

How Do I Change iTunes So It Converts My Music to MP3 Files?

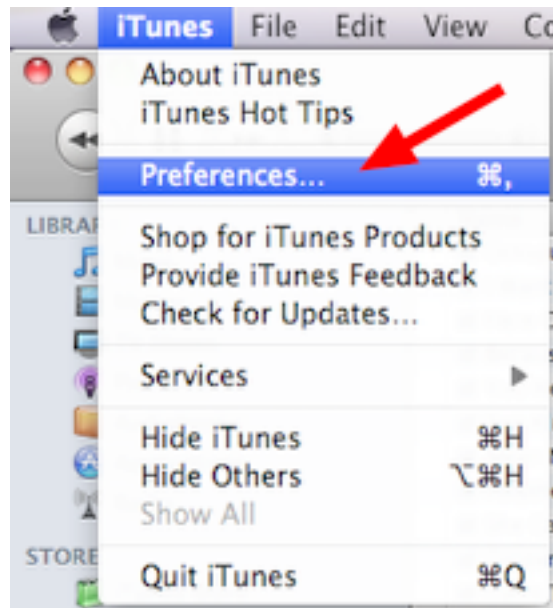
Subject Descriptors: Music, MP3, iTunes

Application (Version): iTunes 8 Windows Vista, Windows XP, Mac OSX

Task Description: I want to convert some of my music to MP3 files using iTunes. iTunes by default records music in the AAC format. How do I change that to MP3?

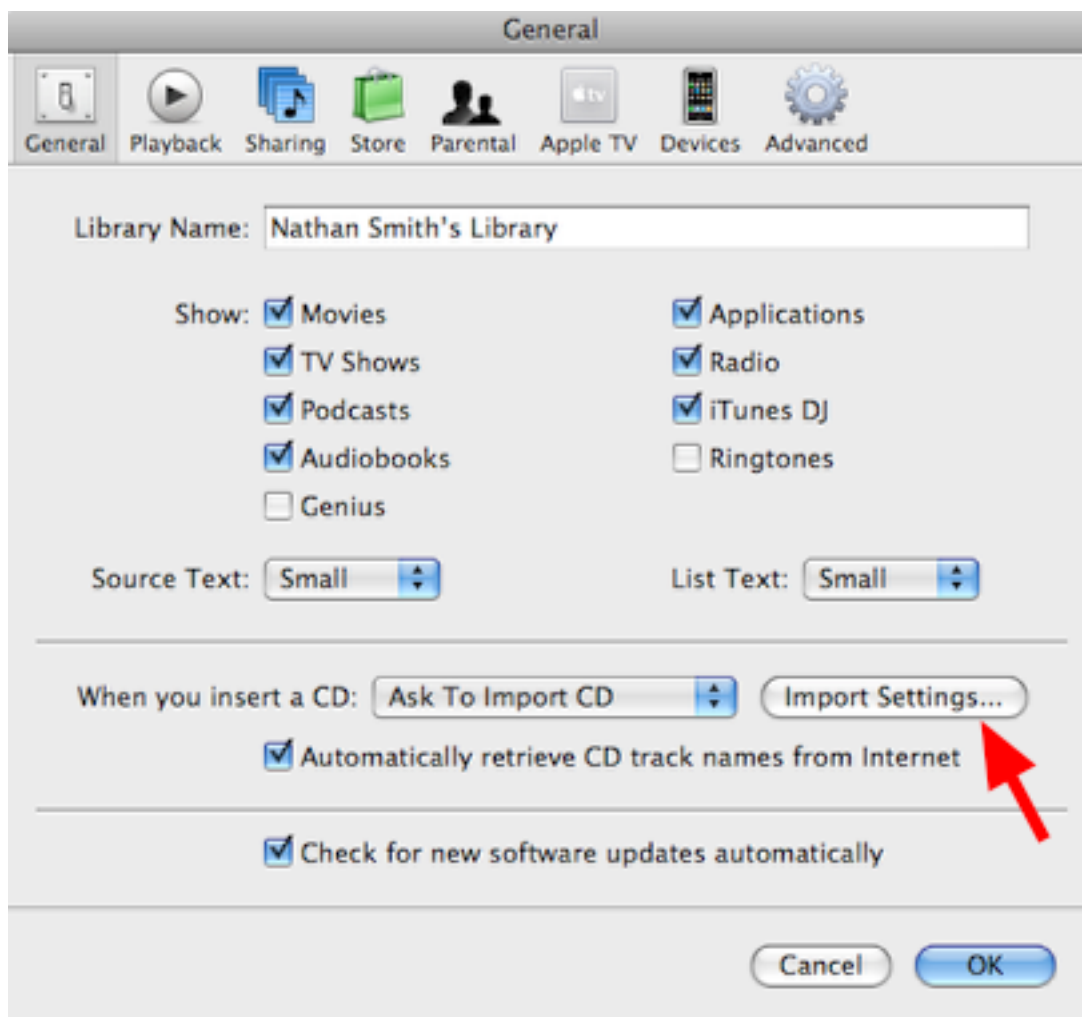
Tutorial Date: 13 May 2009, by Tim Holmes

