

STAR Watch

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Improve Your Webstreaming Experiences

Over the past 6 months, Western New York Law Center and Empire Justice Center teamed up to produce more than a half dozen trainings that were simultaneously webcast. Most people who watched the multiple live webcast trainings via the Internet had no problem seeing and hearing the entire presentations, but a few encountered some issues.

While some of these problems were corrected on the spot, some could not be since they required more than a quick fix. After some research, we were able to list the steps that users can take to improve the performance of their PC's when viewing any presentation streamed over the Internet, not just ours.

Viewing a training webcast or watching a movie on your computer should be a no-brainer, but that isn't always the case. Many first-time viewers encounter a host

of problems such as poor audio, poor video, or even computer crashes. While it is possible that there are some serious problems deep inside the computer, usually it's something really simple.

If you are encountering problems with webstreams or movies on your computer, here are a few simple things that you can do to fix the problem.



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Install the latest version of Windows Media Player

Start up Windows Media Player, then go to **Help > Check for Player Updates...** If you are told that there is a updated version of Media Player, go ahead and install it. (As this article is being written, the latest version is 10) That alone may fix all of your problems.

Run the DirectX diagnostic tool

Windows Media Player is heavily dependent on the DirectX software. This software, which is free from Microsoft, performs much of the work for Media Player. To test it...

- Go to **Start > Run** Type **dxdiag** into the dialog box, then click **OK**
- When the DirectX Diagnostic Tool starts up, go to the **Display** tab
- Click **Test DirectDraw** and follow the instructions
- Click **Test Direct3D** and follow the instructions
- Now select the **Sound** tab
- Click **Test DirectSound** and follow the instructions

If the system cannot pass the DirectDraw and Direct3D test, it usually indicates a problem with the video display drivers. If the system cannot pass the DirectSound tests, it usually indicates a problem with the sound card

drivers, but don't overlook the obvious: Are the speakers plugged in to the computer and powered up?.

Install the latest sound card and video card drivers

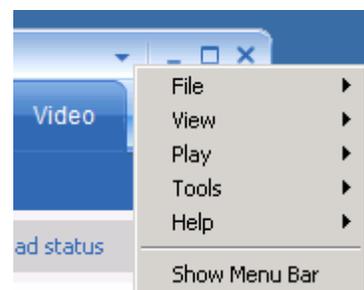
Even if your computer is fresh out of the box, go to the video card or sound card manufacturer's site, download and install the latest device drivers for the sound card and video card in your computer. It's more work than using the "Update driver" feature in Windows, but it guarantees that you are

getting the most up-to-date driver for the device.



Optimize Windows Media Player

Start up Windows Media Player, then go to **Tools > Options...** Microsoft has not made this menu option easy to find. Go to the upper-right corner of the screen. To the right of the "minimize" button, is an "upside-down triangle". If you hover over it with the cursor, text will be displayed that says "Access application menus". Left-click on the triangle and a menu will be displayed (as shown below).





- On the **Player** tab, select **Download codecs automatically**. If an unknown file format is encountered, Media Player will attempt to locate the correct software to play it.
- Select the **Performance** tab. Click the **Advanced** button.
- In the **Video Acceleration** box, for all video cards except those made by nVidia, make sure that **Use video mixing renderer** and **Use high quality mode** are selected. If the video card was made by nVidia, select **Use mixing renderer** and **Use overlays**
- In the **DVD Video** box, for all video cards except those made by nVidia, make sure that **Use video mixing renderer** and **Enable full-screen mode switch** are selected. If the video card is made by nVidia, select **Use video mixing renderer** and **Display full-screen controls**.

Prevent some crashes

If Windows Explorer or My Computer crashes when you open a folder that contains one or more .AVI files, the codec for Xvid (also known as DivX) might be missing. To download the codec free of charge, go to www.divxmovies.com/software and follow the instructions.

If Windows Media Player crashes while attempting to play a video file, it might also be a missing AC3 codec. To download the codec, go to ac3filter.sourceforge.net. If the playback

problem is fixed, but the audio volume is low, go to **Start > Programs > AC3Filter > AC3Filter Config**. On the **Main** tab, adjust the **Master** and **Gain** controls in the lower-central portion of the screen.

For more advanced users

This procedure is not for the casual computer user. If you are unfamiliar with editing the registry, do not attempt to perform this procedure.

