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Video formats can be confusing, and some may not work on their video playback of choice, especially more obscure formats like MKV. It's often easier or even necessary to turn them into something more usable, such as MP4. Fortunately, this conversion is easy. Note: We are using macOS for our examples and images in this article, but all our apps here use almost identical work on Windows. What are MKV files, and why should I convert them? MKV is not a video format. Instead, it is a multimedia container format used to combine different elements such as audio, video, and subtitles into a single file. That means you can use any encoding video you want in an MKV file, and still play it. Related: What MKV files and how do they play? The problem arises with compatibility. Not every device or video app can play MKV files, and this is especially true on mobile devices. MKV is open source, and not an industry standard, so it doesn't have support on many devices. Even in Windows Media Player or QuickTime, Windows and macOS defaults won't work. Solution: Convert your MKV files to MP4. MP4 is compatible with most devices and apps, and you won't lose a lot of quality (if any) to the conversion process. Easiest solution: Using VLC VLC is an open source media player, one of the few that can play MKV, but also has a hidden option to convert video. From the file menu (or media menu in Windows) select convert/stream (or convert/save in Windows). This won't automatically convert what you're watching, so you'll need to drag the file back into the window. After that, you can choose the file format you want to use to save; VLC supports most formats, but MP4 is the default. After selecting the desired template, just hit the Save button and select where you want to save the new file. A more complete outstanding solution: WinX Video Converter while VLC performs simple encoding on a single file, there is much more under the hood that you may want to control if you are doing any video production work. For this, WinX VideoProc handles the work well. When you open it, switch to the video tab at the bottom and the first page you see will ask you to drag the media on it. Drag your file in, and the rest of the controls come up. You can also add all the folders of videos and bulk code all of them at once, but we stick to a video now. Again, the default conversion option is MP4, so we don't have to change much, but if you want to look under the hood, you can double-click profile to change the settings. From here you can change many options, the ones that are striking: image quality, to adjust the quality per frame, and bitrate encoding speed, to smaller files at framerate quality cost, to convert to 30 or 24fps video resolution and aspect ratio there are also audio codec options, but audio makes up such a small part of the video it's worth keeping it in. Settings. Once you have done the configuration, you can run statistics to start converting. Video conversion can take a while, especially with larger videos, but once it's done the program will automatically open the folder where it has saved your files. Open source is a winX shareware alternative, and while you can do a lot of things with the trial version, the full app is locked out unless you pay for the premium version. If you want the same level of customization for free, it's worth trying Handbrake. Handbrake is a little easier, but its interface can be a little confusing. With so many options and buttons, it's a bit hard to figure out what one does, but the basic ones you need to know are preset (which affects the quality and speed of encoding) and format (which is default to MP4 like others). Handbrake has a good queue to cover up multiple codes but does not have the same option to encode entire folders as WinX. However, you can add multiple files individually, and then add them all to the queue. This is still useful though since encoding very large files can sometimes take hours depending on your computer profile. Image credits: Halay Alex/Shutterstock An MP4 file is an MPEG-4 Video file. Play one with your favorite media player or try free VLC.Convert to other video types like MOV, AVI, etc. with tools like freemake video converter. This article explains what mp4 video file is, how to play and edit one, and convert one to other video formats that may work a little better on your device. A file with MP4 file extension stands for an MPEG-4 Video file, which is a compressed file format that can include not only video but also audio and subtitles. MP4 files are usually seen when you download a video from the internet or use a DVD tearing down program to store a DVD on your COMPUTER. Files like this that only have audio are sometimes saved with .M4A extensions. Lifewire/Liedtke team the easiest way to play MP4 files is to double-click mp4 and let your computer decide which default program should it open. Since most people have already installed Windows Media Player or QuickTime, MP4 should open automatically. However, if no program opens the MP4 file then you probably don't have an installed program that can view and/or edit MP4 files. We recommend installing one of the programs listed above, or free VLC playback, which is a fantastic MP4 file player that supports not only this video format but also many others, including audio files. MPlayer is another free MP4 player. If you find that your favorite video player does not open MP4 files, you may need to install mpeg-4 codec. MPEG-4 Codec is a small piece of software that allows your computer to recognize MP4 files and play them properly in any player you use. X Codec Pack is a completely free collection of popular codec that is in Windows 10, 8, and Windows 7 works. Once installed, you will be able to play MP4, as well as All other popular video formats, in your favorite player. Just watch out for ads on the X Codec Pack site —they can look deceptively like download links! MP4 files are supported by default on many mobile devices, such as Apple's iPad, iPod Touch, and iPhone, as well as Android