

Video To DVD White Paper

Ok – so you have decided to preserve those old videotapes. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to help. There are a few things to be aware of before and after this service. As always, you can email or call us for more information about your specific need but what follows is a good start.

Video Quality

The first thing to consider is the quality of your original tape. Even though the process is a “digital” one the DVD quality can only be as good as your original, and in most cases not quite as good.

While the actual process is a bit more complicated, it involves playing your video through a player and “recording” it or digitizing it to a computer. This is what is called a second-generation copy. It will include all of the dust and scratches that may have damaged your video over time, but isn’t that the reason you are doing this – to put a STOP to the damage and preserve what you have?

Of course once the DVD is created it can now be hand edited, frame-by-frame, to fix many imperfections. This is not one of eLifeNeeds services and it can be extremely costly once you find someone to provide this service.

Also remember that your DVD has a very high quality resolution and in some cases this may make imperfections look worse since it might actually emphasize them. Add to this a large HD TV hooked to your newly acquired DVD player and the little piece of dust becomes some multi-legged monster.

Audio Quality

The same will be true for the sound reproduction of your videotape. The process for the audio is exactly the same as that for the video portion so any variations in sound for the original will become part of the DVD.

From time to time, we have created DVD’s from videotapes that start out at generation one and a half. This means that the original videotape was not used to record original video or sound. Consider the recording of your vacation with music from “Leavin’ On A Jet Plane” playing in the background. The resulting DVD will then be a second and a half generation instead of just a second generation one. eLifeNeeds does provide a service where we will scan your photographs and put them together with “digitized” music that will result in better quality.

Content

There are a few points to consider here. The first is a legal one. Do you own everything on the original videotape? Including the music? We can't, and will not, duplicate copyrighted or copy-protected content from your videotapes. Additionally, since we must do the actual work before we discover illegal content, you will be charged the same price as if we actually performed the work so be sure you own everything.

We also must be on the lookout for inappropriate content and be advised we will involve the proper law enforcement team if we discover such content. At this point your original videotapes and any information we have about you will also be turned over.

Length Of Tapes

Some older videotapes, specifically VHS, at one point had a variable capacity. The "typical" videotape of this type had a name like "T-120" implying 120 minutes of recording time. Some recording devices super-sized the capacity to as much as four hours.

Our pricing structure is based on the typical capacity of 120 minutes so if your videotape is one of the super-sized ones your cost will double as well. There is also another potential issue with the larger capacity involving the type of DVD media that is required.

In general a standard DVD is called a DVD R and will hold 4.7 gigabytes or around 120 minutes of data. This does not mean that your 120 minutes of videotape will fit this media. DVD technology must use part of this media to prepare the DVD for viewing on your player. Not only does our pricing assume the typical size but it also assumes the complete project will fit this size media.

There is another type of DVD media called DVD +RDL, which will hold 8.5 gigabytes or around 240 minutes of data. It's natural to ask why we don't just use this media all the time. The simple reason is that it might not work in your playback device.

Some older computers and players may in fact keep your DVD inside them after they get confused. So what to do? In general we set a limit to the data so it will fit on the typical size DVD. A little preparation from you can also help. If you know the tape has more than the "good" stuff just let us know. You can tell us to capture from 00:00:00.0 to 00:01:29.3 to get just the first one minute and 29.3 seconds of video, tell us to stop at 90 minutes or you can just tell us to stop "after the presents are open".

The DVD's Last Forever Now??

It might surprise you to know that your DVD's do not last forever, even those you buy as commercial movies. It takes just one badly placed scratch to make the entire disk unusable. This is true not only for our DVD's but also any CD's you purchased or created on your own – including back-ups.

We do not keep your digitized data on file once the DVD is created. For a small additional charge we can create a digital file in MPEG, or movie, format that you can copy to your computer. Yes your hard drive can fail and unless you have backed up the data it will disappear too.

We can help if either the DVD goes bad or your computer gets forgetful but even we are not good enough if both fail. Our DVD creation service can be from a videotape, one of our DVD's or from an MPEG file that you saved. Just let us know how we can help.

Why Are There No Labels On The DVD??

No, we didn't forget to put them on – in fact we don't suggest using any kind of label or direct printing on the DVD itself. There are two basic types of labeling systems; one involves a kind of sticky label and the other prints directly on the DVD. Remember our discussion about damaging the DVD? Using either of these methods can start the damage.

The sticky solution looks nice for a while but as soon as it peels it's a goner and you have a nice Frisbee. The printing solution either uses ink or scribes into the media, both of which starts the DVD on the road to Frisbee land.

Instead we use three methods to identify your DVD. The first is a cover that is in the jewel case. It can contain any information you want on it; typically this is a title, a year and the estimated playing time. We also include a title screen as part of the DVD that plays before your movie. This too can have some customization. The last is a title for the DVD itself, which can be seen on a computer that reads DVD's.

What Is The "HooDad" On The Cover??

It is called a QR, or Quick Response, code. It is used by phones with cameras, SmartPhones and QR-readers and you can think of it as a quick way for those devices to get to our web page at eLifeNeeds.com. It originated with a Toyota subsidiary and was used to track parts.