

Adding Sound to your Web Site

Contributed by Alan Steward
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Adding Sound to your Web Site - The Good, The Bad And The Ugly - Many webmasters like the idea of adding background music to their web sites but most shy away from doing it worrying about slow loading pages and large file sizes. There are many different ways to add background music to your site and some of them don't require large files to achieve professional results. Let's examine all the different ways to add background music to your site and rate them to find the best solution for you.

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{bot_wrgoogle} Many webmasters like the idea of adding background music to their web sites but most shy away from doing it worrying about slow loading pages and large file sizes. There are many different ways to add background music to your site and some of them don't require large files to achieve professional results. Let's examine all the different ways to add background music to your site and rate them to find the best solution for you.

1) MIDI Files

MIDI files are very small because they actually use your sound card's built-in instruments to create the sounds. The problem is that most sound cards don't have any decent sounds to start with, plus no two sound cards sound alike and therefore the results are very unpredictable. MIDI files usually sound like they're coming from one of those cheap Casio keyboards. Using MIDI for background music is very likely to make your site seem amateurish. Want to know how to do it anyway? Just add the line to your site. (Replace xyz with the name of the MIDI file you want to use!) The Autostart command will play the file automatically when the page is loaded.

PROS: Very small file size, easy to implement

CONS: Unpredictable results, amateurish sounds

2) WAV Files

Using the WAV file format allows you to add professional sounding recordings to your site but the problem is that even if you use a low quality setting like 11k/8bit, the file sizes are still very large and it will take a long time for your music to load. And slow loading pages are the worst thing that can happen to a site. Implementing a WAV file on a web page is easy. Just add the line to your page's HTML code. There's an additional command to loop the WAV file but WAV files do not loop cleanly with the embed command.

PROS: Many Quality Levels, Easy to implement

CONS: Large File Sizes, WAV Files do not loop

3) MP3 Files

MP3 files are highly compressed and don't take that long to load but the problem is that MP3s need to bring up an external player program and which in some cases takes your visitors away from your site altogether. Also, MP3 files don't loop cleanly.

PROS: Smaller File Sizes, Good Quality Possible

CONS: Needs external player software, not loopable

4) Flash

If you own a program that can create Flash files, you will have lots of flexibility in adding sound to your site. Flash lets you import WAV as well as MP3 Files and then creates quite small files from these sounds that will load automatically on your site. You can set the quality level and therefore decide how large you want the Flash file to be. Flash also allows you to loop short pieces of sound to create 'continuous' background music files that can be quite small. But please note that only imported WAV files can be looped in Flash, MP3 files will not loop cleanly.

PROS: Great Flexibility, Small File Sizes, especially when looping sounds

CONS: You need to buy expensive Flash software to create Flash Files

5) Pre-Made Flash Loops

The newest thing on the market are pre-built Flash Music Loops. These files are professionally recorded, loop almost indefinitely and most of these Flash Music Loops are only about 20k in size so they load almost instantly. Flash Music Loops are available at <http://www.flashmusictracks.com> and currently there are three different loop packages available in all kinds of music styles from classical to techno. Using these pre-built Flash files is easy. Simply upload the "xyz.swf" Flash file to your server and add a few lines from the corresponding "xyz.html" file to your web page and presto...instant professional sounding background music.

PROS: Extremely small file size, professional quality music

CONS: None

As you can see there are many different ways to add background music to your web pages and you don't have to worry about slow loading pages if you choose the right file format.

Article by Alan Steward, a professional recording engineer and producer who worked with many Grammy award winning groups and musicians.

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