Open the iTunes Preferences



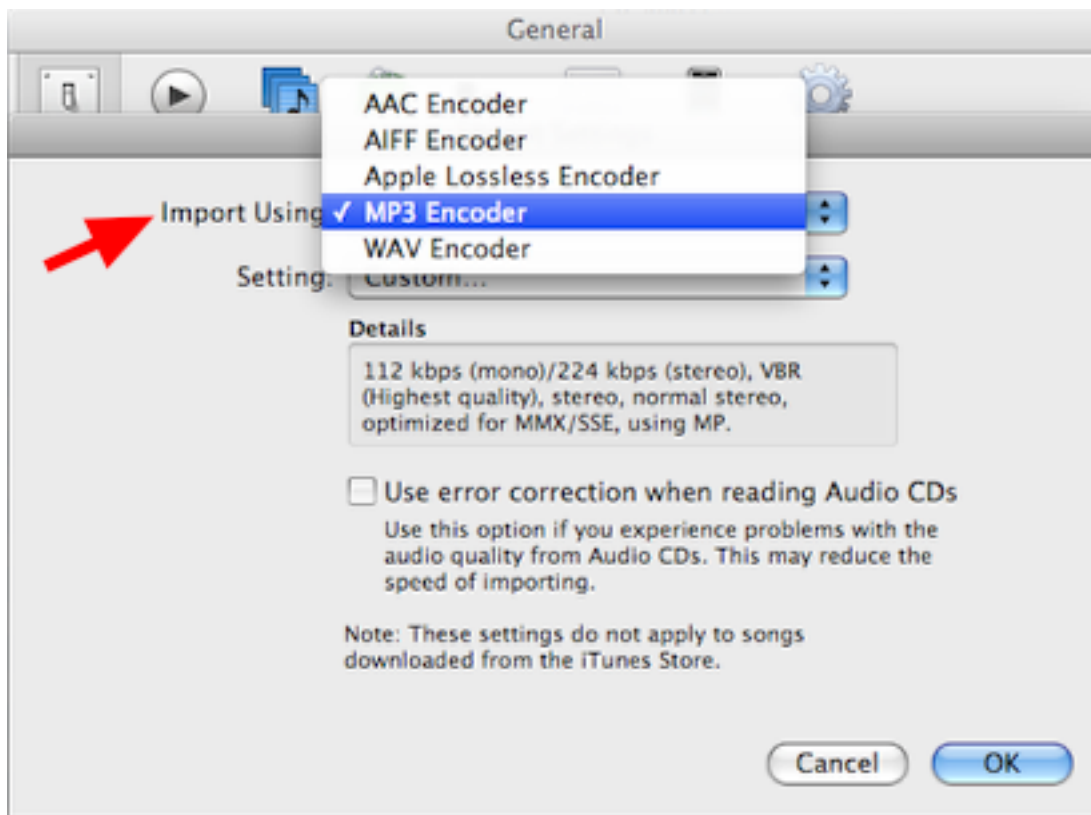
Open your iTunes application. Go to the iTunes menu and choose Preferences...

