

Making the Most of Music

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Why add music to your video?

The purpose of a video is to tell a story or to make a point. For your viewers, the images and pictures they see are only half of the experience. What they hear is the other half.



Imagine if the movie *Jaws* had not used music or had used polka music instead of the haunting score by John Williams. You'd still witness the same blood, guts and gore on screen but it wouldn't have affected the you nearly the same way.

Adding music to your video will add a professional quality to your video and can help set the tone and have a positive impact on the message you are trying to convey.

Copyright concerns

Whether you make instructional videos, travelogues, or webisodes, music will definitely enhance your audience's experience. Before adding just any music to your video, you need to be aware of legal issues in using copyrighted material. Youtube has some great information on [copyrighted material here](#). But basically it all boils down to this: *Don't use music that you don't have permission to use*. Getting permission to use popular music can be time consuming and costly.

Where to get music

So, you ask, "if I can't get permission from the Michael Jackson's estate to use "Thriller" for my Halloween video, what can I do?" Here are several low-cost/no-cost alternatives.

1. **Royalty Free Music:** A quick google search of [Royalty Free Music](#) will provide you with numerous sites offering single tracks or entire libraries of music for a small fee or a donation.
2. **Music Library:** Many computers come with music libraries that contain jingles, sound effects and musical loops that can be used for video. Apple computers come with an excellent music library as well as a program called [Garage Band](#) that allows you to create your own.
3. **Songwriters:** You can always hire a songwriter to compose music for your video, but if you ask around in various songwriter/artist forums, you may just be able to find someone who will allow you to use their work in exchange for exposure.
4. **Public Domain:** Finally, there is a plethora of music with expired copyrights that have fallen into public domain and can be used without having to pay royalties. [Archive.org](#) is a great resource for finding Public Domain material.

Mixing music

Once you've selected the perfect track, it's time to open up your editing software and add it to your video. Here are some suggestions for making your video "sing".

1. **Turn off other audio tracks when editing your music track.**
2. **Use external speakers when editing music.**
3. **Timing:** More often than not, the music you select will not be the same length of your video. Your music should complement your video and not distract from it. Abrupt transitions and sudden endings can distract from the message of your video and should be avoided.
4. **If your music track ends before your video:** You'll want to find a musical phrase (verse or chorus) within the music that you can loop to extend the track.
5. **If your video ends before your music:** You can cut a section of the music so that the finale of the song will coincide with the ending of your video and provide a definitive conclusion.
6. **Maintain the rhythm:** The important thing to remember in splicing your music track is to make your cuts so as to maintain the rhythm

of the song in the transition. You can add or delete a second or two of video if necessary.

7. **Balance:** It's important that your music track not overpower your video's audio track. A good rule of thumb is for the music level to be around -18db and for dialogue to be around -6db to -12db. Try to keep levels consistent throughout your video. Balance each track separately with the other tracks turned off.
8. **Use Fades:** If cutting and splicing the music track doesn't seem worth the hassle, you can always "Fade In" to initiate your music track. Conversely you can have your music slowly "Fade Out" at the end of your video to eliminate having an abrupt ending. "Cross Fades" can be used to help smooth spliced transitions. This is where the first spliced clip fades out as the next clip fades in.
9. **Close your eyes and listen:** When you think you're finished, turn all audio tracks on, close your eyes and listen to your final product. Make sure that you can clearly hear the dialogue over the music and that there are not any distracting transitions in the music. This will identify any areas that need your attention.
10. **Pat yourself on the back:** All of your hard work will give your viewers a better experience which in turn may pay dividends for you as they'll stay on your site longer, visit more often and be more likely to share your site with their friends.



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