigation buttons.*

Here is a brief explanation of each button.

Play/Pause

This button toggles back and forth between two states: **Play** and **Pause**. **Play** starts the selected music or video playing, and **Pause** pauses it. Clicking **Play** from a paused state will start the program playing from the same position it was paused at.

Stop

This button stops a currently playing program. If you click **Play** after clicking **Stop**, the program will start over at the beginning.

Seek

This is the long bar that extends above the other buttons. The **Seek** bar shows the current position in the file. If you click and drag the tiny box, you can change the current position in the file to anywhere you want. The left end of the **Seek** bar represents the beginning of the file, and the right end represents the end of the file. So the midpoint of the bar represents the midpoint of the file, regardless of its length.

Mute

Click this to mute the sound of the currently playing file. Click it again to return the sound to its previous volume.

Volume

This is a short triangular bar with a box above it. Click and drag the box left or right to increase or decrease the volume of the sound.

Previous

Click this to go to the previous title in a playlist.

Fast Reverse

Click this to move the current seek position of the file backward. Click it again to start playing from the new seek position. This button only works for video files that use the Windows Media video file format.

Fast Forward

Click this to move the current seek position of the file forward. Click it again to start playing from the new seek position. This button only works for video files that use the Windows Media video file format.

Next

Click this to go to the next title in the playlist.

Switch to compact mode

Use this to change the Player display to compact mode. This will change the user interface to the default skin or the last skin you selected.

Watching visualizations

At the bottom of the left side of the **Now Playing** pane, you'll see two buttons. Click these to change visualization presets. These buttons are shown in Figure 2.7.

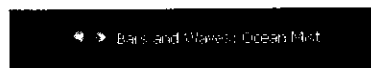


Figure 2.7 – *Previous visualization and Next visualization preset buttons.*

Visualizations draw moving shapes and colors on the screen that rise and fall in time to the beat and tone of the music. Several visualizations are included with Windows Media Player, and more are available from the Windows Media Player Visualizations Gallery. Click **Download Visualizations** on the **Tools** menu to go there.

Each visualization has several presets. Each preset gives a different “flavor” or “twist” to the visualization; for example, one preset might make all the colors soft pastels and another preset would make them vivid primary colors. You can change visualizations and presets by clicking the **Previous visualization** and **Next visualization** buttons. The visualization and preset names are displayed to the right of the buttons, with the visualization name first, and the preset name following, separated by a colon.

You won't see a visualization if you're playing a video, because they both use the same display pane.

Changing other settings

There's one other button that can be useful when playing audio and video. At the top of the full mode Windows Media Player, just to the right of center, you'll see the **Show Equalizer & Settings** button that looks like Figure 2.8.



Figure 2.8 – *Show/Hide Equalizer & Settings in Now Playing button.*

Clicking this button will show a new pane in the **Now Playing** area that is below the visualization/video pane. This pane covers several settings. To move to a new setting, click the **Previous setting** or **Next setting** button. These buttons are shown in Figure 2.9.



Figure 2.9 – *Previous setting and Next setting buttons.*

The following settings are accessed from this pane by clicking the **Previous setting** and **Next setting** buttons:

- **SRS WOW Effects**
- **Graphic Equalizer**
- **Video Settings**
- **Windows Media Information**
- **Captions**

Here is a brief explanation of each setting.

SRS WOW Effects settings

This pane allows you to adjust the SRS WOW settings. SRS is a type of surround sound that makes your audio sound more lifelike and three-dimensional. You can see the **SRS WOW Effects** pane in Figure 2.10.

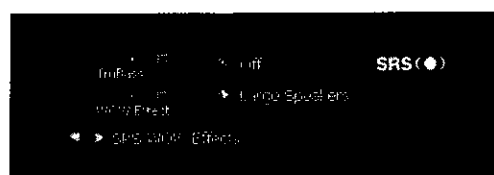


Figure 2.10 – SRS WOW Effects pane.

On the right is the logo for SRS. Click it to find out more about SRS. On the left are two horizontal sliders that adjust the **TruBass** and **WOW Effect**. Between the two sliders and the SRS logo are two buttons: the top turns SRS on and off, and the bottom one toggles between various presets.

Here is a brief explanation of each button:

TruBass

Sliding this all the way to the right increases the bass enhancement of the audio. Sliding to the left decreases it.

WOW Effect

Sliding this to the right increases the perceived height and width of the audio image.

On/Off

Click this toggle button to turn the **SRS WOW Effects** on or off.

Speaker Settings

Click this to toggle through the following speaker settings: normal speakers, large speakers, and headphones.

