How to get gapless playback on your phone

The gap between tracks is in the file, not the phone. The sourced numbers behind MP3 padding, and the formats and settings that give you seamless albums.

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A gap between tracks is a property of the file, not of your phone. MP3 and AAC decoders insert 528 silent samples at the start of every file, while FLAC, ALAC and Opus record the exact sample count instead. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless is a free offline player for iPhone and Android that reads that count and plays an album as one continuous take.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops FLAC Player Offline: Gapless. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

The fix has two halves: keep your music in a format that stores its own length, and use a player that respects it. Below: where the silence comes from, which formats are sample-exact, and how to set it up. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless is free on the App Store and Google Play.

Why is there a gap between songs on your phone?

Because lossy encoders cannot describe an arbitrary number of samples. An MP3 frame holds exactly 1152 samples, so if a track is not an exact multiple of 1152, the encoder pads the last frame with zeros to fill it. The LAME project, which wrote the most widely used MP3 encoder, documents this in its technical FAQ: every decoder it tested also introduces a delay of 528 samples at the start of a file, and a WAV file that is encoded and then decoded comes back with a 1056-sample delay.

At the 44.1 kHz sample rate of a CD rip, one second is 44,100 samples, so 528 samples is about 12 milliseconds of added silence and a zero-padded final frame is up to 26 milliseconds more. That is inaudible between two unrelated pop songs and brutally obvious halfway through a live set or a beat-matched mix, which is why the complaint almost always comes from people with concept albums, classical recordings or DJ sets in their library.

What does gapless playback actually mean?

Gapless playback means the first sample of the next track reaches the output immediately after the last sample of the current one, with nothing inserted and nothing trimmed by accident. It is not crossfade. Crossfade hides a seam by overlapping two tracks and lowering the volume of both; gapless removes the seam, and the two settings solve opposite problems.

Three things have to line up. The file has to state how many samples it contains, the decoder has to discard the encoder's padding rather than play it, and the player has to have the next track decoded and queued before the current one ends. A player that opens the next file only after the previous one has finished will always produce a short silence, however good the format is.

Does the file format decide whether your albums play gapless?

Largely, yes. FLAC is specified in IETF RFC 9639, which sets a minimum block size of 16 samples and a maximum of 65,535, and then makes one exception that matters here: the last block may be smaller than 16 samples, specifically so the file can match the length of the encoded audio without using padding. A FLAC file therefore ends where the music ends. Its STREAMINFO header also carries the total number of samples in a 36-bit field and a 128-bit checksum of the original audio.

Opus solves the same problem differently. RFC 7845 puts a pre-skip field in the stream header listing the samples a player should decode and then throw away, recommends at least 3,840 samples of pre-skip when cropping a stream, and defines the real playback position as the granule position minus that pre-skip. MP3 and AAC can be made gapless too, but only if the encoder wrote the delay and padding into a tag and the player reads it, which is one more thing to go wrong.

How do you get gapless playback on iPhone and Android?

Start with the files. Rip or convert your albums to FLAC or ALAC rather than MP3, keep each album in its own folder, and import the folder as a unit so the track order survives. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless imports whole folders and keeps their structure, and its Wi-Fi transfer sends music from a computer straight into the app through a browser, which avoids the re-encoding that a sync tool can impose. It is free on iPhone and Android, and its own store listing promises:

> Gapless playback that actually works, for live albums, concept albums and DJ sets

On Android the groundwork is in the platform itself. The MediaPlayer reference has carried a setNextMediaPlayer method since API level 16, documented as transitioning from one player to the next as seamlessly as possible, and it exists precisely because handing over at the end of a track is the hard part. On iPhone, where the system music app will not import FLAC at all, the work has to be done by the player you install. Then check two settings: gapless on, and crossfade off inside albums, because crossfade will happily undo what you just set up.

Which player should you actually use?

