

MP3, MP2 & The Legacy You'll Still See — Cheat Sheet

What MP3 and MP2 are, why MP2 still runs broadcast, and when each is acceptable in 2026.

Fast facts

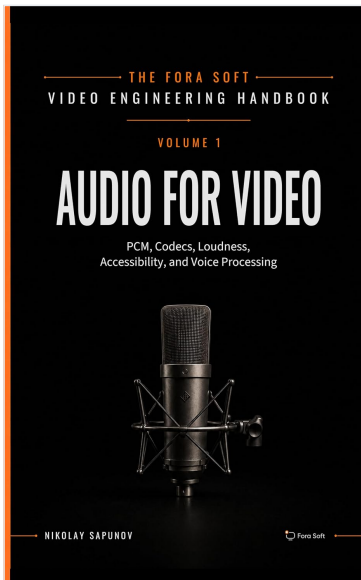
What they are	Two layers of ONE 1993 standard, ISO/IEC 11172-3. MP2 = Layer II, MP3 = Layer III.
MP3 won on	File size: ~11x smaller than CD PCM (1,411 kbps to 128 kbps).
MP2 survives in	UK DAB radio, DVB TV audio, professional broadcast contribution links.
MP2's edge	Low encoder latency + error resilience, not compression.
MP3 patents	Core program ended 23 Apr 2017. Baseline encode/decode is royalty-free.
For new builds	Use AAC (streaming) or Opus (real-time). Both beat MP3 per kilobit.

Should you use MP3 / MP2?

Situation	Verdict
New streaming / OTT audio	No - use AAC-LC
New WebRTC / real-time voice	No - use Opus
Max compatibility, very old devices	MP3, only if needed
UK DAB radio, DVB-T TV audio	MP2 - mandated
Broadcast contribution link	MP2 by convention
Decoding files you receive	Yes - then transcode

Read it this way

MP2 and MP3 are siblings, not generations - one 1993 standard, two layers. MP3 trades latency and robustness for small files; MP2 does the opposite. Always read the codec field in the container, never trust the file extension.



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Audio for Video: A Complete Guide to Sound in Video Products

From PCM and Codecs to Loudness, Accessibility, and Real-Time Voice Processing

By Nikolay Sapunov, CEO at Fora Soft · 1,229 pages · Kindle & paperback on Amazon

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This sheet tells you when MP3 and MP2 are still acceptable and when to move on. Volume 4 covers the codec choices around them in depth: PCM and sampling, perceptual coding, AAC and Opus behaviour at real bitrates, loudness targets and what broadcast still mandates.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- Perceptual coding from MP2 and MP3 to AAC
- AAC-LC versus Opus for streaming and real time
- PCM, sampling rate and bit depth basics
- Loudness targets for broadcast and streaming

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