devices. This means that you don't have to install an app just to play mp4 videos you receive over text or email or open on web pages. A number of apps also allow editing MP4 files for free, such as VSDC Free Video Editor and Lightworks. More examples of MP4 editors include MAGIX Movie Edit Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Pinnacle Studio. One of the easier to use apps to convert MP4 Freemake is video conversion. It supports saving MP4 files to formats such as MKV, FLV, AVI, 3GP, and others, including converting MP4 directly to a DVD disc, ISO file, or MP3 (for audio only). Another option is to use Zamzar to convert MP4 to WEBM, MPG, AC3, OGG, FLAC, MOV, and other formats. Unlike an MP4 file conversion program, these are websites, which means that even if you don't have to install any kind of program you use them, you need to upload MP4 to the site and then download the converted file before you use it. Zamzar also supports MP4 to GIF conversions to convert a video file to a motion picture. If the video exists online, a different converter such as imgur video to GIF or ezgif.com might be a better option. Remember that since this converter works online, in your browser, it may take a while for the video to upload from most videos relatively large in size. Also, after converting the video, you need to re-download it to get it back on your computer, which in itself may not be a quick process as well. If none of these options seem to work for you, there are other free video conversion apps and online services that may work out better, some of which also support free MP4 editing, such as disconnection and cultivation. What to do when you don't need to watch a video, but instead you just have to listen to the sound? In these cases, you want the portability and storage provided in MP3. We want to show you how to easily convert an MP4 video file to MP3. There are free file converter types you can use directly in your browser or download to your desktop. Read about our favorites and the simple instructions we learn about how to convert your MP4 using this free tool. Step 1: Moving to CloudConvert CloudConvert Home is the best place to start. CloudConvert is an intuitive, cloud-based service that provides a standalone option that requires little more than an internet connection and your file. It is completely free, requires no additional software to run, and supports over 200 formats - most importantly in our case, MP4 to MP3. While the resulting audio quality is great, as is conversion speed, a free account only allows up to 25 free conversions It's day. However, CloudConvert should fit your needs if you Requires a few conversions, small files per day. Step 2: Select the files you want to convert, click the Select File button in the middle of the page, and select the video files you want to convert to MP3. A pop-up window will appear where you can find or search for the desired files on your computer. If you click the drop-down arrow icon on the right side of the file selection, you can also select a file from a URL or from Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive. Note that you need to log in to your cloud storage account via the CloudConvert site to access your cloud storage files. Doing so may automatically create a free CloudConvert account. When your files are selected, click the Open button in the bottom right corner of the pop-up window to add the file to the Conversion queue. Step 3: Select your output template image, click the drop down arrow button that appears after uploading your MP4 file, then select the audio looking MP3 from the drop down list. Click on the wrench icon located directly next to the file if you wish to fine-tune the audio bit rate, audio Qscale, volume, or length. The latter is an incredibly handy tool if your video has an introduction or an end to unwanted audio. When finished, click the Good Red button. Step 4: Start converting the image, click the Red Conversion button on the right side of the page when you have finished adjusting your desired output settings. The gray and yellow bar appears to represent the current state of conversion, along with a cancellation button (red X next to the grey and yellow bar) should change your opinion for any reason. After that, wait for the conversion to complete. Step 5: Download your new MP3 image may take some time, but CloudConvert will notify you when your conversion is finished. (A preview of your MP3 track may play automatically so you can hear it before deciding to download it.) Then just click the download green button and select a save destination for the file. Now that you're ripping your audio, you need a decent MP3 player to play it in. These are our favorites. Alternative: Any video converter (Windows and MacOS) you can use our favorite video converter, any video converter, if you want to convert files on your computer. With this converter, users can convert MP4 audio to a variety of formats, including the highly portable MP3 format. This converter is our top choice due to its high speed, good video and audio quality, and its wide range of supported devices. AVC also offers advanced options including cultivating and trimming audio files or layering different files. The software is available for free download from the AVC website. This is the best place to go to find the latest freemium or lith version of the software. Just click the red download icon, download the software, and follow the installation notifications. Once installed, open the app and just click on the Blue Add or Drag File(s) button in the middle of the screen. Choose your image MP4 file from the pop-up window. Configure your output file using the options in the drop-down to the left of The Blue Converter now. Button. For example we want to select MP3. (You may need to click the Music Notes icon first before you have MP3 listed as an extension.) Next, click the Convert now button to convert your video. Once the conversion is complete, the storage location for your new MP3 file should automatically pop open to your new file. Editors' Recommendations