



Selecting A Media Player

All three media players QuickTime, RealPlayer and Windows Media Player are equipped to open and display most popular streaming file formats and possess the ability to play live (available at a certain time, in progress) streaming audio and video. While all three players provide equally good audio quality, Apple QuickTime has been found to provide superior video quality, followed closely by RealPlayer. However, Windows Media Player's most popular feature is a scalable video-viewing window that you or your student can resize for optimal placement whereas RealPlayer is restricted to only three preset sizes. It has been found that all three players are equipped with the technology to monitor the network (Internet) congestion at all times and automatically control the audio or video quality to meet the network conditions.

In the final analysis, it has been found that RealPlayer and Apple QuickTime are probably the best choices for streaming media in terms of superior audio and video quality, the ability to work with most recent versions of Internet Explorer and Netscape browsers and the ability to support a variety of different media file formats. While the Windows Media Player scores one above the former two with its ability to provide for a fully scalable window size, it can only support proprietary Microsoft media formats (for example you can take your CDs and put them onto your computer using Windows Media Player, but you can only save them in the Windows Media audio format and not MP3). Also, the Windows Media Player is not compatible with a Netscape browser.



Windows Media Player

- ◆ Good audio/video quality
- ◆ Compatible only with an Internet Explorer Browser
- ◆ Provides a fully adjustable video viewing window
- ◆ Supports only Microsoft media formats



Apple QuickTime

- ◆ Superior audio/video quality
- ◆ Compatible with Internet Explorer and Netscape Browsers
- ◆ Supports various media formats



RealPlayer

- ◆ Very good audio/video quality
- ◆ Compatible with Internet Explorer and Netscape Browsers
- ◆ Supports various media formats
- ◆ Provides only three preset video-viewing window sizes

Note: Real Player 8 Basic is a free download.

What's New: Real Player 8 Plus

With RealPlayer 8, the #1 streaming media player, you can experience the broadest range of audio and video (A/V) content on the Web with a single click. RealPlayer 8 Plus can be downloaded from www.real.com for US \$29.99.

Additional Features:

No matter what speed Internet connection you have, RealPlayer 8 offers the highest-quality audio and video experience available online. RealPlayer is the only streaming media player that plays both RealAudio and RealVideo, the leading formats for Internet audio and video, giving you access to more than 85% of the streaming media programming on the Web.

RealVideo:

- ◆ New RealVideo 8 offers enriched video quality and smoother playback over all types of connections, from regular dial-up to broadband Internet connections.
- ◆ Picture controls let you lighten up dark scenes and adjust flesh tones. Great for Web cams or reality shows. Sharpen up fuzzy video.
- ◆ The "View" button on the toolbar of the RealPlayer screen has two options: Normal and Compact.

- ◆ You must be in Normal View in order to Fastforward and Rewind, whereas Compact View only allows you to Play, Pause, and Stop.
- ◆ In RealPlayer G2, you also have the option to view the video in it's Original Size or Double the size of the image. If you previously viewed a video in a particular size, the next time you play a file the image will be set automatically to the one that was used previously. You can change what size the image is played at by clicking on the magnifying glass at the bottom of the RealPlayer window. After clicking on the magnifying glass, you can click on your desired size.
- ◆ The various RealPlayer options can take up a lot of screen space, so cut down the clutter with the View menu. Compact mode shuts off the Channels window, the search area, and some of the commands. AutoSize mode causes the title bar and menu bar to disappear, except when the mouse cursor is moved over the RealPlayer window. NOTE: The default size of an image in the viewing window is 320 X 240 pixels.

RealAudio:

- ◆ The full 10-band graphic equalizer that offers superior audio quality including 3D stereo effects and improved bass for richer, more dramatic sound.

Smart Buffering handles net congestion so that you never miss a crucial second of audio or video. SureStream technology helps regulate audio and video delivery by working like an automatic transmission, downshifting when connections bog down and upshifting as the connection clears. The effect is better video and audio quality with less buffering.

Multiple Windows: With multiple RealPlayer windows, you can experience more compelling interactive audio and video. For example, you can watch a video clip in one window and navigate through the entire program in the main window.

Resizable Windows: With RealPlayer's resizable video window, you can adjust the size of the presentation on your own, or use the Zoom Options button to choose from preset sizes. You can even watch presentations at full-screen size.

To view a demonstration of a sample multimedia file encoded and streamed using several different media technologies and at different modem speeds, please visit the following site:

<http://www.ki-multimedia.com/sample.html>



Here is a more detailed comparison chart of some other features offered by the three players for your reference:

Feature	Windows Media Player	Apple Quick Time	Real Player
Audio quality	Good	Good	Good
Video quality	Good	Superior	Very Good
MP3 audio files Support	No. Cannot save an audio file as MP3. Only supports Windows Media audio formats!	Yes	Yes (through RealJukebox Basic music organizer)
Live Streaming Audio/Video Support	Streaming audio support through Radio Toolbar compatible with IE 5	Yes	Yes
Stored Streaming Audio/Video Support	Yes	Yes	Yes
Browser Compatibility	IE 3,4 or 5 only	IE 3.x, Navigator 3.x, America Online version 3 or higher	IE 4.01, Navigator 4.05 or higher
Operating System Compatibility	Windows 9x/NT4, Windows 3.x, MacOS 7.61 or later	WindowsNT/9x, MacOS 7.1 and newer	Windows 9x, MacOS 8.1 or newer
Where to Download	http://www.microsoft.com/window/mediaplayer/en/download	http://www.apple.com/quicktime	Free download http://www.real.com/products
Online Network Congestion Control	Yes	No	Yes

(Automatic adjustment of audio/video quality)			
Scalable video viewing window	Fully scalable - can be resized to any window size for optimal placement	No	Provides only three preset sizes
File Formats Supported	Supported by Windows Media Player 6.4 .AVI, .WAV, .MP3, .M3U, .IVF, .MPEG, .MPG, .MPE, .M1V, .MP2, .MPV2, .MP2V, .MPA, .MID, .MIDI, .QT, .MOV, .AIF, .AIFC, .AU, .SND, .ASF, .ASX, .WM, .WMA, .WAX, .WMV, .WVX, and others	(Supported by Apple QuickTime 4) .QT, Flash, .AVI, .MP3, .WAV, .AIF, .DV, .GIF, .MPEG, .JPEG, .TIFF, .MIDI, .SD2, .AU, .FLC, .MOV, .BMP, .FPX, Photoshop, Motion .JPEG, OpenDML, .PNG, .GX, .TGA, .SGI, .PICT, and others	Real Player G2: .AIF, .ASF, .AU, .AVI, .MIDI, .MOV, .MPEG-1, .RA, .RV, .RM, .SWF, .WAV Real Jukebox: Basic: .AIF, .AU, .RA, .RM, MP3, .PLS, .M3U, CDs, RealJukebox, A2B, Liquid Audio



For more information about video and video production refer to these LOT handouts:

- ◆ Incorporating Video and Video Streaming into your Course
- ◆ Incorporating Video and Video Streaming into WebCT
- ◆ Support Services for Video Production and Streaming at Texas A&M