How Do You Play FLAC Files on an iPhone Without Converting Them?

iOS decodes FLAC natively, but the Music app refuses to import it. Here is why, and how to play your FLAC library without converting a single file.

Author: Lubor Šimůnek · Published: August 19, 2026 · Productivity

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FLAC Player Offline: Gapless is a free offline music player for iPhone and Android that plays FLAC, ALAC, WAV, OPUS, OGG and MP3 from your own files, with true gapless playback and a 10-band equaliser. It is 38 MB, needs iOS 13 or later, and works with no account, no subscription and no internet connection.

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

Can an iPhone play FLAC at all?

Yes. Apple lists FLAC directly in the iPhone technical specifications: under Audio Playback, the iPhone 16 specification sheet names FLAC alongside AAC, MP3 and Apple Lossless. The hardware is not the obstacle, and converting your library is not the answer most guides claim it is.

The obstacle is the Music app. iOS can decode a FLAC file, but the Music app will not accept one into your library, which is why a FLAC album copied to an iPhone appears to vanish.

Why won't the Music app import your FLAC files?

Apple's library format is built around AAC and Apple Lossless, and the Music app only indexes what it can sync through that pipeline. A FLAC file in the Files app plays when you

tap it, but never reaches the library: no album view, no artist grouping, no lock-screen controls.

That gap is the entire reason dedicated players exist on iOS. A third-party player keeps its own library index, so it shows your FLAC albums the way the Music app shows AAC ones. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless stores that index on the device.

FLAC Player Offline: Gapless on the App Store handles the import step directly, so nothing has to pass through the Music app.

Do you need to convert FLAC to ALAC first?

No, and converting costs you something real. Both formats are lossless, so conversion does not damage the audio, but it rewrites every file and frequently drops non-standard tags, embedded cue sheets and multi-channel layouts. The official FLAC FAQ notes the format supports 1 to 8 channels per stream and 4 to 32 bits per sample — range a careless conversion can flatten.

Playing the original avoids all of it. If your collection came from CD rips or a Bandcamp download, the FLAC you already have is the copy worth keeping.

How do you get FLAC files onto an iPhone?

Three routes work, in ascending order of convenience.

1. **Files app.** Copy the folder into On My iPhone, then point the player at it. No cable, no computer software.
2. **Wi-Fi transfer.** FLAC Player Offline: Gapless opens a small local web server; you drag files from a computer browser straight into the app on the same network.
3. **Cloud folder.** Sync a folder from iCloud Drive, Dropbox or a NAS into the Files app, then import from there.

Whichever route you use, the files stay on the device. There is no re-download when you go offline, which matters on a plane or on a metered roaming plan.

What about FLAC on Android?

Android has decoded FLAC far longer than iOS. Google's supported media formats documentation shows FLAC decoding since Android 3.1. The catch: the platform decoder is documented as mono or stereo only, up to 48 kHz, 16-bit recommended. A 24-bit 96 kHz album is not handled at full resolution by it.

A player that ships its own decoder is not bound by that table, which is why hi-res collections behave differently between two Android apps on the same phone.

FLAC Player Offline: Gapless on Google Play reads the same folders and playlists as the iOS build.

Why does gapless playback break on so many players?

Gapless matters on live albums, DJ mixes and classical movements. It breaks because most players decode one track, stop, then start the next, and the encoder's padding shows up as a fraction of a second of silence at the seam.

Doing it properly means pre-buffering the next track and trimming the encoder delay before the current one ends. In FLAC Player Offline: Gapless, crossfade and gapless are separate settings rather than one substituting for the other.

> Your music. Your files. No internet, no ads, no subscription.

That line is the app's own App Store description, and it summarises the trade: nothing for streaming catalogues, everything for files you already own.

Which FLAC player should you actually use?

Three alternatives are worth naming, each winning a case the others do not. Versions below were checked on the United States App Store on 18 August 2026.

Choose foobar2000 if you want a free, format-obsessive player

- Published by Illustrate Limited, free, version 2.25.8, last updated 25 July 2026.
- Handles a very broad format list and mirrors the desktop application. The interface is deliberately spartan — a feature to some, a wall to others.