Graphic Equalizer settings

This pane allows you to adjust the audio to make it sound exactly the way you'd like. If you want to boost the bass or cut out high notes, this is the place to do it. Figure 2.11 shows the **Graphic Equalizer** pane.

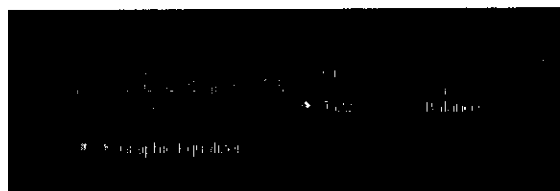


Figure 2.11 – Graphic Equalizer pane.

On the left you see ten sliders that correspond to ten divisions of the audio spectrum. Move the leftmost slider up to increase the power of the lowest fre-

quencies, move it down to reduce them. Similarly, the rightmost slider controls the upper tenth of the spectrum (the highest frequencies). Play with the sliders to see what sounds good to you.

To the immediate right of the sliders are two buttons. The top one turns the graphic equalizer on or off. If it is off, the settings are completely “flat,” that is, no modification is made to the sounds. The bottom button toggles through several presets that are based on popular styles of music. For example, the **Jazz** preset will boost the middle frequencies more than the **Acoustic** setting. If you make changes in the **Custom** preset, those changes will be saved for the next time you use the Player.

To the right of those two buttons is a final horizontal slider that allows you to adjust the stereo balance. Move it to the left to increase the apparent volume of the left channel and to the right to increase the right volume.

Video settings

This pane allows you to adjust the video to make it look the way you like it. If you want to adjust the brightness or the intensity of the color, this is the place to do it. Figure 2.12 shows the **Video Settings** pane.



Figure 2.12 – *Video Settings* pane.

On the left side of the pane are four horizontal sliders. They adjust the **Brightness**, **Contrast**, **Hue**, and **Saturation** of the video picture. To the right of these sliders is a button that resets all the sliders to their default (centered) positions.

Here is a brief explanation of each slider:

Brightness

This adjusts the brightness of the video picture. Slide it all the way to the left to make the picture completely black and all the way to the right to make it completely white. Usually you'll want it somewhere in between.

Contrast

Use this to sharpen or blur video images. Moving this slider all the way to the left makes the picture sharper. This effect is sometimes known as posterization. Moving it to the right makes the image look blurry, as if everything was photographed in a dense fog or underwater.

Hue

Adjust the hue for basic color changes. Slide it to the left to make everything more red/purple and to the right for green.

Saturation

This adjusts how much color is shown in the video. Slide the slider all the way to the left, and only the gray tones are used, with no color at all. Slide it all the way to the right, and the colors are extremely intense (saturated).

Windows Media Information

This pane isn't really a setting, but shows additional information about a particular item. For example, if you load the **Sample Playlist**, and open the **Windows Media Information** pane, you'll see something like Figure 2.13.

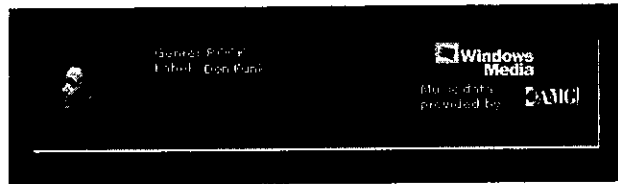


Figure 2.13 – *Windows Media Information* pane.

The **Windows Media Information** pane can display details such as genre and label, but can also display pictures, links, and other useful information. In this example, if you click the album cover or the link to the right of it, you'll be taken to a Web page that gives more details about the artist, album, label, and so on. For more information on how to create advertising information such as the kind you see in the **Windows Media Information** pane, see Chapter 13.

Captions

This pane isn't really a setting either, but shows captions for video files. See Figure 2.14 for a typical caption file.

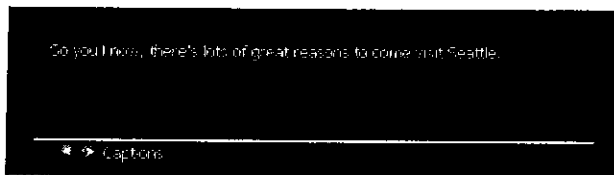


Figure 2.14 – *Captions pane.*

For more information about captions, see Chapter 13.

Using menus

Many of the operations you can perform with buttons can also be done through menus. The **File** menu is always available in the full mode view but is also available in skins that provide menus. Here is a brief listing of each menu item and what it does.

File menu

The **File** menu helps you work with files. The following commands are available on the **File** menu:

Open

Use this to load a file, using the standard Windows **Open** dialog box. The file you select will be loaded into a new playlist, and the file will start playing.

