How to Convert Anything

James Hoke

2022

A JimmyNet Manual

1   Introduction

Have you ever had a file that was not in the right format? Converting between file formats can be complicated. You may come across a file that uses an outdated format that will not open. Or perhaps you use that one program that nobody else uses and you still need to send them files. In this JimmyNet manual I will explain how to convert between nearly every type of file.

2   Video

Converting between video formats is a simple process. Perhaps you have an old file or something in a weird format. You might be able to play it in VLC but sometimes you just gotta have an MP4. Maybe you are trying to upload to Instagram, which only supports MP4 files. Or perhaps you need to compress a video to fit in Discords stingy file size limit (they really want to sell you on nitro, and nobody really wants it. Maybe you should stop breaking bots if you want people to invest in your platform).

2.1   Handbrake (The Simple, Yet Powerful Way)

Handbrake is a fanstatic cross-platform app that can convert from most video formats. It's main limitation is that while in can read almost any file you throw at it, it can only export to a .mp4, .mkv, or .webm file. Fortunatly there are generally the only file types you will ever need. Just download it, open your video, pick a preset, and click start.

2.2   FFMPEG (Advanced)

FFMPEG is a command line tool that can convert between video formats. Only use this if Handbrake doesn't work and you are comfortable with the command line. Once installed, just run this command:

```
ffmpeg -i "input.file" "output.file"
```

This will convert pretty much any video file.

3 Audio

Converting between audio formats is a simple process. Perhaps you have an old file or something in a weird format. You might be able to play it in VLC but sometimes you just gotta have an MP3.

3.1 Audacity (The Simple, Yet Powerful Way)

Audacity is a fanstatic cross-platform app that can convert from most audio formats. Just download it, import your audio, pick a preset, and export it in the desired format.

3.2 FFMPEG (Advanced)

FFMPEG is a command line tool that can convert between audio formats. Only use this if Audacity doesn't work and you are comfortable with the command line. Once installed, just run this command:

```
ffmpeg -i "input.file" "output.file"
```

This will convert pretty much any audio file.

4 Documents

Converting between obscure document formats can be helpful. Sometimes you have to send a file made in LibreOffice to a MS Word file to send in for a class assignment. Maybe you like writing markdown, but everybody just wants a PDF. Perhaps you would like a turn your MS Word Doc into a webpage.

4.1 Using Your Word Processors Built In Functionality

Whatever you are using to write with probably can save in a varity of formats. If you click *save as* or *export* in pretty much any word processor you will be given the option to save DOCX, ODF, DocBook, Text, HTML, and many other formats. This is the easiest method.

4.2 Print to PDF

Everybody want PDFs, this manual is made available in PDF format (LaTeX fans, you can download the complete set of manuals in TeX format at https://jimmyhoke.net/manuals). Your computer almost definitely has a "print to PDF" option when you try to print a document. This is a simple way to instantly convert any file to a PDF.

4.3 Pandoc (Advanced, Command Line)

Pandoc is a command line tool that can convert between nearly any format. Using it is simple. To convert between most types install Pandoc and use this command:

```
pandoc "input.file" -o "output.file"
```

To convert a file to an HTML webpage, use this command:

```
pandoc "input.file" -s -o "output.html"
```

You can also use Pandoc to make a PDF. To do this you will need top install a LaTeX distribution on your system. This con be a buggy process at times, and the output file will have different formatting than the original. For this readon I would not recommend using Pandoc to make a PDF unless you have a specific reason.

5 eBooks

Sometimes you need to convert an eBook into a format that your eReader can understand. While ePub is the standard format, some devices use their own formats. Amazon's Kindle devices, for instance, require .mobi files.

5.1 A Note On DRM

Many eBooks use a technology called "Digital Rights Management" or DRM. The supposed purpose of DRM is to prevent "piracy" (which is the term we use for when someone violates copyright law, which is morally the same thing as murdering a ship's crew and stealing their stuff, apparently). DRM, in my opinion should be made illegal to protect consumers. DRM takes away your

legal rights as a reader. It sidesteps the doctrine of first sale, denying you the right to resell your books. DRM prevents you from switching to another eReader without losing your book. Becuase it is illegal to bypass, even fair use of a work (a right you legally have) becomes illegal. Additionally, DRM often lets companies like Amazon remotely delete or alter your books. In one instance, Amazon remotely deleted 1984 (yes really) from many people's Kindle libraries. **NEVER BUY A BOOK WITH DRM** Don't buy from Amazon, they put DRM on everything. Use a store like Kobo, which does not use DRM on book where the publisher asks then not to. If a book has DRM you don't really own it. **BOOKS WITH DRM CANNOT BE CONVERTED WITH LEGALLY AVAILABLE TOOLS**

5.2 Calibre

Calibre is the best tool for converting eBooks. Just import it into your Calibre library and convert it into the right format.