General Tab



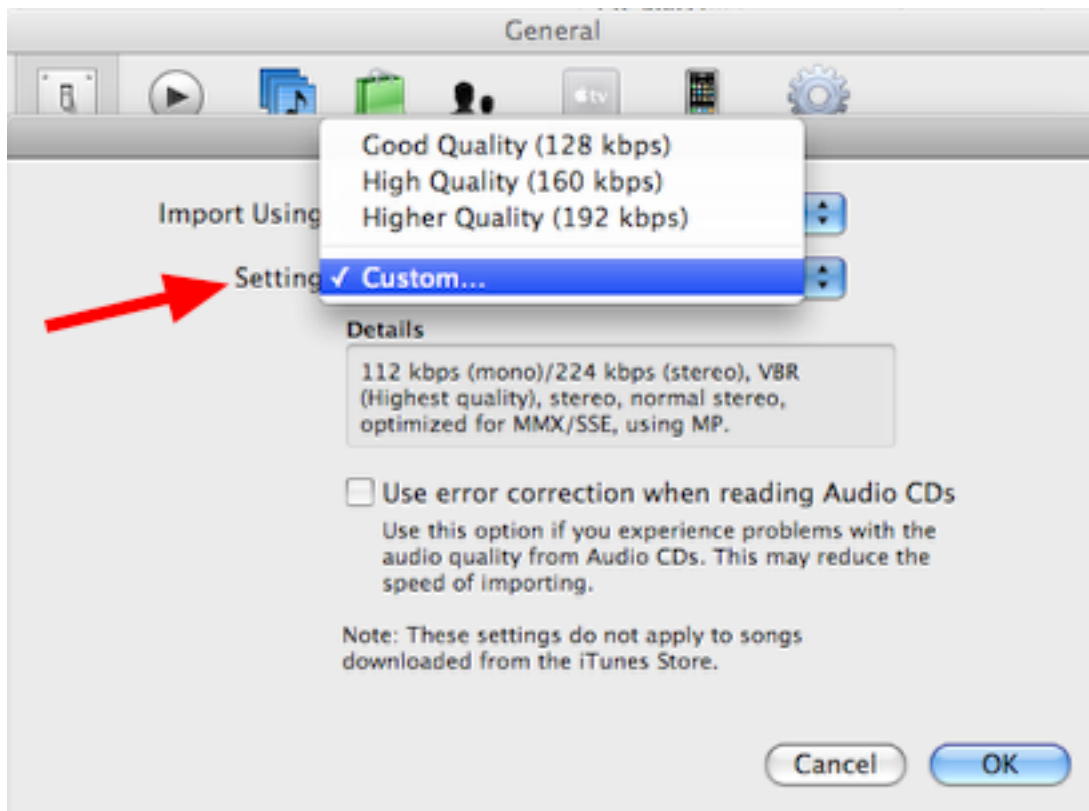
Once you're in the iTunes preferences, make sure the General tab is clicked, then click on the Import Settings button.

Choose an Encoder



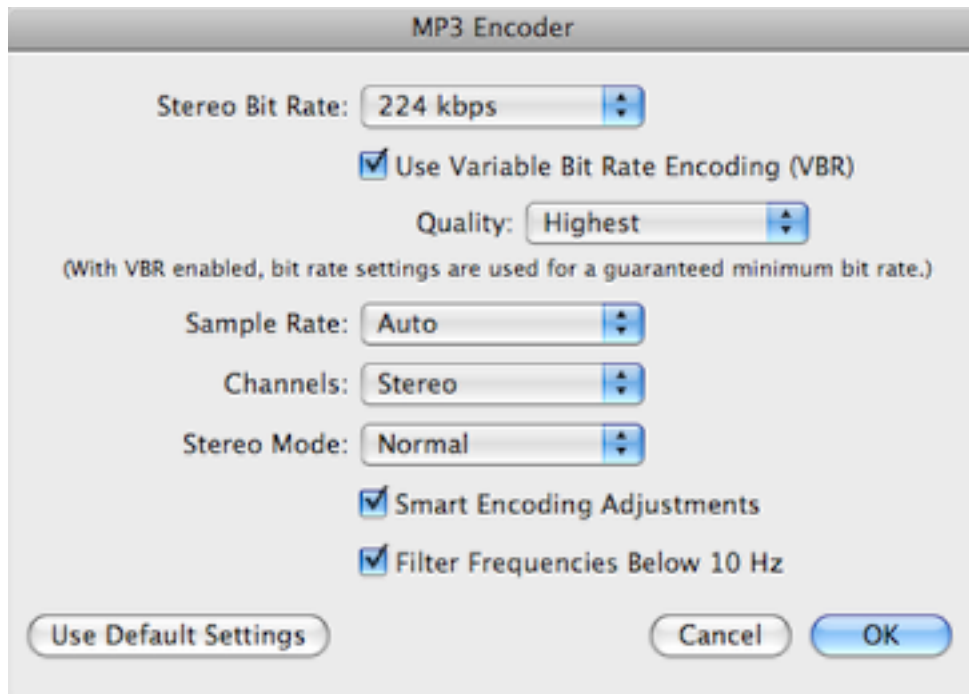
This is where iTunes looks to see how to encode an audio file. Your choices are AAC, AIFF, Apple Lossless, MP3, and WAV. This function allows iTunes to become an audio converter for these types of files. In this case, we will choose MP3 encoder through the dropdown menu. You can drag or import any of these types of files into iTunes, and using this dialog, convert them to any of the other types of audio files.