Open URL

Use this to load a file from a Web site or over a network. A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is a path to a file; for example, *http://internalsite/laure.wma* is a URL. You must type a URL that links to an audio or video file. If you type a URL to a Web page, you will get an error.

Close

This doesn't close the Player; it closes the media file that is playing. It stops the Player and deselects the current item in the current playlist.

Add to Library

Use this to add a track to the media library. The media library is the collection of all audio and video that the Player has information about. When you select this option, you are given three choices: **Add Currently Playing Track**, **Add File**, and **Add URL**. The first choice is useful when you want to add the content that is currently playing to the media library. The second and third choices are similar to the **Open** and **Open URL** commands on the **File** menu except that instead of playing the file, the Player just adds it to the media library.

Import Playlist to Library

Use this to import a playlist into the media library. Playlists are Windows Media metafiles that have an extension of .asx, .wax, .wvx. You can also import a .m3u file which will automatically be converted to a playlist.

Export Playlist to File

Use this to save a selected playlist in a text file. If you don't have any playlists selected (or any playlists at all), the media library will be saved as a playlist.

Copy to CD

Use this to copy files to a CD. You must have a CD-ROM that is recordable and a CD drive capable of recording. For more information about copying files to a CD-ROM, see Chapter 3. You may not see this menu item if you do not have a recordable CD drive installed on your computer.

Properties

Selecting this will display information about the audio or video that is currently playing.

Work Offline

Use this option if you don't want the Player to go out to the Internet to gather information about CDs.

Exit

This will shut down Windows Media Player.

View menu

The **View** menu helps you see all the different parts of Windows Media Player and work with visual elements. The following commands are available through the **View** menu:

Full Mode

This option returns you to the full mode view.

Compact Mode

Use this to change from full mode to a skin. Whatever skin you used last will be the default skin.

Now Playing Tools

Select this to change how the **Now Playing** area looks. You can choose to hide or display the playlist, title, and visualization portions of the pane. You can also show or hide the following settings: **SRS WOW Effects**, **Graphic Equalizer**, **Video**, **Windows Media Information**, and **Captions**. Finally, you can also hide or show the resize bars, which are the bars that separate the sub-panes of the **Now Playing** area.

Task Bar

The **Task Bar** menu command provides access to the same features found on the **Task Bar** tabs at the left side of the full mode Player. The following features are provided: **Now Playing**, **Media Guide**, **CD Audio**, **Media Library**, **Radio Tuner**, **Portable Device**, and **Skin Chooser**. For more information about the **Task Bar**, see the "Changing views in full mode" section of this chapter.

Visualizations

Selecting this option provides a list of the currently loaded visualizations. Selecting a visualization shows you the presets that are available for each visualization.

File Markers

Use this to go to a specific position in a file that has markers. If a file doesn't have markers, you can't select this option. For more information about file markers, see Chapter 12.

Statistics

Selecting this option can show you how well the file is playing. This can be particularly useful if you want to report problems with files that you are receiving in real time through the Internet (called streaming). If there are problems, you usually will know, but this option can give you exact answers, such as how many packets are being lost during transmission.

Full Screen

If you are playing a visualization that supports it, use this option to have the visualization display over the full screen of your computer. Once in

full screen, you can return to normal mode by pressing the ALT and ENTER keys simultaneously.

Refresh

Use this to refresh the page when you are using the **Media Guide**, **Portable Device**, or **Radio Tuner** panes. If you think you're looking at yesterday's Web page, you may be right. Some information in these task panes is cached, that is, stored on your hard disk, depending on the settings in Internet Explorer or your portable device.

Zoom

This allows you to change the size of a video that is playing. You can choose to make it fit the screen, or pick a specific percentage of the original. The percentages are 50%, 100%, and 200%.

Play menu

The **Play** menu gives you most of the same options that the transport buttons offer. The following commands are available through the **Play** menu:

Play/Pause

This starts the music or video program playing, or if it is already playing, pauses it. The Player must have at least one item in the media library in order to play. Playing a paused file starts the file playing at the same position it was paused at.

Stop

This stops the currently playing program. If you click **Play** after stopping the program, the song or video will start over at the beginning.

Skip Back

This stops the currently playing item in the playlist and plays the previous item in the same playlist. This corresponds to the **Previous** button in the Player buttons at the bottom of the full mode Player. If you are at the first item in a playlist and you select **Skip Back**, the last item in the playlist will be played.

Skip Forward

This stops the currently playing item in the playlist and plays the next item in the same playlist. This corresponds to the **Next** button in the Player buttons at the bottom of the full mode Player. If you are at the last item in a playlist and you select **Skip Forward**, the first item in the playlist will be played.

