

The Kindle Fire

PocketGuide



Scott McNulty

Ginormous knowledge, pocket-sized.

The Kindle Fire PocketGuide

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**Peachpit
Press**

The Kindle Fire Pocket Guide

Scott McNulty

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*For all the people who dream impossible things
and share them with the rest of us.*

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As always, though many people helped to make this book a reality, any errors are mine alone.

About the Author

Scott McNulty owns more Kindles than is entirely sensible. Author of *The Kindle Pocket Guide*, devoted to the second-generation Kindle, he is known for his in-depth knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the Kindle platform. Scott lives in Philadelphia with his wife, Marisa. By day he works at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and by night he blogs about whatever strikes his fancy at <http://blog.blankbaby.com>. He has also been known to tweet once or twice under the handle @blankbaby.

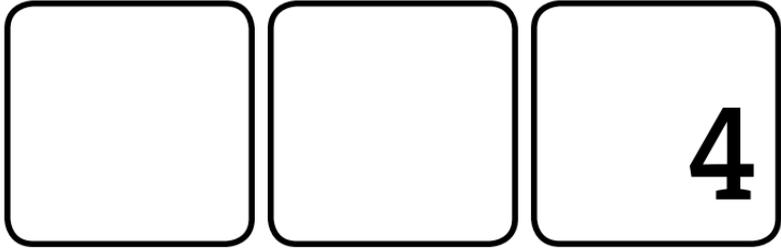
Contents

Chapter 1: Meet the Kindle Fire	1
A Tablet by Any Other Name	6
Touching Fire	7
Your First Kindle Fire Moments	9
Firing Up Your Fire for the First Time	13
The Kindle Fire Home Screen	20
<i>Status Bar</i>	21
<i>Search</i>	32
<i>Navigation Bar</i>	34
<i>Carousel</i>	36
<i>Favorites</i>	38
Options Bar	41
Lock Screen	42
Accessing the Cloud	43
Browsing with Silk and the Cloud	45
Managing Your Kindle Fire	47
Deregistering Your Fire	47
Resetting to Factory Defaults	51
Securing Your Fire	52
Chapter 2: Newsstand	55
Newsstand 101	56
Reading	59
Page View	61
Text View	65

Searching	66
The Store	68
Kindle Fire	68
Amazon.com	73
Canceling Subscriptions	75
Privacy Settings	76
Chapter 3: Books	79
Books Library	80
Reading	82
Navigation	87
Appearance	90
Store	91
Children's Books	94
Graphic Novels	96
Kindle Owners' Lending Library	97
From Amazon.com	98
Chapter 4: Music	101
Getting to Your Music	102
Playlists	104
Playing Music	107
Adding Music to Your Fire	113
Cloud Drive	113
<i>Uploading Your Own Music to Your Cloud Drive</i>	115
Transfer Your Own Music	119
Buying Music on the Fire	120

Chapter 5: Video	123
Video Store	124
Prime Instant Videos	125
<i>Prime Instant Video Movies</i>	125
<i>Prime Instant Video TV Shows</i>	128
Renting and Purchasing	130
Library	133
Watching a Video	134
Playing Your Own Videos	135
Chapter 6: Docs	137
Kindle Personal Documents Service	138
The Setup	138
E-mailing Your Documents	140
USB	142
Using Docs	143
Chapter 7: Apps	145
Built-in Apps	146
Email App	148
Viewing and Reading E-mails	149
Composing E-mails	151
Getting Apps	152
Amazon.com	153
Fire	156
Sideloading	163
Managing Your Apps	165

Chapter 8: Web	167
Browsing the Web	168
Setting Bookmarks	172
Silk Settings	174
Index	177



Music

Given that the Kindle Fire has a relatively low amount of onboard memory (about 6GB), you might be tempted to think that it isn't a great music device. Most of us have rather large digital music collections (I have something like 18,000 tracks stored on 86GB of hard drive space on my computer), and only a tiny chunk of a large collection can fit on a Fire. Although that is true of on-device storage, let's not forget about the cloud. You can use Amazon's cloud services to give your Fire an unlimited capacity for music (as long as you have an Internet connection).

This chapter will cover the music interface and all the ways to get music onto your Fire, as well as what to do with it when it is there.

Getting to Your Music

Tap Music on the navigation bar to enter the Music library on the Fire (Figure 4.1). At the top you'll see the top navigation of the Music library: Music, your two libraries (Cloud/Device), and a Store button. Music, your two libraries (Cloud/Device), and a Store button.

Figure 4.1
The Kindle Fire Music Cloud library

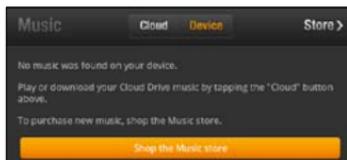


By default, your Cloud library is displayed. Tap Device to see your local library, though if you don't have any music stored on your Kindle Fire, you'll see an alert telling you that there isn't any music on your device and why not tap the big orange button to buy some from Amazon? (Figure 4.2). Tapping the "Shop the Music store" button takes you to the Fire music store (more on that in a bit).