Choose Doppler MP3 & FLAC Player if library curation is the point

- Published by Brushed Type Ltd, free to download, version 3.2, last updated 3 October 2025.
- Strong metadata editing and album management. That release date is close to a year old, so check the listing before committing a large library.

Choose VLC media player if you also have video files

- Published by VideoLAN, free, version 3.7.3, last updated 24 April 2026.
- Plays effectively anything, including video — a reasonable single-app answer for a mixed media folder. It is a media player first, so album browsing is thinner.

Choose FLAC Player Offline: Gapless if offline and gapless are the priorities

- Free, 38 MB, iOS 13 or later, and available on Android from the same folders and playlists.
- Six formats out of the box: MP3, FLAC, ALAC, WAV, OPUS and OGG.
- Gapless and crossfade as separate settings, a 10-band equaliser with ReplayGain levelling, Wi-Fi transfer, M3U playlist import and export, CarPlay and a sleep timer.
- No account, no subscription, no analytics — the library index never leaves the device.

When is FLAC Player Offline: Gapless the wrong choice?

It is a local-files player and nothing else, so it is wrong in several real situations.

- If your music lives in Spotify, Apple Music or YouTube Music, this app cannot reach it. It plays files you own, not catalogues you rent.
- If your library sits on a NAS and you want to stream it rather than copy it, a NAS-oriented client fits better.
- If you are on iOS 12 or earlier, the minimum requirement of iOS 13 rules it out.
- The app is at version 1.0, released on 27 July 2026, so it has a shorter track record than players that have shipped for a decade.

If those limits do not apply to you, install it on iPhone or install it on Android and point it at the folder your music already lives in.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is FLAC Player Offline: Gapless free?

Yes. FLAC Player Offline: Gapless is free to download on both the App Store and Google Play, with no subscription, no advertising and no account requirement. There is nothing to unlock before you can play a full album, and the equaliser, gapless playback and Wi-Fi transfer are all included in the free download.

Does it work without an internet connection?

Yes, completely. The player reads files stored on the device and never contacts a server to play them, so it works in aeroplane mode, in a basement or abroad without roaming data. The only step that uses a network is the optional Wi-Fi transfer feature, which runs on your local network rather than the internet.

Which audio formats does it play?

Six: MP3, FLAC, ALAC, WAV, OPUS and OGG. That covers CD rips in FLAC, iTunes-era purchases in ALAC, older MP3 collections and Bandcamp downloads. Lossless files are decoded at their original resolution rather than being downsampled first, which is the point of keeping them in FLAC in the first place.

Do I have to convert my FLAC files to play them on an iPhone?

No. iOS decodes FLAC natively and Apple lists the format in the iPhone technical specifications. What iOS will not do is add FLAC files to the Music app library, so you need a player that keeps its own index. Converting to ALAC works too, but it rewrites every file and can lose non-standard tags.

What is gapless playback and why does it matter?

Gapless playback removes the fraction of a second of silence that appears between tracks when a player stops decoding one file before starting the next. It matters on live recordings, DJ mixes, concept albums and classical works where movements run together. Without it, a continuous album is broken into audible chunks.

Can I transfer music from my computer without iTunes?

Yes. The app runs a small web server on your local network, so you open the address it shows in a browser on your computer and drag files across. Nothing is uploaded to the internet, and no desktop software or cable is required. Copying folders through the Files app also works.

Does it support hi-res 24-bit files?

FLAC itself supports resolutions between 4 and 32 bits per sample according to the official FLAC FAQ, and the player decodes files at their stored resolution. Actual output depends on your hardware: Android's system decoder is documented as mono or stereo up to 48 kHz, so a dedicated decoder matters more on Android than on iOS.

Does the app collect any data about my library?

No. The library index, playlists and play counts are stored on the device, and the App Store description states plainly that the files never leave it. There is no account to create, so there is no profile to associate listening with, and no analytics call is made during playback.

How large is the app and what does it require?

The iOS build is 38 MB and requires iOS 13 or later; an Android build is available from the same developer listing. Your music files sit outside the app bundle, so the storage that actually matters is the size of your library rather than the size of the download.

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