Set the Quality Settings



Now you must choose the quality of the audio you want when you convert your files or import your music CDs. The trade off? If you want small files, and aren't too concerned about the quality of the audio, choose a lower kbps setting (kbps stands for kilobits per second). In the custom option, you can drop the setting down to 16 kbps. This setting would be good for recording a classroom lecture, for example. Voice recordings can still be clearly understood at that setting, and you could record an hour lecture and still end up with a very small file. This is great for creating a podcast, or for putting a lecture online for students to download easily or listen to online. For music, where the audio quality is more critical, you'd typically choose 128 kbps or higher. You can experiment with these settings and find what works best for you. You trade quality for file size. The higher the quality setting, the larger the resulting file will be.

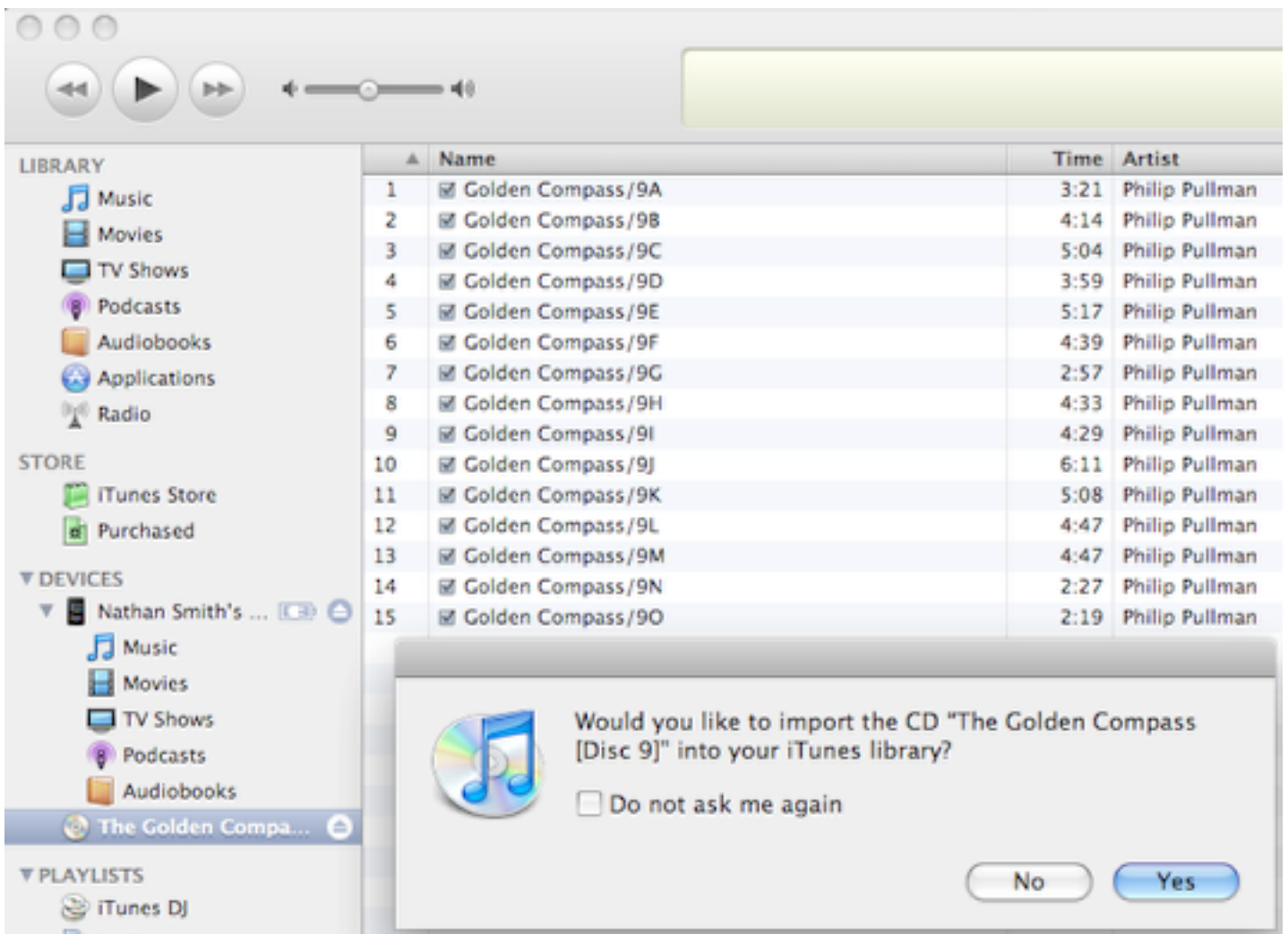
The custom setting dialog...