When you have music in either of your libraries, the interface is identical despite that the music is stored in different places.

Figure 4.2

If your on-device library is empty, Amazon suggests you buy some music.

**note**

Don't forget that you must have an Internet connection to listen to any music from your Cloud library. Music in your Device library can be listened to whether or not you're connected to the Internet.

Under the main navigation are the four different sections of your music library:

- **Playlists:** Playlists on your Fire are just like playlists on every other media player. They are lists of songs you create. The neat thing, though, is when you create a playlist in your Cloud library, it is available in the Amazon Cloud Player for the Web.
- **Artists:** This is a scrolling list of all the artists in your Music library along with the number of albums and songs from that artist.
- **Albums:** This is a scrolling list of your albums with the album cover to the left, the name of the album in white text, and the number of songs on the album.
- **Songs:** The final section of your Music library is Songs, the basic building block of any Music library. This list, much like the Albums list, shows the album cover, the name of the song, the artist, and one additional piece of information: the song's duration.

Your music is also searchable. Just tap the search button in the options bar, and the Search box appears. You cannot search across all your music in both libraries, Cloud and Device, at once. If you want to search both libraries, you'll have to search one and then the other.

Each section of the Music library (Playlists, Artists, Albums, and Songs) has its own search results format. If you search the Albums section, albums are returned with album cover art. If you search for artists, the artists and the number of albums and songs you have belonging to them are returned.

Playlists

You can create a new playlist right on your Fire. Tap Playlists > Create new playlist. Type in your playlist's name in the "Create new playlist" pop-up and tap Save (Figure 4.3). Next add some music to your playlist by scrolling through your songs and tapping the plus button next to the songs you want to add (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3

Name your new playlist something that makes sense given what songs you plan on adding to it.

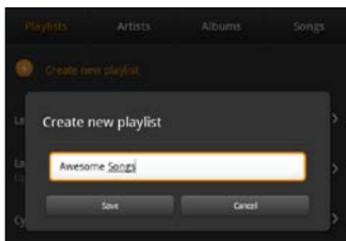
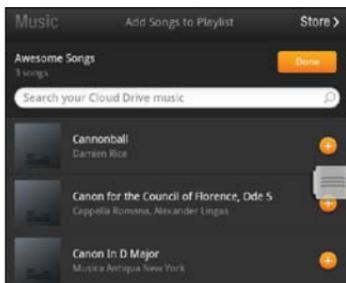


Figure 4.4

Tap the plus icon to add songs to your playlist.



This isn't the most efficient method of looking for particular songs. Tap the Search box at the top of the Add Songs to Playlist screen and type the name of a song, artist, or album. The results will be displayed, and you can tap the plus sign to add songs to your playlist.

tip As you scroll down a particularly long list in your Music library, a sort of slider appears on the right of the screen (Figure 4.5). You can use this slider to quickly scroll through the list. Put your finger on the slider and slide down/up, and you'll see the list zip by.

Figure 4.5

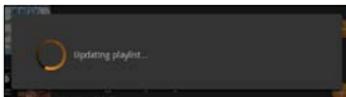
This little tab appears while you're scrolling. Press your finger against it, and you'll scroll through a long list in no time.



Tap the Done button, and your Fire displays an “Updating playlist” message as it creates your playlist (Figure 4.6). Once the playlist is created, it is displayed so you can either play the songs or edit it by tapping the Edit button to add/remove songs.

Figure 4.6

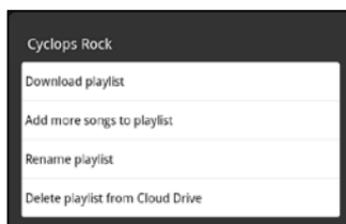
Tap Done, and the playlist is saved.



Now that you have a new playlist, you can do some cool things to it. In the playlist list, long tap a playlist, and the contextual menu appears with some options (**Figure 4.7**):

Figure 4.7

The playlist's contextual menu allows you to download it to your device, among other things.



- **Download playlist:** If you know you won't have Wi-Fi access but you really want to listen to some of your sweet playlists, you can download the playlist, and all the songs that it contains, to your device. This option appears only on playlists in the Cloud library.
- **Add more songs to playlist:** I just covered how to create a playlist. If you have an existing playlist and want to add more songs to it, tap this option, and you'll be taken to the Add Songs screen (shown in Figure 4.4).
- **Rename playlist:** Not happy with the name of your playlist? You can change it by tapping this option, typing a new name, and then saving it.
- **Delete playlist from Cloud Drive or device:** Want to get rid of the playlist? Tap this and the playlist is gone, but the music on the playlist is still in your Music library.