In Windows XP, when an attempt is made to play a file, XP can consume a lot of resources while it attempts to extract information about the video file before playing it. This can lead to faulty playback. To prevent Windows XP from extracting information about the file before playing it, locate the registry key **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\CLSID\{87D62D94-71B3-4b9a-94895FE6850DC73E}**. Rename it to **-{87D62D94-71B3-4b9a-94895FE6850DC73E}** by putting a "-" in front of it.

When all else fails...

If the video refuses to play using Windows Media Player, will it work with RealMedia Player? The folks who put together the different players have different opinions about which codecs should be packaged with their respective products. Consequently, the video stream that totally refuses to work with one player may perform flawlessly with a different one.

If you get really desperate (or have a lot of time on your hands), it may be necessary to analyze the file to



determine whether the file is damaged, incomplete, or uses a codec that is not installed on the computer. The best program that we have found for this purpose is a called GSpot. It is free and can be downloaded from a number of sites, including www.headbands.com/gspot. GSpot will check for file truncation or corruption, then determine which codecs are required for proper playback and if they are installed on the computer. Unfortunately, if the required

codecs are missing, GSpot cannot point you to a location from which you can download them.



What is a "Codec"?

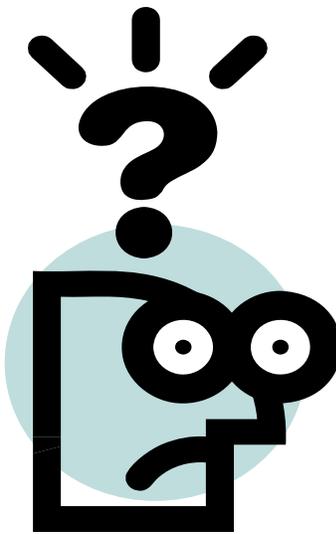
Short for compressor/decompressor, a codec is a detailed specification of how data will be compressed and/or decompressed. Codecs can be implemented in software, hardware, or a combination of both.

For webstreaming purposes, the most common types of files produced by or read by codecs are .AVI, .MPG, .WMV, .MOV, and .RM files.

It would be wonderful if that's all there was to it, but life just isn't that simple. Each of those file extensions mentioned previously designates an entire family of codecs—and none of the family members are required to speak to, or understand

anyone else in the family. Without a product like GSpot (mentioned in the previous article), there is no way to figure out what codec was used to create the file and which codec must be used to play the file back. And just to confuse the issue even more, different codecs can be used to create the audio and the video portions of the webstream/file.

While the Microsoft family (.WMV), QuickTime family (.MOV), and the RealMedia family (.RM) have fewer dialects (and hence fewer playback issues), new .AVI and .MPG codecs are popping up all the time keeping users who wish to play files in the new formats dazed, confused & bewildered.





Free Online Training: Emergency Assistance 101

This training will provide an overview of emergency assistance programs in New York State:

- Emergency Assistance to Families
- Emergency Safety Net Assistance
- Emergency Assistance to Adults.

The training will review situations that constitute an emergency, and the financial and categorical eligibility requirements for receipt of emergency assistance, and paid special attention to shelter and utility emergencies.

Empire Justice Center originally presented this training live and by webcast at The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York in Albany, New York on Thursday, October 27, 2005.

The information was presented by Susan Antos from the Empire Justice Center and by Charles Brennan from the Public Utilities Law Project.

Empire Justice Center and Western New York Law Center are re-broadcasting this training for the legal services community and for others working with clients who need emergency assistance.

This training is free of charge, but you must register in advance.

To register for this training, please go to:

http://service.wnylc.com/PB101_Registration.html

You can test to see if you can receive the live webcast by going to:

http://www.wnylc.net/Test_PB101.htm



WNYLC Web Statistics For March 2006

Total Hits.....409,914
 Total User Sessions.....81,818
 Average Hits/Day (Mon-Fri)15,632
 Average user Sessions/Weekday.....2,891
 Number of Pages Viewed.....160,078
 Avg Number of Pages /Day.....5,163
 Number of Documents Viewed.....82,836
 Accessed Using Internet Explorer.....89%
 Accessed Using Netscape.....5%

Operating Systems Used:
 Windows XP.....53%
 Windows 2000.....13%
 Windows 98.....6%
 Windows ME.....<1%
 Windows 95.....<1%
 Windows NT.....<1%
 Macintosh.....<1%
 Linux/Unix.....<1%



WHO WE ARE

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