

Chapter 4

REALPLAYER - THE BASICS

With every new version of RealPlayer, RealNetworks tries to improve your experience, not only in what you hear and see, but also in how you use the program. This chapter describes the basic functions, common to both RealPlayer and RealPlayer Plus.

Additional Information

Check your Help file for additional information about RealPlayer features. (Be sure to download the latest Help file update. Just go to **Help/Check for Update**.)

So now that I have this software, what do I do with it?

RealPlayer gives you access to multimedia files, both on the Internet and those stored locally on your computer and your LAN. With RealPlayer you can find and play Channels, Live Stations, and other clips directly without having to launch your web browser first. *My Favorites* and *Scanning* (features of RealPlayer Plus, detailed in Chapter 5) let you organize and search for *clips* with just a few clicks of your cursor.

Note

Clip is a catch-all phrase to describe anything RealPlayer plays. A clip can be video, audio, video with audio, RealText®, RealPix™, Real System G2 with Flash, any combination of these, or any other form of audio-visual media that a *plug-in* is available for.

Some clips contain more than one song or video; these are called *multi-clips*. A *multi-clip* strings together several individual clips of content, but you only have to click on it a single time to hear or see all of the media associated with that clip.

The Many Ways to Play a Clip

There are two very different ways to play media (clips) on your computer. The first is *local playback*. Local playback is when you use the **Open File...** option from your RealPlayer **File** menu.

The second way clips are played, is as *streamed content*. This is any clip that is played in real-time over the Internet. But before you can play a clip on the Internet you have to connect to it. You can connect to streamed content by clicking on links in a web page, using the **Open Location...** option from your RealPlayer **File** menu or by using any of the new options RealPlayer has to offer: My Channels, My Favorites (Plus only), and the Real.com Media bar.

Note

For a complete discussion of streaming media and the Internet, please see Chapter 6: What is Streaming Media and How does it Work? on page 39.

Navigating through a clip

When you start playing a clip, you have *loaded* it. A clip remains loaded until you select a new clip. *Loading a clip* means either that you are connected to it or that it was the last clip you were listening to during the current *session* of RealPlayer. A session starts when you launch RealPlayer and ends when you close it. Stopping a clip does not unload it. Stopping a clip just resets it to play from the beginning. However, just because a clip is loaded does not mean you are necessarily connected to the Internet. Loading a clip only means that RealPlayer knows where to look for it and what clip it should work with when you click any of the control buttons (see table on next page).

Navigation

Button	Action
	Play starts a clip from the beginning or from where you paused it. <i>Live</i> streaming media (example: live radio) starts at the current point in the program.
	Pause freezes playback of the clip. If you pause a clip for several minutes, you may be disconnected from the clip. When you resume playback there may be a delay while RealPlayer reconnects to the site. Real-time streaming media is not buffered while paused and will reconnect at the current point in the program.
	Stop halts playback and resets the clip to the beginning.
	The Position Slider indicates where you are in the clip. Dragging the slider to a new position will let you jump around a large clip—watch the time indicator on your Status bar for your location. (Not available during <i>Live</i> media play.)
	The longer you hold down Fast Forward , the further ahead in the clip you will jump. (Not available during <i>Live</i> media play.)
	The longer you hold down Rewind , the further back in the clip you will jump. (Not available during <i>Live</i> media play.)
	Mute turns the volume all the way down (affects all System Sound Cues on PC).

What if I am disconnected from my Internet Service Provider (ISP)?

If you are not connected to the Internet and attempt to play a loaded clip, RealPlayer will try to establish a connection for you. In most cases on a Windows PC, this means you will see the Dial-up Connection dialog that you see when you launch your browser or get your e-mail. For a Macintosh, most often, you will be reconnected automatically. In both cases, if you do not automatically reconnect to the Internet, connect manually and try to play the clip again.

Channels

Channels give you one-click access to content that is updated on a frequent basis. All take advantage of the SMIL format which provides a richer experience by using multiple types of streams at once (see SMIL on page 52 for details).

Figure 4-1: My Channels



My Channels provides you with up-to-date headlines from all of your selected Channels while you're connected to the Internet.