When you play songs from a playlist, the playlist appears on the home screen's Carousel. Long tap the playlist's icon to add it to your Favorites. This trick works for the special playlists as well.

Special Playlists

You can delete or modify all the playlists you create on your Fire, but there are some playlists that are automatically generated. In your Cloud library you'll see two playlists that allow you to download only the songs they contain; you can't rename them or delete them. Latest Purchases and Latest Uploads list exactly what you think they do, but here's the clever part: You don't add songs to them manually but rather by your actions.

When you upload songs to your Amazon Cloud Player (more on this in the "Adding Music to Your Fire" section), they are added to the Latest Uploads list automatically. When you purchase songs/albums from the Amazon MP3 store (either on the device or via Amazon.com) and add them to your Cloud Drive, they appear on the Latest Purchases playlist.

The Device library contains one special playlist, Latest Additions, which lists all the songs/albums recently added to the device.

Playing Music

Now that you know how to get around your Music library, it is time to play some music (if you don't have any music available in either your Cloud or Device library, check the "Adding Music to Your Fire" section to find out how to get your tunes loaded).

No matter what section of your library you're in (Playlists, Artists, Albums, or Songs), playing some music is easy. Tap the playlist, artist, album, or song you want to play. Once it is done loading, the song starts playing

(Figure 4.8). The Now Playing screen is shown with a big image of the album art, if available, displayed. Above the album art some information is displayed, from left to right:

Figure 4.8

The Now Playing screen displays the album art of the currently playing song, as well as the playback controls.



- *A number x of y:* This designates the song's position in the currently playing playlist where x is its position and y is the total number of songs on the playlist. Obviously, when you're playing a song from a playlist, y will be the number of songs on the playlist. When you're playing an album, it'll be the total number of tracks on the album. Interestingly, when you just play a random song from your library by tapping it from the Songs list, this number is still displayed. That's because your Fire queues up to 2,000 songs when you play a particular song. This queue allows the Fire to prefetch the next song on the list, which is particularly useful when you're playing from your Cloud library. Prefetching the song ensures you have a smooth streaming experience.

If you have fewer than 2,000 songs in your library, you will display your total number of songs.

- **Song Scroll:** Next you'll see the name of the song displayed in large white type with the album and artist displayed underneath. If one part of this information doesn't fit into the allotted space, it'll scroll so you can read the whole thing.
- **List view:** Tapping this icon will bring you to a list of all the songs on either the Now Playing queue, the playlist you're playing, or the rest of the songs on the album you're enjoying. You can tap any song on this list to play it instead of whatever is currently playing.

Beneath the album art is a slider showing how long you've been listening to the song, your current position, and how much time is left. You can scrub the track by pressing your finger on the slide control and sliding back and forward.

Directly under that slider are some familiar play controls:

- **Shuffle:** Tap this icon to shuffle the songs and play them random order; tap again to play the playlist/album/queue in order. When active, this icon turns orange.
- **Play controls:** The Back, Play, and Forward buttons are so ubiquitous that you certainly know what to do with them.
- **Repeat:** If you want to repeat the entire contents of a playlist/album/queue, tap this icon once. Tapping it twice will repeat the currently playing song over and over again (something I like to do on occasion) (**Figure 4.9**). Tap again to stop repeating.



Figure 4.9 The repeat button can be used to repeat a playlist or a single song over and over again.

Finally, there is a volume slider that you can use to turn the music up, though keep in mind that just like the volume slider in the Quick Settings (Gear icon), it controls the system volume of your Fire, so everything will be louder, not just your music.

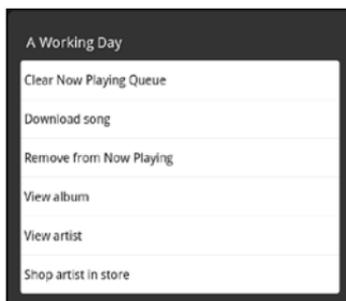
note

When you turn your Fire on its side, the play controls are displayed in landscape mode.

When you long tap the album art of the currently playing song, a contextual menu appears with a number of choices (**Figure 4.10**):

Figure 4.10

Long tapping the currently playing song brings up this contextual menu.



- **Clear Now Playing Queue:** Tap this to clear all the songs from the queue. This will force your Fire to re-create the queue and play songs in a new randomized order (if you have shuffle on).
- **Download song:** Available only when you're playing a song from your Cloud library, this will download the song to your Fire.
- **Remove from Now Playing:** If you don't want the song to be in the Now Playing queue, tap this button. When you hit the previous button, the song you remove won't play, but rather the song that played before it will.

- *View album:* View all the tracks on the currently playing song's album.
- *View artist:* View everything by the currently playing song's artist.
- *Shop artist in store:* Want to see what else the singer/group of this track has for sale? Tap this, and a search for the artist will take place in the Fire Music store.

tip

You can also clear the Now Playing queue by tapping the options menu and then tapping “Clear queue.”