Rewind

This rewinds a video in short intervals. You can only rewind videos that are encoded in Windows Media Format. This corresponds to the **Fast Reverse** button in the Player buttons at the bottom of the full mode Player.

Fast Forward

This fast forwards a video in short intervals. You can only fast forward videos that are encoded in Windows Media Format. This corresponds to the **Fast Forward** button in the Player buttons at the bottom of the full mode Player.

Shuffle

This plays the items in the current playlist in a random order. It does not change the order of the items in the playlist, only the order in which they are played while the shuffle option is selected.

Repeat

This repeats the playing of the entire current playlist, not specific items in a playlist. If you want to repeat only one item, create a new playlist, put only that item in it, and repeat that playlist.

Volume

This lets you nudge the volume up or down by a small amount. It also allows you to mute the volume.

Tools menu

The **Tools** menu is for advanced features of Windows Media Player. The following commands are available through the **Tools** menu:

Download Visualizations

Select this to go to a Web page that will let you download new visualizations.

Search Computer for Media

Use this to search your computer for all audio and video files. The Player will add the files it finds to your media library and divide them between the audio and video collections. If you choose the option to search for WAV and MIDI files, you will add a lot of Windows sound effects that you may not want to play with the Player; on the other hand, you may

discover some interesting MIDI files that are hidden away inside your Windows folder. You can choose to load from local drives, network drives, all drives, or a specific drive, and even a specific directory. If you have mapped a network drive to your computer, you can search that drive as well. For example, if drive X: is mapped to a network drive, you can search that drive, or directories on that drive.

License Management

If you download music that requires a license, or make copies of CD tracks, this option specifies where you want to store the licenses on your computer. You might want to pick a folder that you can find easily so you can conveniently back up your licenses to another drive or storage medium. If you pay for a song and the song needs a license to play, you'll want to take good care of your licenses. For more information about licensing, see "Understanding digital rights" in Chapter 3.

Options

This is the option for everything else not covered in other menu items. The following section, "Options dialog box," provides more information about this menu item.

Options dialog box

If you go to the **Tools** menu and click **Options**, the **Options** dialog box is displayed. It covers various options you may want to change. The following tabs are included in the **Options** dialog box:

Player

This tab lets you set how often you want Windows Media Player to check for software upgrades (daily, weekly, monthly), whether you want the Player to automatically download codecs it needs (See Chapter 3 for more about codecs.), whether you want the Player to identify itself to Web sites and download licenses automatically, whether you want the Player to start up in **Media Guide** (instead of whatever you mode you used last time), and whether you want skins to be on top of other windows. You can also decide whether you want the anchor to be displayed when using skins. The anchor window is a small window that appears in the lower right corner of the screen when Windows Media Player is in compact mode. You can click the anchor window, and then click **Return to Full Mode** to return to the full mode of the Player. Most

of the time you'll want to leave these options the way they were initially set.

Network

If you are an advanced networking user, you can use this tab to set proxies, ports, and protocols.

CD Audio

Use this to set up how you will play or record CDs. For playing CDs, you can choose whether to use digital playback, if your computer supports it, and whether to use error correction. Change these options if you are having problems playing CDs. For copying music from CDs, you can select how much compression to use when converting music from CD format to music file formats. You'll have to choose between smaller file sizes and better quality. You can also choose whether to use digital copying or error correction, and whether to use personal rights management. Finally, you can choose what folder you want the copied audio files to be created in. For more information about copying CDs and digital rights, see Chapter 3.

Portable Device

If you have a portable device, you can use this pane to decide whether to let the Player convert the music automatically or let you pick a tradeoff between file size and audio quality. You can also click a button and find out what devices are supported by Windows Media Player. For more information about portable devices, see Chapter 5.

Performance

You might want to use this tab if you are having trouble with viewing live files (streaming). You can tell the Player what network connection you have, how much buffering to do, whether you want to use hardware acceleration with video, and how to adjust digital video settings. For more information about streaming, see Chapter 4.

Media Library

Use this tab to set access rights to your media library. You can specify what levels of access you want to grant outside Web sites to read or modify the media in your library. This involves both security and privacy issues. This also specifies whether you want Internet music purchases to be added to your library automatically.

Visualizations

If you have installed a visualization that has properties you can change, go to this tab to change them. For example, the Ambience visualization will let you set the full-screen size and offscreen buffer size. You can also use this tab to load a visualization that is stored on your computer but that is not registered with the Player. Be sure you know the source of any visualization before loading, and load them from only trusted sites, so that you can avoid viruses.