Here's a quick look at the custom setting dialog box. My own personal preference for converting music to MP3 files are the settings pictured here.

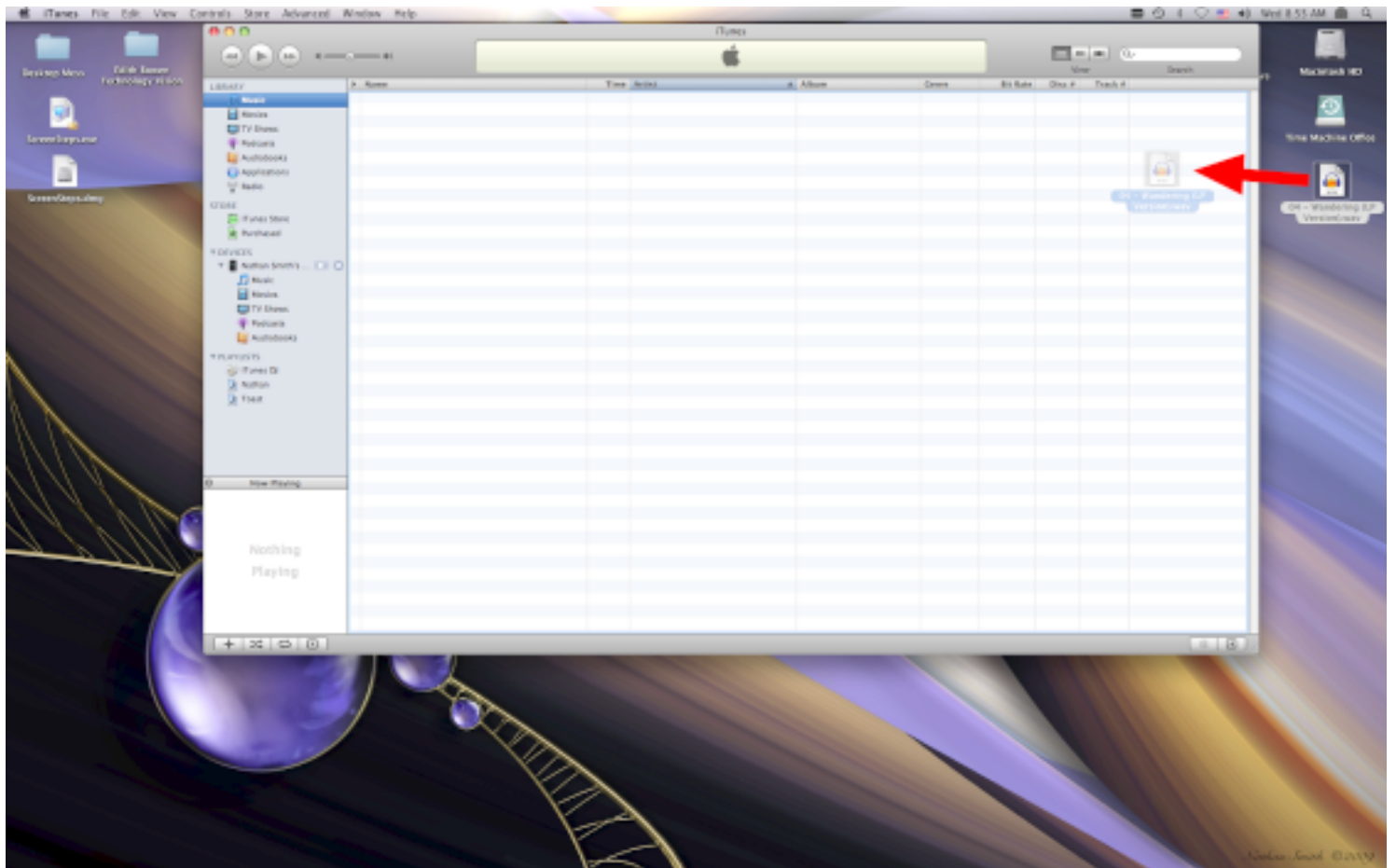
[NOTE: Click OK until the preference dialog boxes are all closed and you are back in iTunes.](#)