Headlines for each Channel appear to the right of the Channel's icon as you move your cursor over the Channels. You can also set the Headlines to display and scroll automatically; see Content Preferences on page 61.

Headlines update automatically while you are connected to the Internet. When the content for a Channel has changed since your last visit, you'll see a gleam appear on the Channel icon; you won't have to play the Channel to find out if there's something new (see Channels gleam on page 22).

Tip

You can force a Headline update to occur ahead of its next scheduled time by selecting **Update headline now...** from the **Options** menu. If you are not connected to the Internet, your RealPlayer will attempt to connect to your ISP when you click **Update headlines now...** To turn off automatic updating see Content Preferences on page 61.

Your RealPlayer comes loaded with a starter set of Channels but you can change these at any time by clicking **Add New Channels**. In fact, RealNetworks is always working to supply you with new Channels, so check regularly to see what new Channels are available.

To Change or Add to Your Channels

1. Click the Channel titled: **Add New Channels**.
2. A page will open in your browser or, if you use a PC and have Internet Explorer V 4.0 or later, it will open in your RealPlayer.
3. Follow the instructions on the Channels page to change your lineup. Channels are available for a variety of interests: News, Entertainment, Sports, and others.
4. Click **Finish** on the Channels page to have your selections take effect.

Real.com Take 5



Figure 4-2: Channels tab



Real.com Take 5 is a special service created by RealNetworks to bring you the best of the web: a daily showcase of the top streaming entertainment, music, news and specialty programming on the Internet. Real.com Take 5 is available only through RealPlayer

A single click on the Real.com Take 5 icon starts the program. You'll hear an excerpt of the showcase content as well as a list of other categories you can access.

Additional Information

Real.com Take 5 is a SMIL presentation (see SMIL on page 52) that combines RealSystem G2 with Flash, RealText, RealPix and RealAudio, all synchronized in the same presentation within RealPlayer. Real.com Take 5 is designed to give you a good experience even over slower dial-up connections (such as when using a 28.8 modem).

Real.com Take 5 takes advantage of other new RealPlayer features such as *multi-instance* (multiple RealPlayer windows) and file caching. Multi-instance

allows you to view a video clip in a new window and not lose your place in the main Real.com Take 5 window—substantially reducing the need to reload pages. In fact, when pages are reloaded, some of the components on the page are retrieved from Clip Cache (see Performance Preferences on page 72), speeding performance.

Real.com Take 5 has a dedicated team at RealNetworks working every day with content providers to find the best and most informative content from around the Web; just for you. All this makes Real.com Take 5 one of the best places to be on the Web every day.

Channels gleam

Figure 4-3: Channels tab with gleam



Channels also let you know when there's something new to watch. A gleam will appear on the channel (shown to the left).

To see when your Channels were last updated, see the date or time next to **Options**. To update manually, click **Options** and select **Update Headlines Now**.

Radio Tuner

RealPlayer provides access to Live Stations; continuous real-time streaming media from a variety of radio stations throughout the world (usually a combination of live and pre-recorded programs). Station are selected with the Real.com *Radio Tuner*.

Note

When playing a continuous feed (such as a radio station) the status bar will show the word "Live" instead of the length of the clip. See Status bar on page 15.

You can go to the Radio Tuner from the **Radio** menu, which offers a variety of quick selections, or by clicking **Radio Tuner** on the Media bar (see Figure 4-9: Real.com Media bar on page 28).

Opening the Radio Tuner takes you to a site at Real.com. By following the links, you can select and play radio broadcasts right from your RealPlayer. You can search for Live Stations by their name/call letters, or browse through available Live Stations sorted by category.

Once selected, radio station locations can be added to your favorites list, like any other media clip. (See Favorites below.)

Favorites

Just like bookmarks on a web browsers, RealPlayer lets you save and organize the locations to your favorite clips and links.

- To organize your favorites, select Favorites/Organize... from the pull-down menu at the top of RealPlayer. An *Organize Favorites* dialog box will be displayed. Create folders to save your favorite clip information in.
- To add a favorite to your list, select **Favorites/Add to Favorites...** from the menu bar. An *Add to Favorites* dialog box will be displayed. Select a folder to add the clip to and click the **OK** button. The clip you are playing, or the last clip loaded if you are not playing a clip, will be added to the selected folder in your list of favorites.