Formats

Use this tab to make sure the Player plays the file formats you want it to play. If another brand of player starts playing a file that you want Windows Media Player to play, change the file association here, if it is a file format the Player can play.

Help menu

The **Help** menu gives you help and information. This menu has the following three commands:

Help Topics

This command launches the Help file that comes with Windows Media Player. The Help file covers all the features you need to know about to use the Player. You can also get the Help file by pressing the F1 key on your computer at any time while Windows Media Player is the active Window.

Check For Player Upgrades

Use this command any time you're curious about upgrades to Windows Media Player. The Player will do this automatically for you, but you may want to do it yourself if you've heard news of a new version.

About Windows Media Player

This will display the name, copyright, version number, and product ID of Windows Media Player.

Compact mode shortcut menu

When Windows Media Player is in compact mode, you can right-click the skin and get a menu. Each of the commands on the menu corresponds to a similarly named command on one of the menus of the full mode Player.

Table 2.1 shows the commands on the menu of the compact mode along with their corresponding full mode menu commands.

Compact mode menu command	Full mode menu command
Open	File menu Open option
Open URL	File menu Open URL option
Shuffle	Play menu Shuffle option
Repeat	Play menu Repeat option
Volume	Play menu Volume option
Play/Pause	Play menu Play/Pause option
Stop	Play menu Stop option
Skip Back	Play menu Skip Back option
Skip Forward	Play menu Skip Back option
Return to Full Mode	Play menu Skip Forward option
Full Screen	View menu Full Screen option
Properties	File menu Properties option
Statistics	View menu Statistics option
Options	Tools menu Options option
Help	Help menu Help Topics option
About	Help menu About Windows Media Player option
Exit	File menu Exit option

Table 2.1 – Menu commands of the compact mode Player.

Changing views in full mode

The full mode of Windows Media Player has seven views that are accessed by clicking tabs on the **Task Bar**, which is on the left side of the window. Each view gives you a different way to interact with audio and video. Here is a list of the views:

Now Playing

This view shows a visualization or video on the left pane and a playlist on the right. You can also display a hidden settings pane to make various adjustments or see additional information. You'll spend most of your time in this view.

Media Guide

This is the default view of the Player and opens up a world of audio and video through the Internet. You can get daily news of new audio and video releases, tune in to Internet radio stations, and download tons of things to see and hear, most of it free! For more help with downloading, see the "Finding files on the Internet" section in this chapter.

CD Audio

If you have a CD player in your computer, you can play your CD tracks using Windows Media Player. For more information about using CDs, see the "Copying music from CDs" section in this chapter. For more information about creating your own CDs, see Chapter 3.

Media Library

This is where you can organize all your audio and video. You can search for audio and video files on your computer, create playlists, and change your Internet radio presets here. For more information about working with playlists, see the "Using playlists" section of this chapter.

Radio Tuner

Use this feature to search out and sort Internet radio stations. From around the world or around the block, you can listen to music every hour of every day and never hear the same thing twice!

Portable Devices

Use this pane to download music to your Pocket PC or other portable device. For more information about portable devices, see Chapter 5.

Skin Chooser

Use this to apply skins that came with your installation. You can also use this feature to download new skins from the Windows Media Skins Gallery Web site. Once you try one skin, you'll never want to stop! New skins will be appearing frequently, so check this site often.

Finding files on the Internet

Now that you know how to use the Windows Media Player, you can go out on the Web and find more music. You can use a browser to do this of course, but Windows Media Player gives you a special window to the world of music and video. This window is called the **Media Guide**. Earlier in this chapter you saw a typical view of the **Media Guide** in Figure 2.1a.

The Player will start up with the **Media Guide** view. You can always get to it by using the full mode of the Player and clicking **Media Guide** on the **Task Bar** on the left side of the Player. If you don't want **Media Guide** to be the default view, go to the **Tools** menu and click **Options**; then click the **Player** tab and clear the **Start Player in Media Guide** check box.

The **Media Guide** is a window to the WindowsMedia.com Web site. The **Media Guide** has hundreds of links to new audio and video files to play and download, and gives you lots of information about what's new in the world of audio and video. You can spend hours and hours exploring the **Media Guide**.

For more information about file formats you can download, see Chapter 3. For information about seeing and hearing files without waiting to download them (streaming), see Chapter 4.

Copying music from CDs

If you want to listen to music from different CDs without inserting and removing your CDs all the time, Windows Media Player can save you a lot of time. All you have to do is copy the CD (or just the tracks you want) onto your computer, then assemble the tracks into playlists and create your own customized musical experience.

Also, you can have the Player compress the files so they won't take up as much room on your hard disk. You can control the amount of compression you need. Choosing high compression will create files that won't sound as good but will take up less space.