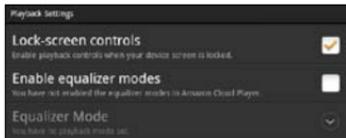
As a song is playing, you can leave the Now Playing screen, and the music will continue to play. Tap the Library button to go back to exploring your Music library, or tap the Store button to shop for some new music. As long as you are in the Music section, a mini-player appears at the bottom of the screen displaying the currently playing track and play controls (Figure 4.11). You should be aware of some playback settings. Tap the menu icon in the options bar and then Settings (Figure 4.12). You're interested in the Playback Settings section, which includes three items: Lock-screen controls, Enable equalizer modes, and Equalizer Mode.

Figure 4.11

Mini playback controls appear at the bottom of the Music library when a song is playing.

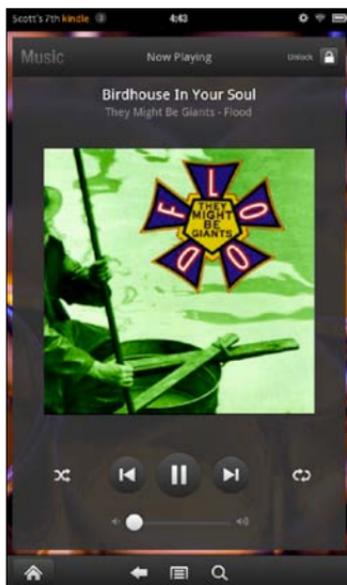
**Figure 4.12**

Playback settings accessible from the menu icon in the options bar



Selecting “Lock-screen controls” allows you to pause, skip, and change the volume of the currently playing track right from the lock screen (Figure 4.13). When enabled (by tapping the checkbox), you’ll be able to access the controls in Figure 4.13 when you unlock your Fire and a song is playing.

Figure 4.13
With lock-screen controls enabled, you can control your music without having to navigate to the Music library.



This is great if you want to change the song and then lock your Fire again. If you want to actually unlock your Fire to use it, tap the Unlock icon in the upper-right corner of the Now Playing window. This does add an extra step to unlocking when a song is playing, so be sure to keep that in mind when enabling lock-screen controls (tap to clear the checkbox and disable lock-screen controls).

An equalizer tweaks the sound coming from your Fire to better re-create the “actual” sound of music. By default equalizer modes are disabled, but

you can enable them by tapping “Enable equalizer modes.” The Equalizer Mode list then becomes available. Tap it to see the full list of equalizers you can apply to your music (**Figure 4.14**). Tap one to apply it, but keep in mind that this is a global setting. The mode will be applied to all the music you play here. You can always change it to another mode, if you like, but per-song/album equalizer settings are not available.

Figure 4.14
Equalizer mode offers up a number of equalizers to tweak the sound of music playback.



Adding Music to Your Fire

You can add music to your Fire in three ways: upload it from your computer to your Amazon Cloud Drive by using the Amazon Cloud Player, transfer it to your Fire using the Fire’s USB mode, or buy it from the MP3 store on the Fire.

This section discusses each method.

Cloud Drive

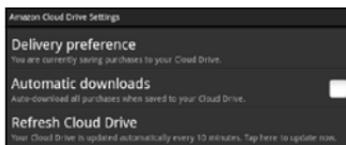
I mentioned Amazon’s Cloud Drive and Cloud Player in the first chapter of this book because they are both important to the Fire. Here’s a refresher: Amazon gives anyone with an Amazon account (that’s you) 5GB of free storage space on its servers. You can store whatever you like using this storage: documents, music, or videos. Once you’ve uploaded your files to your Cloud Drive, you’re able to access them with a web

interface. In addition, Amazon will store any music you buy from the Amazon MP3 store in your Cloud Drive for free. This music doesn't take up any of the storage space, so you will still have 5GB of storage even if you purchase 8GB of music from Amazon. For more information about Cloud Drive, check out <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/learnmore>.

Amazon Cloud Player allows you to play all those songs stored on your Cloud Drive on a variety of devices through your web browser (www.amazon.com/cloudplayer), on an Android-powered smartphone, and on the Kindle Fire. This is where all the music in the Cloud library on your Fire comes from.

To automatically add any music you buy from Amazon (on either your Kindle or Amazon.com's MP3 store) to your Music library, tap the menu icon in the options bar and select Settings. There is a whole section called Amazon Cloud Drive Settings (**Figure 4.15**). Tap "Delivery preference" to set either "Save purchases to your Cloud Drive" or "Save purchases to this device." I suggest making use of the free Amazon Cloud Drive storage to save the storage space on your Fire.

Figure 4.15
Amazon Cloud Drive settings allow you to save all your Amazon MP3 purchases to the cloud.