Figure 4-4: Playing Favorites



To play a favorite clip:

1. Select the **My Favorites** tab from the Content Panel. A list of Favorites folders will be displayed. (See Figure to the left.)
2. Select a folder to display saved clips.
3. Select the clip you want played. RealPlayer will either play the clip, or go to the designated location.

See My Favorites on page 31 for more information about playing and saving Favorites.

Sharing Favorites

RealPlayer allows you to share Favorites with other users of RealPlayer. Sharing is accomplished through the use of *Exporting* and *Importing* Favorites.

To Export a Favorite

1. Select **Organize...** from your **Favorites** menu.
2. Click **Export Favorite** or **Export Folder** (depending on what you have selected in the Organize Favorites dialog).
The **Export Favorites** dialog will open.
3. Select a place on your hard disk to save the Favorite or folder of Favorites (also called a Favorites Pack) and give it a name.
4. Click **Save**. The file will be created with an *.RNX extension*.
5. E-mail the file to your friends. (The file should be mailed as a simple text file if you need to designate “file-type” in your mail program.)

Tip

If you want to quickly Export an entire Folder of Favorites, just select **Export foldername** from the **Options** menu on your My Favorites tab (RealPlayer Plus only).

To Import a single Favorite or folder of Favorites (also called a Favorites Pack)

1. Select **Import...** from your Favorites menu.
2. An **Import Favorite** dialog will open.
3. Browse as you would with your Windows Explorer to where your mail program downloads files and select the Favorite to be imported (it will have an *.RNX extension*).
4. Click **Open**.
5. The Favorite will appear in your RealPlayer.

Additional Information

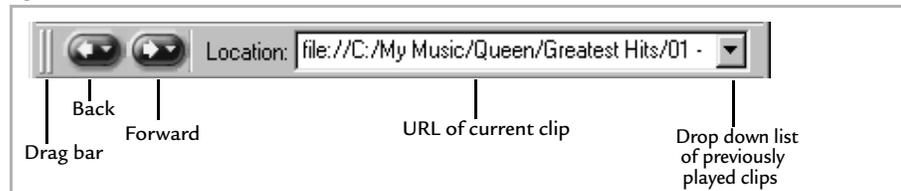
When individual Favorites are imported, folder information is included. If an identical folder already exists, the Favorite is placed there, otherwise the Favorite is placed in a new folder, created with the name of the source folder. Imported Favorites will not overwrite your existing Favorites, even if they have the

same names or folder names. Instead, Favorites will appear in your RealPlayer with identical names, but may connect to different clips.

Location bar

The **Location bar on RealPlayer** displays the *URL* or address of the currently loaded clip, similar to the address bar in your Web browser, and gives you browser-like control of your RealPlayer.

Figure 4-5: Location bar

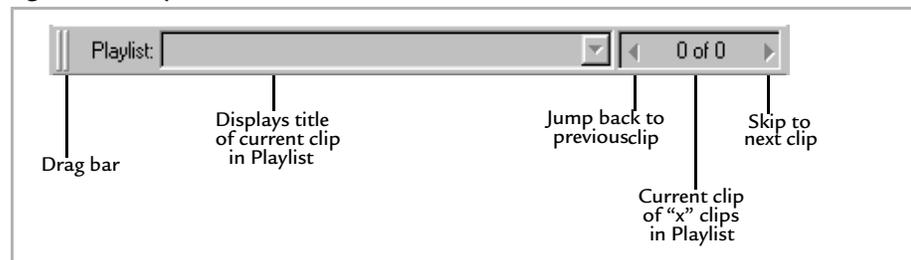


The drop down **Location list** keeps track of the last 20 addresses you enter (type or paste) into your RealPlayer.

The **Back** and **Forward** buttons let you to jump back and forth between the clips you were playing, also similar to your Web browser.