Copying tracks

Copying CD tracks is extremely easy. All you need to do is load a CD into your CD-ROM drive and start Windows Media Player. When the Player starts, it loads the CD tracks into a playlist and displays the **CD Audio** pane of the full mode Player. Figure 2.15 shows a typical **CD Audio** pane, which you can always get to from the full mode view of the Player by clicking the **CD Audio** tab of the **Task Bar** on the left side of the Player.

If you are connected to the Internet, the Player will go out to a database and get information about each track on the CD, showing you not only track names and lengths, but artist, genre, style, and so on. On many CDs, you can even click the **Album Details** and go to a Web site that contains more information about the CD.

After you've loaded your CD, all you have to do is decide which tracks you want to copy to your computer. After you've decided, select the check box at the left of each track to select the tracks you want to copy.

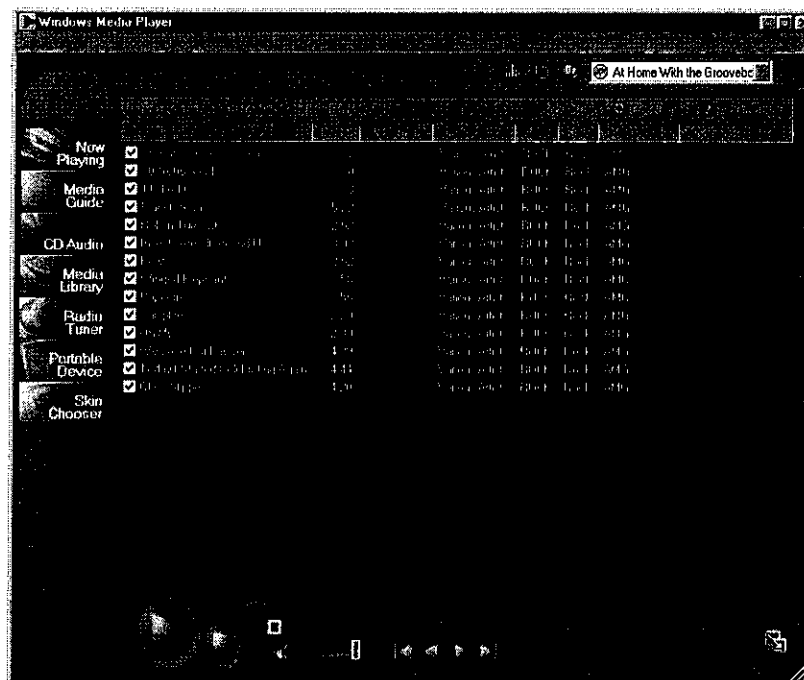


Figure 2.15 – Audio CD pane.

When you're ready to copy, just click the red **Copy Music** button. You'll see that the Player starts copying because there is a **Copy Status** column in the

CD Audio playlist, and the status will be displayed. Files that are being copied will have a percent-copied display; files that will be copied are labeled "Pending" and when a file is finished copying, it will be labeled "Copied to Library" in the status column.

Selecting copy options

There are several options you can select that will allow you to change the way that the Player copies files from a CD to your computer. Click **Options** on the **Tools** menu, and then click the **CD Audio** tab. You'll see the following choices:

Digital playback (under Playback Settings)

This setting only applies to playback, not to copying CDs. If your computer supports digital playback, select this check box and see how digital playback sounds. If you don't select this option, you will not be able to see visualizations.

Use error correction (under Playback Settings)

This setting only applies to playback, not to copying CDs. If you are experiencing a lot of errors, selecting this check box may help correct them during playback. You'll know you're getting errors if the audio sounds as if parts are missing or the video starts jumping around and missing frames. You can only select this if you have also selected the **Digital playback** check box.

Copy music at this quality (under Copying Settings)

Windows Media Player can compress the digital information in the files it creates so that the files will be smaller. It does this using a variety of techniques. Depending on the type of music you're copying, you may or may not notice the difference. You can choose the amount of compression with a slider bar. An average music CD can be compressed from as small as 28 MB to as large as 70 MB. The larger the file, the better the sound quality.

Digital copying (under Copying Settings)

Select this check box to copy CD tracks to audio files that enable digital playback. Not all computers and sound cards have digital playback. If yours do, this is a good option to use, and the sound doesn't need to be converted to analog and back to digital. If you're not sure, try a track both ways and see what you like.

Use error correction (under Copying Settings)

You can only select this check box if you've also selected the **Digital copying** option. Use this if your tracks are producing errors. Once again, if you're not sure whether to use this, try a track both ways and listen to the results.