If you want to have your cake and eat it too, tap "Automatic downloads" to have the music saved to your Cloud Drive automatically downloaded to your Fire.

note

Your Kindle Fire has only 6GB of space that you can use to store things. To check how much of that you're using, tap Quick Settings (the gear icon) > More > Device. The amount of available storage is the first thing displayed.

Uploading Your Own Music to Your Cloud Drive

Now that your Amazon purchases are saved to your Cloud Drive, why not upload all the music on your computer to your Cloud Drive? This way, you can access all your music from your Kindle Fire without taking up any space on the device (assuming you have an active Wi-Fi connection).

Music files (only non-DRMed MP3s and AACs can be uploaded to your Cloud Drive) from sources other than Amazon do count toward your storage limit, so you can upload only 5GB for free. However, for \$20 a year Amazon allows you to upload an unlimited number of music files and adds 20GB to your Cloud Drive, bringing your total available storage for other files to 25GB.

No matter which plan you decide to go with, uploading your music to your Cloud Drive works the same way. On the computer with the music you want to upload, point a browser to Amazon.com and then click MP3s & Cloud Player (**Figure 4.16**). Click Cloud Player for the Web, and a new window will open (**Figure 4.17**).



Figure 4.16 Click MP3s & Cloud Player to launch your Cloud Player from Amazon.com.

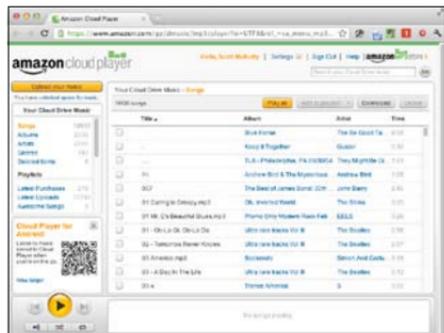


Figure 4.17 Amazon Cloud Player for the Web

You'll find a yellow Upload button with the amount of space you have left on your Cloud Drive for music storage (**Figure 4.18**). Click it, and you'll be prompted to install the Amazon MP3 Uploader. Follow the directions to install the application on your computer (PCs and Macs are both supported).

Figure 4.18
Click the "Upload your music" button to launch, or download, the Amazon MP3 Uploader.



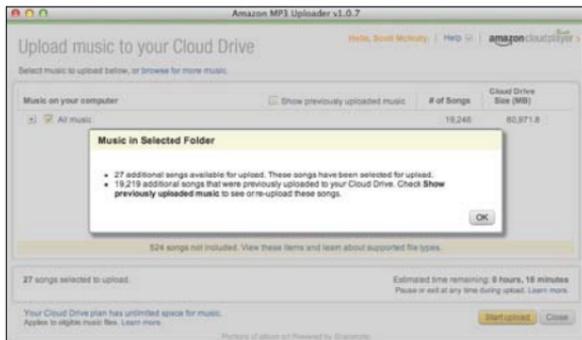
Once it is installed, it will launch automatically and start searching your computer for music (**Figure 4.19**). It searches only well-known locations (the default location for your iTunes library and the Music folder on your Windows computer). If you store your music in a custom location, the Uploader won't be able to find it, but it will allow you to manually select a folder. Select the folder you store your music in and click Scan, and the Uploader will merrily scan that folder for supported music files.

Figure 4.19
The Amazon MP3 Uploader scanning a computer for music



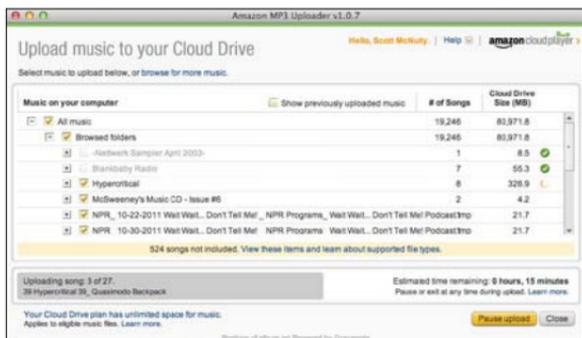
When the scan is completed, a window appears telling you how many files you can upload to Amazon and how many you've previously uploaded (the Uploader is smart enough to upload only those files that weren't there when it last ran) (**Figure 4.20**).

Figure 4.20
Success. The Uploader has found 27 new songs to upload.



Click OK, and now you're ready to upload these files. All the files that you can upload to your Cloud Drive will be displayed. You can uncheck any files, playlists, or folders you don't want to upload. Once you're happy with your selections, click the "Start upload" button, and the upload commences (Figure 4.21). Depending on how many files you're uploading and the speed of your Internet connection, this process can take quite a long time. An estimated time is displayed, as is a progress bar for each upload.

Figure 4.21
The Uploader lists all the music it has found along with a link to view the songs that it cannot upload.

