

Music Downloading

Important Things You Should Know About Downloading Music Files



BECAUSE OF THE SURGE IN POPULARITY OF DOWNLOADING MUSIC FILES FROM THE INTERNET, SBC Internet Services urges its members to educate themselves and their children about copyright infringement, online piracy and the consequences. To help you make the right decisions, SBCIS provides the following answers to some frequently asked questions*.

Q: How do I know whether I am downloading songs legally?

A: It is OK to download music from sites authorized by the owners of the copyrighted music. The important distinction between legitimate music sites and music traded informally over P2P networks is that, chances are, users who make songs available to you over P2P may not be authorized to do so. Swapping music without authorization from the copyright owners is not only against the rules of most Internet Service providers — it is also illegal.

Q: What is a “P2P” network?

A: A P2P (peer-to-peer) network is created when several users install software that allows each user to act as a server and to share information directly with other users (peers) as part of a decentralized network. P2P networks are legal and have many legitimate uses. However, trading and distributing copyrighted material over a P2P without proper authorization is not legitimate or legal use.

Q: What can happen to me if I download songs illegally?

A: First-time offenders who commit copyright violations can face penalties of as much as five years in prison and possible in fines. In some cases, consumers can be sued by the copyright holder in civil court, which can cost up to thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Q: What is a “John Doe” lawsuit?

A: A “John Doe” lawsuit is when the defendant’s name is not known at the time of filing. Usually plaintiffs simply sue “John Doe” and then they obtain a subpoena or court order requiring the Internet service providers to reveal the identity of their subscribers. “John Doe” is simply used as a substitute name until the identity of the alleged copyright infringer becomes available.

Q: Where can I go to legally download music?

A: There are many options that are currently available to consumers that allow for the legal downloading of music. Popular music sites such as MusicMatch, iTunes, MusicNow and Napster are all legal because they have obtained the authorization of the owners and artists who create the music they sell to customers.

Q: I have never downloaded or shared music or movies. Should I still worry about getting in trouble?

A: Music and movie downloading is an important issue you should discuss with everyone who has access to your computer and/or your Internet account. Many account owners are being sued for the actions of their children or other family and friends with access to their computer or Internet account.



*This information is intended to educate consumers about the issues associated with downloading music files and should not be used as legal advice.