

## Which CD or DVD format should I use?

Which disc format you should use is determined by the computer or device that you plan to use the disc in after it's burned. For more information about burning a CD or DVD in Windows, see [Burn a CD or DVD in Windows Explorer](#).

The following sections explain how to determine which format to choose when using Windows Explorer to burn a data disc (a type of disc that is useful for storing, archiving, and sharing files among different computers and devices). If you want to create other types of discs, such as a DVD-Video disc (to play in a regular DVD player) or an audio CD (to play in a regular CD player), you'll need to use a different program or feature of Windows.

### Pick the appropriate disc and format for your needs

Find an example in the following table that best describes your situation. Then, insert the recommended disc, and choose the appropriate disc format when you prepare your disc for burning.

The type of recordable disc you should choose depends on a few different factors, such as:

- The types of recordable discs that work with your disc burner.
- The disc drive on the computer or device that you plan to use the disc in after it's burned and the types of recordable discs the computer or device can read.
- The total size for all the files you plan to burn to a disc.

A typical recordable CD can hold about 650-700 megabytes (MB), whereas a typical recordable DVD can hold over six times more than that at about 4.7 gigabytes (GB). However, the total amount of disc space that you can use to burn files to the disc is less than the amount that's often listed on the disc itself. This is because the disc capacity is calculated differently when it's used in a computer. For example, a typical DVD-R that has a listed disc capacity of 4.7 GB can only store about 4.37 GB of data on the disc.

The following table describes different CD or DVD burning scenarios and provides advice about which format to use.

To	Use this
Burn any kind of file and use the disc in a Windows XP or later computer.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, or DVD-RAM Format: Live File System
Burn any kind of file and use the disc in any computer, including versions of Windows earlier than Windows XP.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, or DVD-RAM Format: Mastered
Burn any kind of file and use the disc in a Windows Vista or later computer.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, DVD-RAM, BD-R, or BD-RE Format: Live File System or Mastered
Burn music or pictures and use the disc in some regular CD, DVD, or Blu-ray Disc players that can play MP3 files and digital pictures.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RW, or DVD+RW Format: Mastered
Burn music or pictures and use the disc in any computer, including versions of Windows earlier than Windows XP.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RW, or DVD+RW Format: Mastered
Be able to add and erase one file or many files over and over (like you can with a USB flash drive) and use the disc in a Windows XP or later computer.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, or DVD-RAM Format: Live File System
Be able to add and erase one file or many files over and over (like you can with a USB flash drive) and use the disc in a Windows 7 computer.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, DVD-RAM, BD-R, or BD-RE Format: Live File System
Leave a disc in your computer's burner and copy files to it at your convenience, such as for routine backup.	Disc: CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, DVD-R DL, DVD+R, DVD+R DL, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, DVD-RAM, BD-R, or BD-RE Format: Live File System

## Understanding the difference between the Live File System and Mastered disc formats

When choosing a disc format, it's helpful to understand what the differences are, so you can pick the right format for the disc you're going to burn. Discs that use the Live File System format are often more convenient because you can copy selected files immediately and as often as you want, just like you can with a USB flash drive. Alternatively, Live File System discs can't be used in all computers or in a CD, DVD, or Blu-ray Disc player. Use this guide to understand the difference between Live File System and Mastered discs:

### Discs formatted with the Live File System option:

- Have this option name in the Burn a Disc dialog box: Like a USB flash drive.
- Work like a USB flash drive, which means that you can copy files to disc immediately without having to burn them later in a separate step.
- Give you the option to delete one file, many files, or all files. For more information about erasing files from a disc, see [Erase a CD or DVD](#).
- Are convenient if you want to keep a disc in your CD, DVD, or Blu-ray Disc burner and copy files whenever the need arises.
- Are compatible only with Windows XP and later versions of Windows.
- Aren't blank after they're formatted.

### Discs formatted with the Mastered option:

- Have this option name in the Burn a Disc dialog box: With a CD/DVD player.
- Don't copy files immediately; you need to assemble the entire collection of files that you want to copy to the disc, and then burn them all at once.
- Don't give you the option of deleting just one file or a few. All files on the disc will be deleted. For more information about erasing files from a disc, see [Erase a CD or DVD](#).
- Are convenient if you want to burn a large collection of files, such as a music CD with MP3 files.
- Are compatible with computers that aren't necessarily running Windows and some consumer electronic devices, such as CD players, DVD players, and Blu-ray Disc players.

## Why are there different versions of the Live File System format?

Each version of the Live File System format is compatible with different operating systems. Depending on which computers you plan to use a disc in, you might need to select a different version of Live File System. If you plan to use your disc on a later version of Windows, however, you shouldn't need to change the version of the Live File System you use. If you need to make discs that are compatible with earlier versions of Windows, use the following table to select the right Live File System version for your needs:

The following table describes Live File System versions and their appropriate uses.