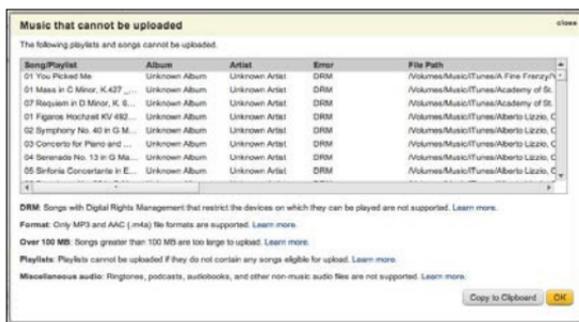


Chances are your Music library will have some songs that the Uploader won't upload. In Figure 4.21, you can see a yellow alert at the bottom of

the screen that says “524 songs not included.” Click the link to see the full list of incompatible files and why they couldn’t be uploaded (**Figure 4.22**). You can copy the list to the clipboard so you can paste it into a text document for future reference.

Figure 4.22

Music that can’t be uploaded for one reason or another. Click the Copy to Clipboard button if you want to save this list.



Downloading from the Cloud

Sometimes you won’t have Internet access, which means all those songs in the cloud won’t be accessible. For times like this, you can download songs from your Cloud Drive to your Fire ahead of time. Just look for the orange download icon on every cloud song, album, artist, and playlist (**Figure 4.23**). When you tap the icon, it will download all the tracks associated with whatever content you were viewing: all the songs on a selected playlist, all the songs and albums from a particular artist, or just a specific album or song.

Tap the options bar and then Downloads to track the progress of the download.



Figure 4.23

Tapping the download button will download the song, playlist, or album to your Fire.

As the files upload, they will be added to the Latest Uploads playlist on your Kindle Fire (and in the Cloud Player for the Web) so you can listen to them right away.

Transfer Your Own Music

If you're more of a do-it-yourselfer, you can load your Kindle Fire with music directly. Keep in mind that any music added to your Fire via this method will use up space on the device.

You'll need a micro-USB cable to do this. Plug your Fire into a USB port on the computer with the music files on it using a micro-USB cable. The Fire will go into USB drive mode and show up either on the Desktop of your Mac or in the Windows File Explorer as a drive called **KINDLE** (**Figure 4.24**).

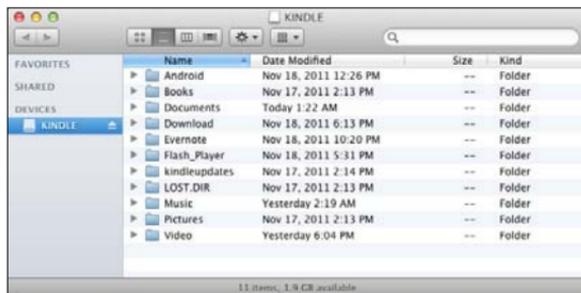
Figure 4.24

*When you connect your Fire to your computer, it becomes a USB drive called **KINDLE**.*



Double-click the drive, and you'll see all the directories on your Kindle (**Figure 4.25** on the next page). Notice there is a Music folder; that's where you're going to add your music. The Fire will play back MP3s and AACs; no other audio files are supported, though. If you move other types of files into the Music folder, they will take up space; they just won't be playable.

Figure 4.25
These are all the directories on your Kindle Fire.

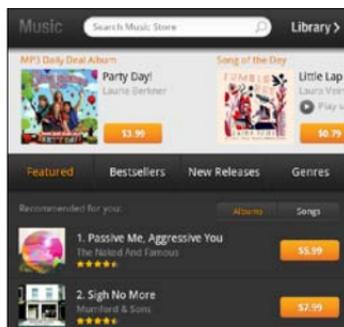


Drag and drop files, or whole directories, of music onto the Fire's Music directory. When you're finished transferring songs, tap the Disconnect button on the Fire's screen, and your songs will appear in the Device Music library.

Buying Music on the Fire

Tap the Store button to shop in the Amazon MP3 store right from your Fire (**Figure 4.26**). This store is much like the other stores on the Kindle. At the top you'll find Featured albums you can swipe through. Below that are some other sections of the store: Bestsellers, New Releases, and Genres. Tap any of those buttons to be taken to that section of the store.

Figure 4.26
The Kindle MP3 store



Rounding out the storefront are some recommendations for you based on your Amazon purchase history. Both Albums and Songs are listed; toggle between the two lists by tapping the appropriate button. Each album or song has a button with the price displayed next to it.

Tap an album to see a list of all the songs on the album, along with individual prices for each track (**Figure 4.27**). Tapping one of the tracks starts a 30- or 60-second sample so you can get a taste for what you're about to buy.

