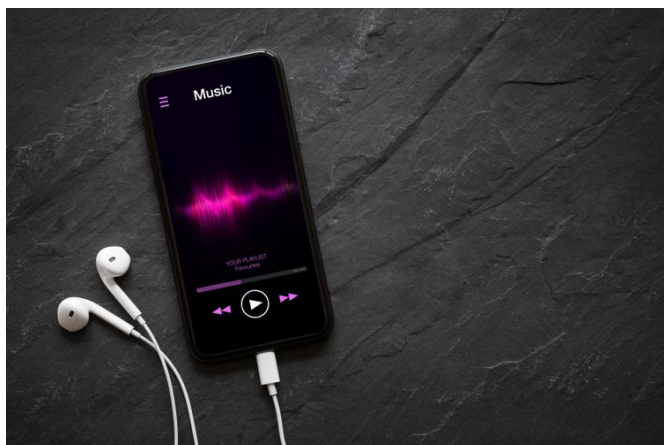


Lifewire Transform Your Old Smartphone Into a Feature-Packed Media Player

Stanley Goodner. Updated on April 4, 2025



Stream music or video to headphones, speakers, and TVs

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The Download

First, reset the operating system to remove all the third-party apps and customizations.

- Next, hide or disable stock apps that aren't useful for your media player.
- Then, install media player apps and customize the device however you want.

This article explains how to repurpose your old phone or tablet into a portable media player.

How to Make a Portable Media Player From Your Old Device

Follow along to turn your unused or outdated smartphone into an awesome device that plays music, movies, and more.

- 1. Perform a factory reset.** Doing so clears out everything, including any user data, customizations, and extra apps that you won't end up needing anyway. Think of it as spring cleaning. Use your device's Settings app to reset the software. It's easy to do on [Android](#) and [iPhone](#).
- 2. Disable or hide stock apps.** Lots of the apps that came with your device—the camera, calculator, voice recorder, etc.—are fine for everyday use but not necessary for a media player. On most devices, the built-in apps cannot be deleted. Instead, you can sometimes disable them. Another option is to [hide apps on your Android](#) or, if

you're on an iPhone, [delete apps from the Home Screen](#).

All you should really want on the Home Screen of your portable media player are apps for music and/or video. Keep it tidy for the best experience!

- 3. Reconnect to Wi-Fi.** Now that your portable media player is primed and ready, it will need internet access to access all the apps you might want. Remember, the factory reset erased everything from the device. Log back into your Wi-Fi network to access the app store.
- 4. Download media apps.** Now that your media player is online, you can start downloading relevant apps. The app icons should populate on the Home Screen for you to organize as desired. Once all your media apps have been downloaded, sign into each service one by one. If you don't already have an account, you'll be prompted to create a new one. Not sure what to download? We have lists of the [best free music streaming apps](#) for iOS and Android, as well as a collection of our favorite [free movie apps](#).
- 5. Build your media collection.** You're creating a dedicated media player out of your old phone, so you probably have a hefty music and movie collection. If you can't find what you want through the app store, copy all your favorites from your computer or other devices to this device.

If you don't already have music or video to put on the portable media player, it's easy to download and/or digitize almost whatever you like.

If you're an iOS user, [songs downloaded from iTunes can be converted to MP3s](#). Some sites let you legally download music for free. All of these can be copied over to the portable media player.

If you own a physical collection (CDs, vinyl LPs) of music, you're allowed to make legal digital copies for your personal use. You can [digitize CDs using iTunes](#) and digitize vinyl records or even cassette tapes.

Digital movies can be legally purchased online (like from Amazon), and you can [rip DVDs](#) to copy them to your computer and, ultimately, your media player.

If your portable media player is an Android device, it might have the option of a micro SD card slot to expand storage. If so, then all you need to do is insert a high-capacity

micro SD card and copy all of your digital content there.

Otherwise, most Android devices support USB OTG. This means that (with a USB OTG cable, which is inexpensive), you can plug things like USB flash drives or USB hard drives into your portable media player.

iOS devices have compatible flash drives, too. In any of these situations, you'll want to copy your digital media over to the storage drive. Once plugged into the portable media player, the digital music/video becomes available to play offline at any time.

- 6. Personalize your media player.** Lastly, don't forget to personalize your portable media player with wallpapers, effects, different fonts, or color schemes.

Many of these are available on your device without having to download anything, although you can find more through the app store. Have some fun with it!