Enable Personal Rights Management (under Copying Settings)

If this check box is selected, the files you create will have information attached to them indicating that they were created on your computer. You will definitely want to keep this option checked if you want to copy your files to a portable device such as a Pocket PC; many portable devices will not play music if you have not licensed the appropriate rights for a particular file. However, if you keep this option checked, you cannot play files you have copied on another computer. So if you want to copy files from your CD and then transfer them to another computer, you should not select this option. Of course, before copying and transferring, be sure you have the legal right to do so. The issues of digital rights are covered in Chapter 3.

Using playlists

A playlist is a convenient way to organize groups of audio and video files. The term comes from the radio industry and refers to the list of songs that a disc jockey plays on a particular radio program.

You might want to make up playlists for different performers or different kinds of music or videos. You can shuffle playlists or repeat them endlessly. This way, you can create a media experience that is continuously entertaining.

You can see which playlist is playing by looking in the upper-right corner of the full mode Player. You will see a drop-down list box, which shows the current playlist.

Using the Media Library

The **Media Library** is the key to understanding playlists. The **Media Library** is where you create your playlists. You can get to the **Media Library** by choosing the **Media Library** tab on the **Task Bar** of the full mode Windows Media Player. Figure 2.16 shows a typical view of the **Media Library**.



Figure 2.16 – *Media Library.*

On the left side of the **Media Library** you'll see a tree-like list of all the audio and video that the Player has information about, as well as all playlists and radio presets. This is set up similar to Microsoft Windows Explorer in that you click an item on the left and the contents of that item appear on the right.

The **Media Library** is divided into the following sections:

- Audio
- Video
- My Playlists
- Radio Tuner Presets
- Deleted Items

Each section is a node in the tree. Figure 2.17 shows the five nodes of the **Media Library**.

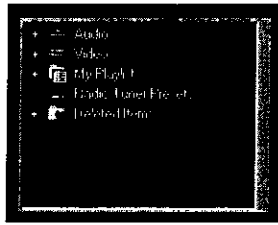


Figure 2.17 – *Five nodes of the Media Library.*

Figure 2.18 shows the nodes expanded by one level for each node. You can expand a node to show the items inside it by clicking the plus sign to the left of the node name.

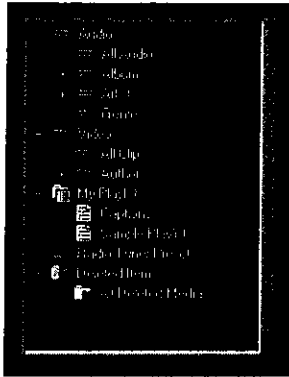


Figure 2.18 – *Media Library nodes expanded by one level.*

You can explore the contents of the **Media Library** by expanding the nodes. Any time you click one of the node item names, the contents of that node, if it is a folder, will be displayed in the right pane of the **Media Library**.

Understanding the audio collection

The audio collection is the part of the library that keeps track of audio files on your computer and other audio files that the Player has information about (for example, files on the Internet).

Adding Audio Files

You can add to the audio collection in several ways:

- Click the **File** menu, click **Open**, and then choose an audio file.
- Click the **File** menu, click **Open URL**, and then choose an audio file.
- Click the **File** menu, click **Add to Library**, and then choose an audio file.

- Click the **File** menu, and click **Import Playlist to Library** (if the playlist has links to audio files in it).
- From the **CD Audio** task pane, copy a CD track to your computer.
- Start an audio file playing by double-clicking it.
- Start an audio file playing by right-clicking it and selecting the **Play** option.

Sorting audio files

You can find a file by clicking the **Search** button at the top of the **Media Library** pane.

The Audio collection is a database of audio files, and like other databases, it stores not only the file name and location of audio files, but additional information such as artist, album, and genre. This additional information is used to sort the Audio collection into at least four categories. You can see the categories by clicking the nodes to the left of the **Audio** label. Figure 2.19 shows the four nodes inside the Audio collection.

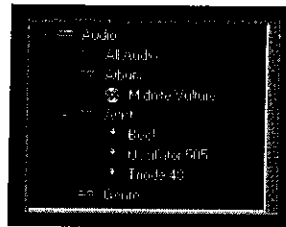


Figure 2.19 – *The four nodes of the audio collection.*

Here is an explanation of each category:

All Audio

This includes a list of all audio that Windows Media Player has information about.

Album

This shows a list of all music that is associated with albums. The album information can come from a CD, from a playlist, or can be embedded in the file itself. The Player can get album information about CDs from Internet databases.

Artist

You can see a list of all the artists that are associated with the audio files in the Audio collection.