Playlist bar

Figure 4-6: Playlist bar



The **Playlist bar** will open automatically when you are playing a *multi-clip* (a clip that contains other clips in sequence). To open the Playlist bar manually, use the View menu (**View/Playlist**). When the playlist is displayed, the title of the clip currently being played is displayed in the left text box; the number of clips in the playlist and the number of the current clip is indicated in the right text box. A list of the clips is displayed as a pull down menu in the clip title box.

Individual clips can be selected from the list, or with the Jump back and Skip next buttons.

Additional Information

You can create a multi-clip by selecting (drag & drop) any playable files (clips) from a local directory, then dragging and dropping them onto RealPlayer. The clips are then listed in the playlist bar and start to play, one after the other.

Visualizations and Audio Analyzer

Visualizations (PC only)

Figure 4-7: Display Panel with Visualization



Visualizations display audio information in fun visual formats. Click  to toggle the Visualizations on. The Visualization is shown in the Display Panel. You can from several different Visualizations displays. Flip through the available Visualizations by clicking  to go backward or forward through the possibilities.

To change how Visualizations react or look, click  to display the *Visualization Options* display window.

This will give you access to **Fade**, **Rotate**, **Zoom**, **Slide**, and **Blur Type** controls. These options affect how some of the Visualizations behave. An On/Off control  in the Options window will turn on or off all optional effects.

Note

When Visualizations is turned on and a clip is playing, it appears in the Display area. This will override any visual component of the clip you are playing. You can restore the video display by turning the Visualization off.

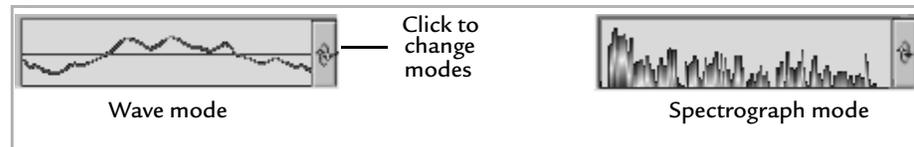
When Visualizations is turned on and a clip is not playing, the Display area is blank.

Why would you want to see what you're hearing? Aside from a visual good time, the Audio Analyzer can help visualize what you are hearing and help you adjust the sound with your Equalizer (RealPlayer Plus only). When you adjust the Equalizer, you will see a corresponding change in the *peaks* and *troughs* on your analyzer.

In addition to the Visualizations that come with RealPlayer, You can download new Visualizations from Real.com. To download these files, go to the **RealPlayer Home Page**, available on the **Favorites/Web Sits** menu. Follow the directions on the web site to install the Visualization files. Once installed, the new Visualization(s) will be immediately available on RealPlayer.

Audio Analyzer (Mac)

Figure 4-8: Audio Analyzer in two different modes



The Audio Analyzer includes the Wave mode and Spectrograph mode (similar to the Spectrograph Visualization in the PC version). To cycle through the different modes, click the **rollbar** on the Analyzer display.

Why would you want to see what you're hearing? Aside from a visual good time, the Audio Analyzer can help visualize what you are hearing and help you adjust the sound with your Equalizer (Plus only). When you adjust the Equalizer, you will see a corresponding change in the *peaks* and *troughs* on your analyzer.

Using the Equalizer and the Analyzer together can be very powerful. The Bar Graph and Spectrograph modes are the best to work with for accurately seeing how your changes in the Equalizer are affecting your sound quality.

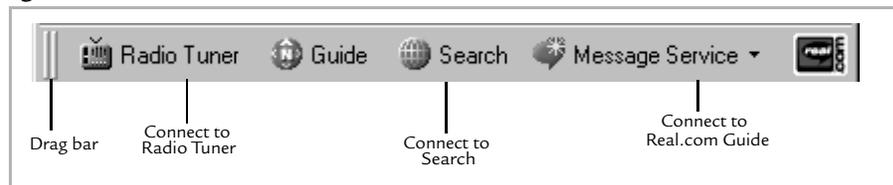
The **Spectrograph mode** indicates the level of each frequency (each narrow band of sound) by showing you a column of light. The Spectrograph displays over 100 frequency bands. The range of frequencies on the equalizer are in the same order as on the Spectrograph, going from Bass to Treble, left to right. Because of this direct relationship, adjustments on the Equalizer will be more obvious in the Spectrograph mode than they will be in Wave mode.

