

HANDS-ON GUIDE SERIES®



**Hands-On Guide to
Windows Media**

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CHAPTER 1



Windows Media Quick Start

You need to get up to speed as quickly as possible on the basics of streaming media and Windows Media Series. Maybe you're on a tight deadline or you have to learn this stuff in between 63 other projects that were due yesterday. You've come to the right place!

This chapter walks you step-by-step through a number of important installations. By the time you're finished, you'll be streaming a video file. Just to make things extra fast, the instructions assume that most default settings, automatically set by the installer, work for you. However, for this chapter to make sense, the text makes a number of further assumptions:

- You have a source audio or video file in a "raw" format, that is, a file with the extension **.wav** or **.avi**.
- You are allowed to install software on your system.
- You are familiar with the basics of using an FTP client.
- You are running a computer with Windows® XP operating system, preferably Windows XP Professional.
- You have access to a computer running at least Windows Server™ 2003 Standard Edition with Windows Media® Services installed.
- You have permission to upload files to a Windows Media Server and a Microsoft Internet Information Services (IIS) web server.
- You know something about writing HTML.

Even if you're not sure about all of the above, we can still get started. By the time you finish this chapter, you'll know how to:

- Update Windows Media Player
- Use the main player features
- Prepare your media file for encoding

- Install a Windows Media Encoder 9 Series
- Encode your media file
- Publish your media file
- Troubleshoot the installation process

Update Your Media Player

Unless you've built your own system from parts or bought a "bare bones" system, there's a better than 99% chance that Windows Media Player is already installed on your hard drive. But you may not have the latest version, especially if you don't have the latest version of the Windows operating system and its service packs.

Inside the Industry



What Is a Media Player?

The term *media player* refers to a piece of software that transforms digital signals transmitted over a computer network into signals that generate pressure waves in speakers, or patterns of light and color on a computer monitor. A software media player performs the same function as Thomas Edison's original 1877 phonograph and similar devices that followed. On a phonograph, a needle followed the hills and valleys of a groove etched in wax. A diaphragm converted the needle's vibrations into sound that humans could perceive. A phonograph is just an analog version of a twenty-first century piece of high-tech. Radios and televisions do something similar, converting invisible radiation (radio and television signals) into sound waves and visible light.

Author's Tip

If you're not part of the information technology team at your company, or you haven't talked with your Internet service provider (ISP) for a while, now is a good time to make contact with your high priests of networking and tell them your plans. They will appreciate being "in the loop," especially when it comes time to streaming your audio and video files.

Using the Player Update Feature

Fortunately, updating the player is free and easy. First, start up your player. A typical location is Start → Programs → Accessories → Windows Media Player. You'll use the Player Update feature built into your version of the software. Here's the procedure, as illustrated in **Figure 1-1**.

1. Click the Help menu
2. Select Check for Player Updates

The player will now contact the Microsoft network and check whether there's a new version. If so, installation will begin. As of this writing, the latest version of Windows Media Player is 10.

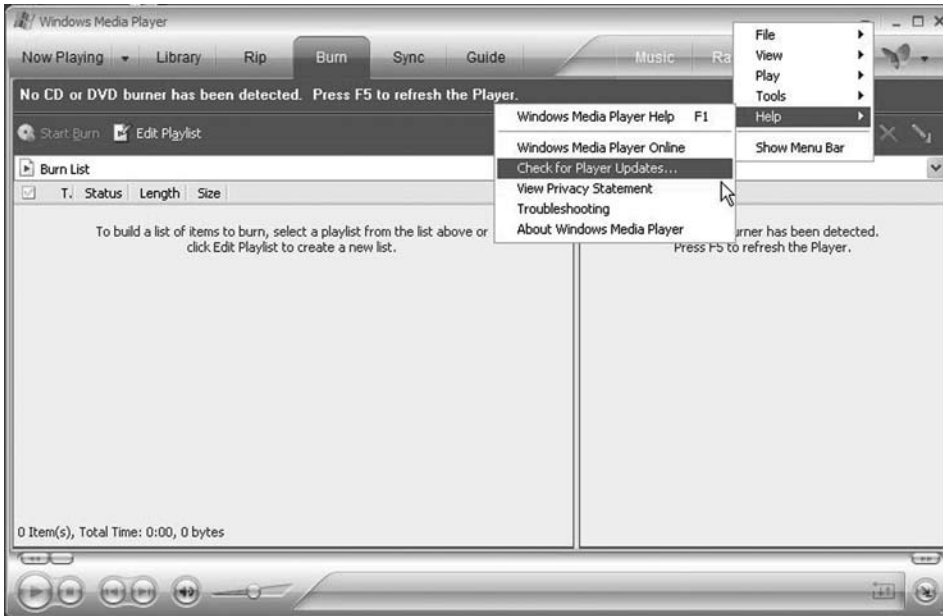



Figure 1-1
To update your player, click Help, then Check for Player Updates.

ALERT  OK, you're already confused. You've noticed that Microsoft advertises Windows Media 9 Series all over the place. But the latest version of the player is 10? Chalk it up to a type of logic only Microsoft understands and expects the rest of us to figure out.

Windows Media Series Player 10 requires Windows XP.

Updating via the Microsoft Website

You also can update your player via the Microsoft website. It takes only a little longer, and it gives you an opportunity to get familiar with Microsoft's Windows Media webpages.

Unfortunately, Microsoft has decided to offer its latest version of the player only to XP users. (See the QuickTip below for update information for non-XP users.) Here's the procedure for Windows XP:

1. Go to Microsoft's Windows Media page:
http://www.microsoft.com/windowsmedia/
2. Click the "Windows Media Player 10 for XP" button, as shown in **Figure 1-2**. (By the time you read this, the webpage may have changed somewhat, but the link will still be the same.)

Author's Tip

From now on, the instructions assume you are logged on to the Internet. You're going to be downloading some large files, so if you're on a dial-up connection, be patient. If you're on a DSL/cable line or better, be happy.