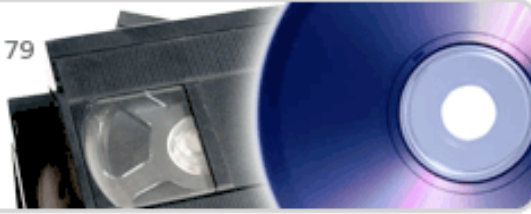


Converting Your Old Media to New Media

► Tech Tip 79



Tech Tip 79 - Converting Your Old Media to New

How to Convert LP Records, Cassette Tapes and VHS Tapes into New Media

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Something Old, Something New



We get many requests from our customers for information on how to convert their old media types to new media types. This is such a common request that we decided to give our readers what they've been asking for. This Tech Tip will deal with how to convert your older media types (LPs, Tapes and VHS) to newer media types (DVD and CDs).

>> A Quick Word about Copyrights <<

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Converting your Vinyl and Cassette Tapes



You've spent years building your LP collection only to watch as CDs overtook and surpassed vinyl as the recording medium of choice. Maybe you have a stack of cassette tapes from the car you just traded in and, unfortunately, your new car only has a CD player. You'd like to bring your music with you, but how?

Believe it or not, your home computer has almost all the hardware already needed to convert your favorite LPs or cassette tapes! All you need is your sound card and a good program. If you plan to burn the LP or cassette to CD, then you will need an optical burner drive as well ([CDRW](#), [DVDRW](#),



etc.). Your sound card will typically have a single 1/8" (3.5mm) stereo "line-in" port. Typically, a phonograph or tape player will have stereo "RCA connectors" left and right channels out. All you need to connect the two is a cable. The [Belkin "Y" Audio Cable](#) sold by Geeks makes an ideal patch cable to easily marry the two together. Patch cables can also be found at any Radio Shack (or similar) store.

Next, a good program is needed. Ideally, when recording from LPs or cassette tapes, you'll need a program to help adapt the sound coming in from the LP or cassette into something the computer can use, such as WAV or MP3 files, and should also compensate for cracks, pops and hiss. A quick search for "LP" on [Downloads.com](#) comes up with a load of programs that can do this of file conversion. Three software products we've recommended for a long time are: "LP Recorder" and "LP Ripper" from [CFB Software](#), "Audio Tools" from [Unrelated Inventions](#) and "Spin It Again" from [Acoustica](#). All three have trial versions available so that you can see which may work best for you.



You simply plug in the LP or cassette player to the computer, launch the program, and then let the recording begin!



Some inventive companies have also come up with shortcuts as well. Geeks.com sells the [Plusdeck2c](#), a clever device that installs into your computer as a cassette drive – and allows you to play audio cassettes and convert them to MP3 format right on your

computer – no need for a separate player.

ADS Tech also sells an external USB sound card called [Instant Music](#) that comes with RCA jacks built in as well as programs from Nero that allow you to convert your LPs and audio cassettes – quickly, easily, and with only one device. They make a [version for MACs](#) as well.



Converting your VHS Tapes

Like LPs and audio cassettes, converting VHS, or other video tapes, to DVD or AVI can be done via two routes. One uses what you may already have on your computer, and the other uses an all-in-one package.



If you have a video capture card or a TV tuner card, (such as [these](#) sold by Geeks.com), or the [All-in-Wonder](#) combination video card/TV cards made by ATI), all you may need is a cable to patch the video capture or TV tuner card and the VHS player together. Most VHS players have RCA connectors out for audio and video. Video RCA connectors are also called "composite" connectors.

Many capture cards will have an RCA video input on them and use a sound card "line-in" for sound. RCA video cables usually need to be a "heavier grade" of cable than audio cables, so a cable made specifically for video, such as [this one](#) sold by Geeks.com, works best. Video cables may also be component or S-Video types as well (for improved video

signal resolution), and many capture cards will also support these kinds of inputs. The [Belkin cable mentioned above](#) would be great for the audio connection here.

Many capture cards already come with software that will allow you to record a video signal in different formats and at different resolutions on your PC. However, many will not have the ability to convert them to the DVD format, also called the MPEG2 format, though they may offer it as a separate add-on. From this point, you can make your own DVD or VCD (Video CD).

You simply plug in the VHS player to the computer, launch the program, and then let the copying begin!

If you lack the software that will allow capture and conversion, you can find many programs on sites such as <http://www.downloads.com> (with a search for "VHS") that will do this.

Programs and capture cards vary in quality and features, so many people opt for an all-in-one solution. [ADS Tech](#) makes a number of products that will include all the hardware and software you need in one convenient package, such as the [ADS Tech USB 2.0 DVD Xpress](#) sold by Geeks.com.



Conclusion

Whether you decide to use the equipment you already have, or buy an all-in-one solution, converting your old media can be a fun and rewarding process. Don't be afraid to convert your LPs, audio cassettes or VHS tapes – you'll find the process very much worth the effort.

As some readers pointed out, there were two different types of LP turntables that were made. One was an "all in one" unit that typically just had straight RCA audio jacks out while the other was usually a "component" of a larger system (these were typically higher end turntables). While the "all in one" type of turntable will produce an adequate output to record directly on a PC's sound card, the component type will not. The turntables that were component type usually could not work without the use of a pre-amplifier (commonly called a pre-amp). If your turntable is a component type, you will need a pre-amp as many sound cards cannot compensate for the low-level sound produced by these turntables when used without a pre-amp. You simply hook the turntable to the pre-amp inputs for "phono" and the PC's sound card to the pre-amps outputs.