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AAC+, MP3, FLAC or OGG: audio formats and quality on each streaming panel

VPS & Servers

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<https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/2188>



The short answer: the **format** decides how the sound is compressed; the **quality** (the bitrate, in kbps) decides how much. **SonicPanel** broadcasts in **AAC+, MP3, FLAC and OGG**; **VoxStream** in **AAC+ and MP3**. Maximum quality is set by the plan, whichever panel you use: **128 kbps on Streaming Pro, 192 kbps on Plus, 320 kbps on Ultra**. For the great majority of stations, AAC+ or MP3 is the right choice.

The four formats

Format	On which panel	When it makes sense
AAC+ (HE-AAC)	SonicPanel and VoxStream	Sounds better than MP3 at the same bitrate, especially at low bitrates. Good for people listening on mobile data. Plays on most current phones and browsers; some older players do not.
MP3	SonicPanel and VoxStream	Plays on practically everything: old devices, network speakers, internet radios. Needs a higher bitrate to sound as good as AAC+.
OGG	SonicPanel only	An open format with good sound. But not every device and browser plays it: test on your listeners' devices before using it on its own.
FLAC	SonicPanel only	Lossless: the sound comes out exactly as the original. In return, the bitrate is far higher than any lossy format (uncompressed CD audio is 1411 kbps; FLAC shrinks that without losing anything, but stays well above 320). For an audiophile audience with good connections.

Choosing format and quality

1

Start with your listeners. On mobile data or weak networks, a high bitrate eats your listeners' data and breaks up. As a guide, one hour at 128 kbps is about 58 MB; at 320 kbps, two and a half times that.

2

Voice, news, talk: AAC+ at a low bitrate (64 to 96 kbps) is enough and spares your listeners. If your broadcasting program allows it, send mono.

3

Everyday music: 128 kbps, in MP3 or AAC+, is the usual balance, and it is the Streaming Pro maximum.

4

When quality is your station's selling point: 192 kbps (Plus) or 320 kbps (Ultra). Only worth it if your listeners have good connections.

5

Use the same format for the AutoDJ and for live shows. Live, what goes out is what your broadcasting program sends: set it to the chosen format and keep it within the plan's maximum, or the broadcast may not be accepted.

6

Test on a phone on mobile data and on a computer. Listen to voices and bass, and check it plays on the devices your listeners use.

Raising the quality does not bring back what is already lost. A 128 kbps MP3 file broadcast at 320 kbps still sounds like 128, it just uses more data. And converting from one lossy format to another (MP3 to AAC+, for example) always loses a little. Upload your music at a quality equal to or higher than the broadcast.

FLAC and the plan limit: since FLAC needs far more than 320 kbps, talk to us before planning a FLAC-only station. For most stations, MP3 or AAC+ at 192 or 320 kbps already sounds very good.

Not sure which format and quality to use for your station? Tell us who your listeners are and we will help you choose.

[Open a support ticket](#)

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[SonicPanel or VoxStream: which streaming panel to choose for your radio](#)

[Streaming Server: first steps with SonicPanel](#)

[First steps with VoxStream: signing in and getting your radio on air](#)

[Switching from SonicPanel to VoxStream or back: what changes and what to take](#)

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