Creating a video disc

Unless you are only concerned with streaming your videos over the Internet, you're soon going to want to share your video presentations with your family, friends or customers on a disc. The choice you will be faced with at this point is to select a disc format that most of your audience can play.

In this article, we're going to consider the advantages and disadvantages of some of the options available to you, the media author. Our media distribution tool (medi@mirror) can be used to facilitate your efforts by providing your audience with a common playback application.

Making a data CD
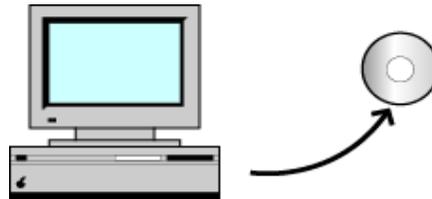
The easiest (and least flexible) solution is to create a data disc with your disc writer, which contains your video files. You can choose from a wide selection of video and audio compression formats (for example, MPG, MP3, DIVX or WMV) in order to maximize space and include as much play time as you can on your media disc.

However, there are so many video file formats and compression schemes in use that it is quite hard to choose a combination that is accessible to most of your viewing audience. If you come across a rare media format that you would like to convert, our free media conversion utility (MJ Pegger) may be able to help.

Every CD-ROM needs a file system so its data can be stored and retrieved. Depending on the burning software you use, you may have to choose a specific file system for your disc that is not compatible with some computer types.

The most common file system for CD-ROM is ISO 9660 designed for the PC. Most CD-ROMs intended for use on the Macintosh are created using the Hierarchical Filing System (HFS) format. There are tools that can help you create a hybrid CD which contains both.

## The Video CD and Super Video CD Standards
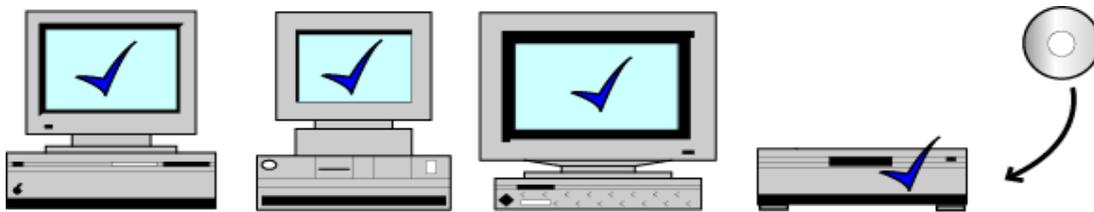
Using a plain and inexpensive CD-R, your CD writer and burning software, you can create Video CD (VCD). A VCD comes with it's own file system that is recognized by computers with the right software installed and many standalone DVD players. The same can be said of the Super Video CD standard.

Some burning software packages require that you encode your video files to MPEG-1 (VCD) or MPEG-2 (SVCD) before you can burn them to disc. Other software programs allow you to import your media files directly and will do the encoding for you. The most recent VCD standard is VCD 2.0

Although more flexible than a data disc in terms of distribution, making a VCD/SVCD will restrict your picture resolution. The picture will look good on your TV when played with your standalone DVD player but may have pixel blocks if played full screen on your computer.

Burning to DVD

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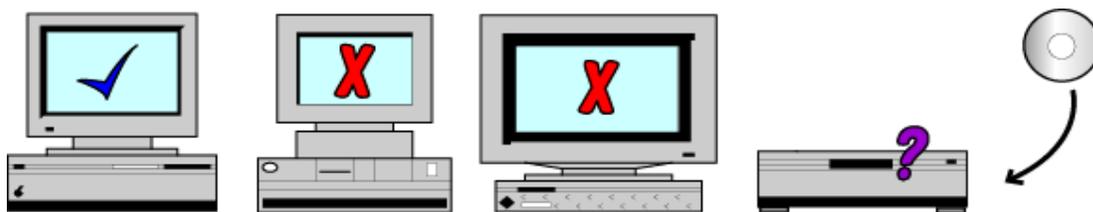
Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs) are higher capacity discs. You can fit more information on them. This translates to higher video and audio data quality. A DVD disc also comes with it's own file system (media disc file systems are explained above).

With a DVD writer, DVD burning software and blank DVD media, you can create a DVD disc that will play on computers equipped with a DVD ROM drive and standalone DVD players that support DVD-R or DVD+R disc format playback.

Apart from the fact that some people may not have a DVD capable drive on their computer, a point to note is that DVD ROM drives and players manufactured in a certain region usually come with a regional code setting. This means that a DVD created to play in one country/region may not play in another.

You can buy code free standalone DVD players. They are more expensive. For Older computer DVD ROM drives, there are software programs available which allow you to change the region setting. Newer drives only allow you to change their region code so many times before the change becomes permanent.

Conclusion

If your goal is to reach the widest audience possible, the first step is to know your crowd, and what type of hardware and software options may be available to them. If you are creating a DVD, you might have to brush up on blank disc formats (DVD+/-R) and region codes as well.

Otherwise, if all you want to do is create a disc that you can play on your computer as well as in your living room and if you have not yet bought a standalone DVD player, the best compatibility test is to create a disc using your computer and take it shopping with you!

This is the end of our article on creating a video disc. In this article, disc distribution techniques and playback options were explained. We hope this information will help you make the most out of our tools and your imagination.

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