Use the Media Player With Other Devices

It's pretty easy to [connect iOS or Android devices to stereo systems/receivers](#), headphones, or speakers. All you need to stream music from your portable media player is an audio cable. Most of the time, you can expect to use the cable that has 3.5 mm connections on both ends (like for headphones).

However, depending on the type of inputs available, you might need an audio cable with a 3.5 mm plug on one end and [RCA](#) connectors (the red and yellow plugs) on the other end. Since the portable media player is the audio source, it would connect to an "audio input" on the speaker or receiver.

Another great benefit of using an older smartphone as a portable media player is the option for wireless connectivity. If your speakers or receiver features Bluetooth wireless, you can connect a portable media player without any cables.



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Although Bluetooth is the most common, there are other wireless audio technologies available, each with pros and cons. If your system doesn't have Bluetooth wireless, you can purchase and install a simple Bluetooth receiver to provide that capability.

When it comes to using your portable media player to send video to a television

(either directly or through a home theater receiver), the easiest way is to use an HDMI cable. However, a special adapter will be needed so that the portable media player can be plugged in with a regular HDMI cable.

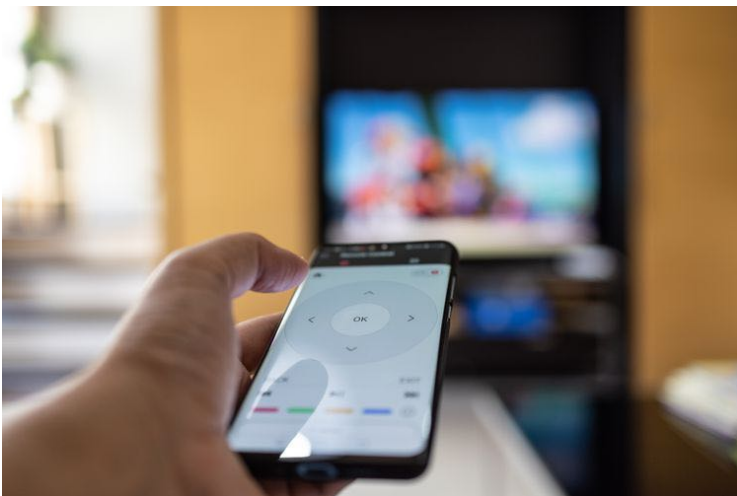
For iOS devices, Apple has Digital AV Adapters that are reliable and easy to use. You can also find similar types of mobile HDMI adapters for Android devices (Amazon is your best bet). Be sure to carefully check compatibility first.

If you want wireless video streaming, [Google Chromecast](#) can be your best friend. Think of it as a wireless HDMI adapter. It plugs into your TV or receiver and essentially replaces the need for a physical cable for sending video/audio. This [streaming device](#) is compatible with iOS, Android, macOS, and Windows devices that support the display-mirroring feature.

Whether you plan for the portable media player to send video from stored files or through a streaming service (e.g., Hulu, Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Video), a Chromecast can handle it all. Not so bad for repurposing an old device!

Why Making a Portable Media Player Is a Great Idea

The life cycle of modern smartphones can feel fairly short, given that the latest versions seem to come out, again and again, each year. While some of us eagerly await a brand-new upgrade, others prefer to get the most out of something before having to replace it.



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If you've been accustomed to listening to music and/or watching videos through your smartphone, you might be wondering about the point of having a dedicated portable media player.

The answer is that it's all about convenience and streamlining your personal technology.

By letting a portable media player be the primary device to handle much of your digital audio/video

entertainment, you can keep your smartphone (and battery power) for important

things like phone calls, photos, messaging, social media posting, gaming, web browsing, and all else.

The power of owning a portable media player becomes more apparent when used in conjunction with a [whole home or multi-room audio/entertainment system](#). You can send content from the media player to your speakers and/or television sets.

For example, let's say you're hosting a party and want music to play on all of your speakers. You *could* leave your smartphone plugged in to do the job. But since it would have to stay near your audio equipment, you're likely to miss calls, notifications, and messages unless you're constantly going back to check.

A portable media player can serve the exact same purpose, but better since it's dedicated to audio and video entertainment. And unlike a CD/DVD player or turntable, you can put a portable media player in your pocket to take with you anywhere.

Best of all, it's entirely possible to turn an old smartphone into a portable media player without spending much (if any) money.

Stanley Goodner

Stanley Goodner is a former Lifewire writer who writes about audio equipment, music management, computer hardware, and other consumer technologies.