Now you can choose to do this or the next step: Insert a Music CD



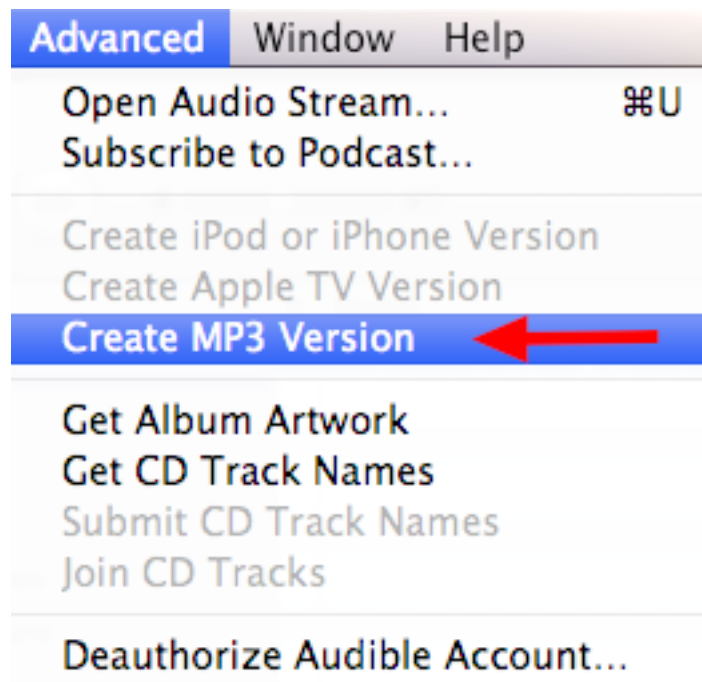
Insert an audio or music CD. If you are connected to the internet, iTunes will automatically try to look up the track titles, artists, etc. If not, they'll just show up as Track 01, Track 02, etc. Then iTunes will ask if you want to import the CD into your iTunes library. Click YES, and iTunes will start encoding the audio tracks into format we specified in the preferences - in this case, MP3. When the process finishes, you'll see the files in your music library. At that point, you can eject the CD. Continue inserting audio CDs and repeating this process until you've completed what you want to do.

Drag audio files into the iTunes library



In this example, I'm dragging a music file that's in WAV format from my desktop into iTunes. This is a quick and easy way to get files into your iTunes library. You can drag a single file, or select a bunch of files and drag them all into iTunes in a single step. You can also do the same with folders of audio files.