<b>Live File System version (UDF)</b>	<b>Best for</b>
1.50	This version is compatible with Windows 2000 (and later) and Windows Server 2003 (and later). It might not be compatible with Windows 98 computers.
2.00	This version is compatible with Windows XP (and later) and Windows Server 2003 (and later). It might not be compatible with Windows 98 and Windows 2000 computers.
2.01	This is the default version that's compatible with Windows XP (and later) and Windows Server 2003 (and later). It might not be compatible with Windows 98 and Windows 2000 computers.
2.50	This version is designed for Windows Vista (and later). It might not be compatible with earlier versions of Windows.

For information about formatting a disc, see [Format a CD or DVD](#).

## What are the differences between the various kinds of CD and DVD discs?

The following table describes the different kinds of CDs and DVDs and provides information about their appropriate use.

Disc	General information	Capacity	Compatibility
CD-ROM	Known as a read-only disc, usually used to store commercial programs and data. You can't add or delete information on a CD-ROM.	650 MB	Highly compatible with most computers and devices.
CD-R	You can burn files to a CD-R more than once (each time is referred to as a session), but you can't delete files from a Mastered disc. Each burn is permanent.	650 MB 700 MB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Highly compatible with most computers and devices.
CD-RW	You can burn files to a CD-RW more than once. You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A CD-RW can be burned and erased many times.	650 MB	Compatible with many computers and devices.
DVD-ROM	Known as a read-only disc, usually used to store commercial programs and data. You can't add or delete information on a DVD-ROM.	4.7 GB	Highly compatible with most computers and devices.
DVD-R	You can burn files to a DVD-R more than once (each time is referred to as a session), but you can't delete files from the disc. Each burn is permanent.	4.7 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Highly compatible with most computers and devices.
DVD+R	You can burn files to a DVD+R more than once (each time is referred to as a session), but you can't delete files from the disc. Each burn is permanent.	4.7 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Compatible with many computers and devices.

Disc	General information	Capacity	Compatibility
DVD-RW	You can burn files to a DVD-RW more than once (each time is referred to as a session). You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A DVD-RW can be burned and erased many times.	4.7 GB	You don't need to close the session to read this disc in another computer. Compatible with many computers and some devices.
DVD+RW	You can burn files to a DVD+RW more than once (each time is referred to as a session). You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A DVD+RW can be burned and erased many times.	4.7 GB	You don't need to close the session to read this disc in another computer. Compatible with many computers and some devices.
DVD-RAM	You can burn files to a DVD-RAM more than once. You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A DVD-RAM can be burned and erased many times.	2.6 GB 4.7 GB 5.2 GB 9.4 GB	DVD-RAM discs can generally be used only in DVD-RAM drives and might not be readable by DVD players and other devices.
DVD-R DL	You can burn files to a DVD-R DL more than once (each time is referred to as a session), but you can't delete files from a Mastered disc. Each burn is permanent.	8.5 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Compatible with some computers and newer DVD players.
DVD+R DL	You can burn files to a DVD+R DL more than once (each time is referred to as a session), but you can't delete files from a Mastered disc. Each burn is permanent.	8.5 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Compatible with some computers and newer DVD players.

Disc	General information	Capacity	Compatibility
BD-R	You can burn files to a BD-R once (in one session), but you can't delete files from the disc. Each burn is permanent.	25 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Compatible with computers running Windows 7.
BD-R DL	You can burn files to a BD-R DL once (in one session), but you can't delete files from the disc. Each burn is permanent.	50 GB	You must close the session to read this disc in a different computer. Compatible with computers running Windows 7.
BD-RE	You can burn files to a BD-RE more than once (each time is referred to as a session). You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A BD-RE can be burned and erased many times.	25 GB	You don't need to close the session to read this disc in another computer. Compatible with computers running Windows 7.
BD-RE DL	You can burn files to a BD-RE DL more than once (each time is referred to as a session). You can also delete unwanted files from the disc to reclaim space and add additional files. A BD-RE DL can be burned and erased many times.	50 GB	You don't need to close the session to read this disc in another computer. Compatible with computers running Windows 7.

For more information about setting the options for closing a session when a disc is ejected, see [Close or finalize a CD or DVD](#).

## Note

For another computer to be able to read a Blu-ray Disc, that computer must have a Blu-ray Disc drive. For another computer to be able to read a DVD disc, that computer must have a DVD or Blu-ray drive. CDs can be used in both CD and DVD drives, and in most (but not all) Blu-ray drives.