Wave mode does show your frequency range, but in a vertical format to show the frequency change from a zero mark that runs horizontally across the center. Essentially, it shows how high the levels are for each frequency. Reading it does require a little more practice, but if you notice most of the peaks are very high (hitting the top and bottom of the Analyzer), you are probably going to experience clipping and distortion in your sound. Adjusting the frequencies that seem overpowering can correct this problem.

Real.com Media bar

The Real.com Media bar provides links to web sites that organize and access media, information, and services for the RealPlayer.

Figure 4-9: Real.com Media bar



Use these buttons to quickly find media content on the Web:

Radio Tuner gives you an up-to-date listing of available radio and video content by opening a Real.com web page in your browser or, if you have a PC and Internet Explorer V 4.0 or later, in RealPlayer itself.

Search will open a Real.com web page in your browser or, if you have a PC and Internet Explorer V 4.0 or later, in RealPlayer. Follow the instructions on the page to look for clips that interest you. Search will automatically look for audio, video and other media clips that meet your search criteria. Just click on any of the resulting titles to listen to a clip.

Guide will take you directly to the *Real.com Guide*, a comprehensive media hub for free Internet audio and video media and related software. Find media featured on the Internet and play it with one click. Choose from a comprehensive listing of downloadable music, live event calendars, and access to premiere programming. More than 2,000 radio and television stations, 8,000 Web sites and 500 daily live events are offered.

Message Service lets you select, check for, and view messages you received from the Real.com Message Service. (Message Service commands are displayed as a pull down menu.) This is an optional service that you can personalize to send news and information updates to your RealPlayer. Messages are downloaded

automatically, or when the **Check for Real.com Messages** command is selected from the Message Service (see Figure 3-12: Message bar). Messages are displayed when you select the **View Real.com Messages** command. (See “Real.com Message Service” below for more information.)

Real.com takes you directly to the Real.com home page where you can find out about all the latest from RealNetworks.

Real.com Message Service

RealPlayer can keep you informed about events and information in several categories with the Real.com Message Service.

The Real.com Message Service is actually two services delivering different types of information: **Real.com News and Entertainment Flashes** and **Real.com Product Flashes**. You can choose to subscribe to either or both services when you install RealPlayer or change your subscriptions later from the Message Service pull-down menu.

Real.com News and Entertainment Flashes

News and Entertainment Flashes alert you to breaking news and live concert events. You can change your subscription options in your Preferences (see Content Preferences on page 61).

Real.com Product Flashes

Product Flashes deliver **RealPlayer Tips and Tricks** and **Special Offers** from RealNetworks. You can change your subscription options in your Preferences (see Upgrade Preferences on page 63).

How do you know when you have received a Flash?

When you've received a Flash, RealPlayer will let you know in one of two ways:

1. The RealPlayer icon in your Windows System Tray will glimmer (Windows Operating System only). You change how this looks on the appropriate Preferences tab depending on the services you've selected. Click the icon in your Tool Tray to see the new Flash.



The Windows Tool Tray is where you see the time displayed (shown to the left).

2. A Message bar will appear in your RealPlayer (see Figure 3-12: Message bar on page 16). The bar will let you know what sort of Flash you've received. For instance, if you see a light bulb with words such as **RealPlayer Tips and Tricks** after it, you've received a Flash with information about how to use one of the many features of RealPlayer. Just click the Message bar to see the new Flash.

Flashes will not interfere with your listening or viewing experience. You choose when to watch the Flash after it has arrived.

Resizing



RealPlayer is manually resizable. Just hover your mouse over any corner or edge of RealPlayer, click, hold and drag to the size you would like to use.

To return to a specific size, use the **Zoom** control (see Figure 3-9: Display Panel (Mac) on page 14) or the **View/Zoom** menu command to select **Original** or **Double** size.

Note

Macintosh users will be able to resize from the bottom, right corner of their RealPlayer using the familiar single-arrowed cursor.