Figure 4.27

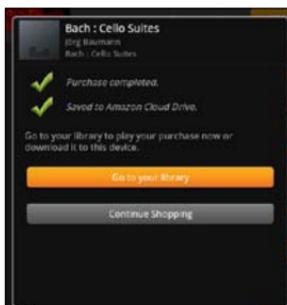
Tap the play icon to preview a song for 30 seconds, and tap the orange button to buy it.



If you like what you hear, tap the button with the price. It turns into a green Buy button. Tap again, and depending on your settings, the songs are added to your Cloud Drive, downloaded to your Fire, or both (**Figure 4.28**).

Figure 4.28

When you purchase a song or album, it can be added to your Cloud Drive, your Fire, or both.



You can listen to the songs as soon as the process is complete.

If you aren't sure what exactly you want from the MP3 store, you can always search. The search results include Albums and Songs buttons, so you can switch between the two (**Figure 4.29**). Tapping an album from the search results gives you more details about it, and tapping a song plays the preview.

Figure 4.29
Searching for music in the store is very easy.



Index

A

- account information, entering, 48
- albums, viewing tracks on, 111
- alerts, tapping, 23
- Amazon account
 - creating, 19
 - listing Kindles associated with, 49–50
- Amazon app, including in Favorites, 38
- Amazon Appstore. *See also* apps
 - buying apps from, 155
 - Categories section, 161
 - compatibility of apps, 154
 - menu options, 161
 - More section, 162
 - My Apps, 161
 - My Subscriptions, 161
 - Parental Controls, 162
 - reaching, 153, 156
 - Recommended list, 161
 - Settings section, 161–162
 - Test Drive Now button, 154–155
- Amazon Cloud
 - Drive, 43
 - Player, 43
- Amazon MP3 store
 - buying songs, 121
 - listing songs on albums, 121
 - previewing songs, 121
 - searching, 122
 - shopping in, 120–122
- Amazon Prime
 - Instant Videos, 4
 - Lending Library, 5
 - membership cost, 3
 - shipping benefits, 3–4
 - TV shows, 4–5
- Amazon.com
 - buying Kindle books from, 98–99
 - Kindle Newsstand, 74
 - subscriptions, 73–74
- Android operating system, 163
- .apk file, finding, 164
- applications. *See* apps
- apps. *See also* Amazon Appstore
 - browsing for, 157
 - contextual menu, 165
 - displaying details about, 157–158
 - displaying file size, 158

apps (continued)

- displaying options, 166
- displaying screenshots of, 159–160
- Email, 148–152
- free app of the day, 156
- Get App button, 158
- installing, 159, 165
- listing running, 166
- managing, 165–166
- permission, 158
- Photos section, 159–160
- Product Info section, 158
- querying, 160
- Recommendations section, 160
- removing, 165–166
- reporting issues with, 158–159
- Reviews section, 160
- Saved for Later list, 157
- searching, 160
- Share option, 158
- shopping for, 156–164
- sideloading, 163–164
- sorting, 157
- switching views, 165
- top 100, 157
- uninstalling, 165–166
- viewing, 157

Apps library

- described, 35
- entering, 146

authors, searching, 92

B

- battery indicator, 23–24
- beginning, navigating to, 88
- book titles, searching for, 92
- bookmark icon, bringing up, 83
- bookmarks
 - adding from History screen, 174
 - deleting from books, 89
 - deleting on Web, 174
 - editing on Web, 174
 - setting on Web, 172–174
 - viewing in books, 89
- books. *See also* borrowed books; Kindle Store
 - adding bookmarks for, 37
 - availability of, 6
 - borrowing, 5
 - “Buy for...” button, 92–93
 - buying from Amazon.com, 98–99
 - buying from store, 91
 - displaying in Carousel, 37
 - Download & Transfer via USB, 99–100
 - downloading, 37
 - downloading without Wi-Fi, 99–100
 - reading, 82
 - sampling, 37, 94
 - searching, 85–86
 - Try a Sample button, 92–93

Books library

- accessing, 80
 - adding notes, 84
 - described, 35
 - grid view, 81
 - highlighting words, 83
 - list view, 81
 - menu button, 81
 - navigation, 87–89
 - New status, 81
 - Not downloaded status, 81
 - options bar, 81, 83
 - Partially read status, 81
 - scrolling through, 80
 - searching, 81
 - selecting words, 85
 - sort options, 80
 - turning pages, 82
- borrowed books, returning, 97–98. *See also* books
- Brightness setting, 26
- browser. *See* Silk browser

C

- camera, lack of, 3
 - canceling subscriptions, 75–76
 - Carousel, 36–37
 - adding Favorites from, 39
 - advancing through, 36–37
 - displaying books in, 37
 - charging Kindles, 11
 - children’s books, 94–95
 - chin, location of, 10
 - cloud
 - acceleration feature, 47
 - accessing, 43–44
 - described, 43
 - integration with Silk, 46
 - storage, 44
 - Cloud Drive
 - adding music to, 113–119
 - downloading songs from, 118
 - settings, 114
 - uploading music to, 115–119
 - website, 114
 - Cloud Player, features of, 114–115
 - Contacts app, described, 146
 - content libraries, viewing, 34–36
 - context menu, bringing up, 39
 - cover, navigating to, 88
 - current location, displaying, 87
 - customer support, contacting, 31
- D**
- definitions of words, displaying, 83
 - deleting
 - apps, 165
 - bookmarks from books, 89
 - bookmarks on Web, 174
 - e-mail messages, 151