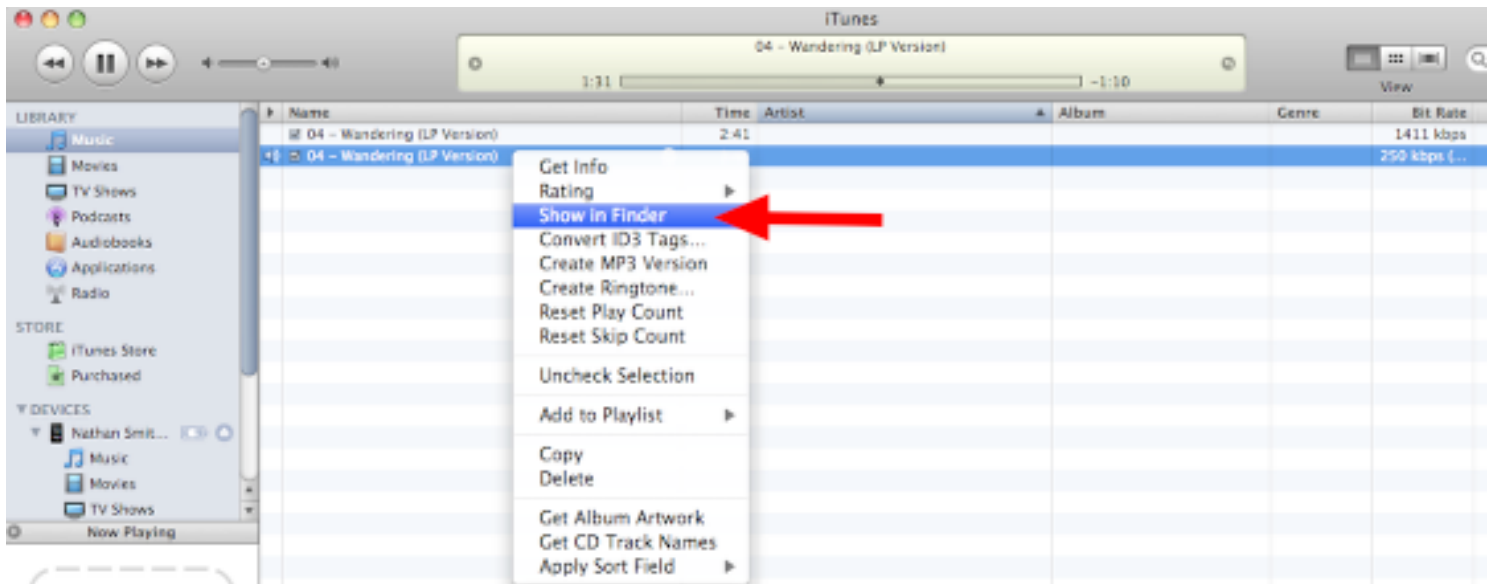
Convert the files to MP3



Select the files in your iTunes library you wish to convert. You can click one file. If you wish to select all the files in your iTunes window, you can press Command-A or go to the Edit menu and choose Select All. If you wish to select a contiguous block of files, click on the first file you wish, then hold the shift key down and click on the last file in the block of files you want to select. If you just wish to pick and choose non-contiguous files, hold the command key down and click on the files you wish.

Once you've got the audio files selected that you want to convert, go to the Advanced menu (or right-mouse-button click on one of the selected files) and choose Create MP3 Version. iTunes will then go to work on converting them to MP3 files in the quality that you set in the preferences dialog.

Go get your file



Once your files are converted, you'll see two of each in your iTunes library. In this example where I only converted one file, I have my WAV file - at 1411 kbps, and the MP3 conversion (my 250 kbps file).

You can delete the original if you want by selecting it and pressing the delete key. iTunes may ask if you want to remove it from your library window and either keep the actual file or move it to the trash. In this example, now that I have my MP3 version, I'm going to move my original WAV file to the trash.

At this point, I'm finished. I can leave my MP3 file in my iTunes library and listen to it whenever I want. I can connect my iPod and drag it to my iPod's music library. However, if I want to move the file somewhere else, I can easily locate it by right-mouse-button clicking on the title in iTunes, and choosing Show in Finder. At that point, a Finder window will open that contains my MP3 file.

You can either move the file out of your iTunes library (that will not delete it out of the iTunes window - so if you click that title after you've moved the file, iTunes will complain that it can't locate the file. Just delete that entry in the iTunes window also.) - or you can make a copy of it. The easiest way to make a copy of a file in the Finder is to hold the OPTION key down while dragging the file to a new location. You'll notice your cursor will have a + sign. When you drop the file into the new location, the Finder will make a copy rather than move the file.