Genre

If you want to find audio files that have a genre associated with them, this is the place to look.

Understanding the video collection

The video collection uses the same concepts as the audio collection except that it keeps track of video files. Instead of **All Audio**, the video collection will refer to **All Clips**, **Artist** becomes **Author**, and there is no album or genre equivalent for videos.

Understanding My Playlists

This is a collection of all playlists that the Player has information about. Playlists are lists that you create of audio and video content.

Creating playlists

Creating playlists couldn't be simpler. Click the **New Playlist** button at the top left of the **Media Library** and enter the new playlist name.

Adding to playlists

You can add to playlists by doing the following:

1. Create your playlist.
2. Find the audio or video file you want to add. You must open an Audio or Video collection and select a file from the collection. For example, open the Audio collection, then open the Artist collection, choose an artist you like, displaying all the songs by that artist in the right pane.
3. Select the audio or video file, and add it to the playlist. You can do this in one of two ways. The easy way is to right-click the file and choose the **Add to Playlist** option. You'll be provided with a list of playlists. Pick one and you're done. There's also an **Add to Playlist** button at the top of the **Media Library** pane if you prefer to click a button.
4. You can also select the audio or video file and drag it to the playlist in the left pane. This requires a bit of opening and closing of nodes in the collection, but after you get used to it, you'll find that this is a useful way to work with complicated playlists.

Deleting and renaming playlists

You can also delete and rename playlists by right-clicking a playlist and choosing the delete or rename option. Deleted playlists aren't really deleted, they are transferred to the **Deleted Items** part of the **Media Library**.

Deleting media items and playlists

If you delete an item in the audio or video collection, the item is transferred to the **Deleted Items** part of the **Media Library**. The same is true for deleted playlists. This is similar to the Recycle Bin in Windows.

Restoring media items and playlists

You can get the file or playlist back by right-clicking it and selecting the **Restore** option. The file or playlist will return to the place you deleted it from.

Permanently deleting media items and playlists

If you want to permanently erase the media items and playlists you deleted, you can reclaim their disk space by right-clicking the **Deleted Items** node and choosing the **Empty Deleted Items** option. Be careful! After you do this, you can't go back! But at least you're given an option to change your mind before the media files and playlists are gone forever.

Using the Radio Tuner

The **Radio Tuner** feature lets you use the Player to listen to Internet radio stations from around the world. Thousands of stations broadcast audio programs of music, news, and commentary.

Figure 2.20 shows the **Radio Tuner** view, which you can get to by clicking **Radio Tuner** in the task bar on the left side of the full mode of Windows Media Player.



Figure 2.20 – Radio Tuner view in the full mode Player.

The **Radio Tuner** view has two panes: **Station Finder** and **Presets**.

Using Station Finder

The **Station Finder** can help you tune in to Internet Radio stations. Even though there are thousands of stations around the globe, you can easily find one you like with only a few clicks. The contents of the **Station Finder** are updated frequently by WindowsMedia.com so that as new stations go on the air, you can tune in to them right away.

All the stations are listed in a table that sorts them by station name, speed, frequency, and format or city. You can sort the table rows by clicking the column heading you want to sort on. Double-click a station listing to start it playing.

Above the table of radio stations is one or more list boxes. The box on the left has several categories that you can use to find particular radio stations, including the following:

Format

This gives you a set of predefined radio station formats ranging from Alternative Rock to Classical to News Radio.

Band

You can choose to search through the AM band or FM band, or choose Internet-only.

Language

There are several spoken languages to choose from, including Chinese, English, Latvian, and 20 others.

Location

Countries such as the United States, Finland, Korea, and 30 others are represented in the table listings with radio stations. If you choose the United States, you can search by state.

Callsign

If you know the call letters of a radio station, you can find the station by typing the call letters in the search box. For example, if you type "CKWW", you'll listen to station CKWW in Detroit, Michigan, that specializes in big band music.

Frequency

You can tune in to a station by typing the frequency; for example, 88.5 on the FM dial would give you radio station KPLU in the Seattle, Washington, area.

Keyword

If a station has a slogan, you can find it with a keyword. For example, searching for "oldies" will give you several stations to choose from.

Using station presets

There are two default presets that you can use to sort radio stations that you will want to use often. One is called Featured and has stations that are currently featured by Windows Media Player. You can't add stations to Featured. But you can add radio stations that you want to use frequently to My Presets.

You can create your own preset categories by clicking the **Edit** button above the **Presets** list.

Working with radio stations in the Media Library

All presets created in the **Radio Tuner** are automatically copied to the **Media Library** in the **Radio Tuner Presets** category.