



iTunes 3: Interface explained

Apple led the MP3 revolution with iTunes – the ultimate user-friendly songs database. It lets you organise your music collection, turn your Mac into a jukebox, listen to Internet radio, and burn your own CDs



Aims of this section
To get to grips with the iTunes interface and basic functions
Difficulty: Beginner
Time needed: 10-30 minutes



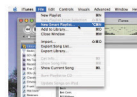
You can't help but marvel at the simplicity and efficiency of iTunes. It's the standard by which other MP3 players are judged and it still manages to rein supreme.

The best way to think of iTunes, if you are not yet familiar with it, is as a digital store of your entire music collection that's sorted any way you want. No more painful hours spent on your knees cataloguing your CDs – iTunes does it for you instantly, and you can view your collection by artist, album, song, track duration or genre.

You can even let the Internet CD Database fill in all the information for you (see page 34) and then burn some of your own compilation CDs (as explained on page 38). iTunes is guaranteed to revitalise your music.

How smart are iTunes' Playlists?

iTunes' best feature is the 'Playlist' pane and its 'Smart Playlists' options. In its simplest form, this lets you create custom lists of songs to match your mood or different conditions. You can also tell iTunes to display songs which match certain criteria you set, for example, songs made before 1987 with the word 'blue' in them. Here we show you how the simplest 'Smart Playlist' options work.



1 To create a 'Smart Playlist', go to the 'File' menu at the top of the screen and then select the 'New Smart Playlist' option.

2 Using the 'Simple' option, tick the box next to the first pull-down menu and enter your criteria into the box. In this example, we have asked to show all songs classified as 'electronic.'

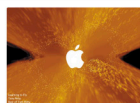


3 If you wish, you can limit the number of results, or display them in any order. Once you click on 'OK', the results of your search are automatically added to a new playlist in the pane.



Repeat and random modes

You can use your iTunes database as a giant random selection jukebox by selecting either or both of these buttons. Selecting the left icon means that songs, albums or artists are played in random order. The one on the right means that all songs are repeated once you get to the end.

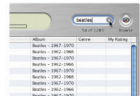


Trippy effects, man

Clicking on this star-shaped icon activates iTunes' 'Visuals' – a kaleidoscope of colour and shapes that react to the music being played and look very cool indeed. These can be set to run in the iTunes window or at full screen.

Searchable music database

Don't think of iTunes as a mere list of your songs, at its core is a powerful and flexible music database which can be used to instantly find the song, artist or album you want to play, and then burn it onto CD for use in your stereo or car.



1 iTunes' excellent search function works for song titles, artists and album names. Just type in the full or part of what you are looking for and the choices are immediately displayed in the main window.

2 When you insert a blank CD-R into the drive and select a playlist or group of songs, the 'Browse' icon changes to this 'Burn CD' icon; ready to create your first music compilation. See page 38 for more on this.



Sort your music in seconds

Your entire music collection is displayed here in the main 'Songs' window and above in the 'Albums' and 'Artists' panes. By clicking on the category headings, you can instantly sort your database using that field of information. iTunes also keeps track of how many times you have played certain tracks, and you can score the tracks to determine how often they are played.



1 Click on any of the headings displayed in the main 'Songs' pane and your collection is automatically sorted, placing all of your music at your fingertips.

Changing the sound profiles

Just like the knobs on your stereo, the iTunes 'Equalizer' allows you to adjust different aspects of the sound to match the type of music you are listening to. There are 22 preset music profiles – from rock to acoustic, electronic to jazz. You can also define your own.