Choose foobar2000 if you want the widest format support

- Free, from Resolute, updated to version 2.26 on 17 October 2026, with 209 App Store ratings averaging 4.5. It is on both the App Store and Google Play.
- Its listing names gapless playback alongside WavPack and Musepack, ReplayGain volume levelling and playback from UPnP servers. If your library has formats other players have never heard of, this is the one that opens them.

Choose VLC media player if one app has to play everything

- Free, from VideoLAN, version 3.7.3 as of 24 April 2026, with 5,988 ratings averaging 3.7, on both stores. It plays video and audio in most formats without conversion and streams from SMB, FTP and DLNA servers.
- Its App Store description does not mention gapless playback, so if seamless album transitions are the reason you are reading this, treat that silence as the answer and test it with your own files before committing a library to it.

Choose Doppler if the interface matters most

- From Brushed Type Ltd, version 3.2, last updated on 3 October 2025, with 1,590 ratings averaging 4.6. It is an iPhone and Mac app; there is no Google Play listing for it.
- It imports music and playlists for offline listening and lets you edit song details and artwork on the device without syncing. The trade-off is platform: an Android phone rules it out entirely.

Choose FLAC Player Offline: Gapless if you want gapless and nothing else in the way

- Free on both stores, no ads, no subscription and no account, with eight formats including FLAC, ALAC, WAV and Opus, a 10-band equalizer and M3U playlist import.
- Gapless inside an album and crossfade between albums are separate settings rather than one compromise, and the whole library stays on the device.

When is a gapless player the wrong fix?

When the silence is already in the file. If your only copy of an album is an MP3 rip made without gapless tags, the samples the encoder trimmed are gone, and converting those MP3s to FLAC preserves the gap instead of removing it. Re-rip from the original disc or buy a lossless download; no player can recover audio that was never written.

It is also the wrong tool if your music lives on a streaming service, because a local-files player has nothing to play. And if the album was mastered with real silence between tracks, that silence is the artist's decision, and a gapless player will reproduce it exactly as intended.

Frequently asked questions about gapless playback

Is gapless playback the same as crossfade?

No, and they work against each other. Crossfade overlaps the end of one track with the start of the next and fades both, which is audible by design. Gapless inserts nothing at all. Leave crossfade off inside an album.

Will converting my MP3s to FLAC remove the gaps?

No. Conversion copies what the MP3 contains, including the 528-sample decoder delay and any zero padding in the final frame. FLAC then stores that silence losslessly. Re-rip from the original disc to get a clean file.

Does the built-in music app on my phone play my own files gapless?

It depends on the file. The iPhone system music app will not import FLAC at all, which is why most lossless libraries need a third-party player. Android varies by manufacturer, so test one album before trusting the setting.

Do I need lossless files for gapless playback?

Not strictly. Opus carries a pre-skip field in its header, so it is sample-exact without being lossless. Lossless formats are simply the safest choice, because FLAC and ALAC record the exact length with no padding to undo.

Why do live albums and DJ sets suffer the most?

Because the music crosses the track boundary. A 12-millisecond silence between two pop songs is inaudible, but the same silence inside a continuous crowd recording or a beat-matched mix breaks the rhythm you are hearing.

Does Bluetooth add a gap of its own?

Bluetooth adds latency, which delays everything equally and is not a gap between tracks. If you hear silence at every track change over Bluetooth but not over a cable, the cause is the player or the file, not the radio.

Does FLAC Player Offline: Gapless need an internet connection?

No. It plays files already on the device and its listing states that it never needs a connection, with no ads, no subscription and no account. That also means it cannot stream from a music service, which is the trade-off.

How do I get my music into the app in the first place?

Three ways: Wi-Fi transfer from a computer through a browser, importing whole folders so an

album stays an album, or the Files app on iPhone and Finder on a Mac. Folder import is the one that protects track order.

Get the formats right, then the player: rip to FLAC or ALAC, import by folder, switch gapless on and crossfade off. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless is free on the App Store and Google Play, and plays your own files with no account and no connection.

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