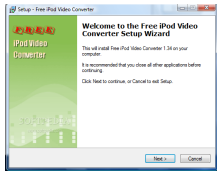


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Free iPod Video Converter main interface

iPod Ready Video

Video conversion in easy steps

When someone mentions portability the first two things that come to my mind are U3 USB keys and iPods. The first ones because of offering a nifty way to store the portable software without mixing the folders up with personal data and the second because, well, it's iPod, everybody loves it. iPod is the greatest revolution in portable media devices since Sony's walkman. The sales went off the charts and right now are stabilizing. As odd as it may seem, both portable devices use flash memory and can be used for carrying data and file. But these are all about the similarities between the two as iPod can run independently while an USB key is fully dependent of a computer, be it a desktop or a notebook. Adding music to your iPod is a pretty simple task and no effort is necessary for the job. But with video files things are just a bit complicated as you need to convert the files and bring them to a lower resolution and file size so that they do not take all the space of the device. One easy and free way to do just this is using Free iPod Video Converter. I guess the name pretty much sums up its object of activity and explaining what it does would be a futile activity. But what is more interesting is the "how" rather than the "what". The application can ready any VOB file, AVI, MPEG, WMV, RM, RMVB, DivX or ASF to play on your iPod at the right screen size. The interface is simple and very easy to handle. There are no complicated settings and all the options neatly run down in the right hand side of the interface. In the left side of the application window there is Task list window containing all the videos to be converted and in the lower part of the screen you will find a Video Information dialog giving away useful details about the selected file. The videos to be converted don't necessarily have to be added one at a time as the program seems to do just fine with batch converting. Also, the files can be of different formats; the operation will complete, no doubt about it. Adding your files to Task List is a painless job and a wizard will guide you through all the process of making all the settings for the output result. Immediately after selecting the file you want to convert to iPod format Settings wizard will pop up presenting the details (duration, video size, audio frequency and channels) of the selected video file. "Next" button brings you to the options available for the resulting MP4 file. Video size can be changed and inputted different values from the default ones (320x240 recommended size and original size of the video) and tweak the video and audio quality dragging by a slider running from Lowest to Highest. You will also be given an estimation of the size of the output result. Unfortunately during our testing estimated size and reality were about 10MB apart. And this happened with all the converted videos. There may not be a big deal, but when you shrink a 195MB DivX file to a 21MB MP4 you kind of wish you had those 10MB of quality displayed in size estimation panel. Details window in the lower window of the application screen comprise information like full location of the input file, the save path of the output result, duration of the movie file, estimated size of the output and a task editing button in case you want to change a setting or two. While testing the software we noticed a tendency of mistreating DivX files in the sense that output result would not be as clean as we hoped for. In the case of these files there was a visible lack of video quality and the result was not up to normal standards (video encoding resulted in showing those nasty blocks we all hate). But this happened only when converting a DivX file, with all other file formats there was no problem and the quality of the output file was almost the same with the original. Conversion progress is showed in a separate window and during our testing everything went OK. The window shows the amount of time elapsed from the starting of the operation, the total progress of the task, the progress with the currently processed file as well as a preview window. A piece of advice: if you minimize the window to tray the conversion will finish much faster. An

additional option allows setting the application to turn off the computer immediately after the conversion process is complete. **The Good** First of all it is absolutely free and does a pretty good job (especially with VOB files). Conversion process is fast, but in the end it all depends on the size of the processed file. Very easy to use with minimum and essential options, Free iPod Video Converter is a nice tool to ready your videos for iPod playing. The user can customize the ID3 Tag by adding Title, Author, Genre of the video and copyright for the file in an easy to use window already loaded with some presets. **The Bad** iPod prepared DivX files are not a pretty sight. Here and there quality is less than what you wished for. Estimating the resulting file's size is not Free iPod Video Converter's strongest point. You should always expect real size to be smaller than program's predictions and as files are larger, the difference is also larger. **The Truth** It is a good tool to ready video for iPod. The conversion is fast and supports all major movie formats on the market. However, there is a slight problem with DivX files which are not shrunk preserving video quality. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*