- highlights, 85, 89
 - items from Favorites, 39–40
 - notes, 89
 - playlists, 106
 - songs, 105
 - videos, 134
- deregistering Fire, 47–51. *See also* registering Fire
- Device library, Latest Additions, 107
- dictionary, loading, 83
- display. *See* screen
- Docs. *See also* Kindle Personal Documents Service
- accessing, 143
 - adding to Favorites, 143
 - explained, 33
 - grid and list views, 143–144
 - opening, 144
 - options bar, 144
 - turning pages, 144
 - using, 143–144
- Docs library
- described, 35
 - searching, 143–144
- downloading files, 44
- Dropbox cloud service, 43
- E**
- e-mail address, displaying, 140
- Email app, 148–152
- equalizer modes, enabling, 112–113
- “Erase everything” option, 51
- F**
- Facebook app
- described, 146
 - including in Favorites, 40
- factory defaults, resetting to, 51
- FAQs (frequently asked questions), accessing, 30–31
- Favorites, 38–41
- adding Docs to, 143
 - adding from Carousel, 39
 - Amazon app, 38
 - context menu, 39
 - Facebook app, 40
 - IMDb app, 40
 - managing, 39–40
 - moving, 40
 - Pulse app, 38
 - removing items from, 39–40
- files, dragging and dropping, 12
- Fire
- charging, 11
 - connecting to computer, 119
 - deregistering, 47–51
 - displaying directories on, 120
 - displaying name of, 21
 - features of, 3
 - versus iPad, 7
 - registering, 14
 - shopping for apps on, 156–164
 - size of, 10
 - weight of, 10
- Font Style options, accessing, 90
- frequently asked questions (FAQs), accessing, 30–31
- Fruit Ninja, playing, 147
- G**
- Gallery app, using with video transfers, 136
- gestures
- double tap, 8
 - pinch, 8–9
 - zooming, 8
- gift, giving Fire as, 14
- Gmail cloud service, 43
- Google, searching, 85–86
- Gorilla Glass, 10
- graphic novels, 96
- H**
- headphone jack, location of, 11
- help, accessing, 30
- Help & Feedback app, described, 146
- highlights
- deleting, 85, 89
 - viewing, 89
- home screen
- parts of, 21
 - returning to, 41
- I**
- images from websites, saving, 172
- IMDb app. *See also* movies
- described, 146
 - including in Favorites, 40
- Instant Video, 4. *See also* videos
- international channels, enabling, 28
- IP address, assigning, 28
- iPad versus Fire, 7
- K**
- keyboard, displaying, 15
- keypress sound, turning off, 30
- Kindle books. *See* books
- Kindle directory, contents of, 142–143
- Kindle Fire. *See* Fire
- Kindle MP3 store
- buying songs, 121
 - listing songs on albums, 121
 - previewing songs, 121
 - searching, 122
 - shopping in, 120–122
- Kindle Owner’s Lending Library, 5, 97–98
- Kindle Personal Documents Service. *See also* Docs
- adding e-mail addresses, 139–140
 - Approved Personal Documents, 139

- Kindle Personal Documents Service (*continued*)
 - compressing documents, 141
 - Documents folder, 143
 - e-mailing documents, 140–141
 - file formats, 138
 - maximum file size, 141
 - number of attachments, 141
 - PDF support, 141–142
 - reading documents, 141
 - settings, 139
 - setup, 138–140
 - USB cable, 142–143
 - zipping documents, 141
 - Kindle Singles, 94
 - Kindle Store. *See also* books
 - children's books, 94–95
 - getting book details, 92
 - graphic novels, 96
 - Kindle Owner's Lending Library, 97–98
 - Panel Preview, 96
 - refining searches, 92
 - search field, 92
 - sections of, 91–94
 - Kindles, listing, 49–50
- L**
- landscape mode
 - accessing, 64
 - versus portrait mode, 10
 - Latest Purchases, 107
 - Latest Uploads, 107
 - legal notices, reading, 30
 - Lending Library, Kindle Owner's, 5, 97–98
 - letters, entering, 15
 - libraries, viewing, 34–36
 - Library, Lending, 5
 - location bar, using, 87
 - location..., navigating to, 89
 - locations, jumping to, 88
 - lock screen
 - displaying, 42
 - enabling controls for, 112
 - setting password for, 54
 - Lock/Unlock setting, 24–25
 - long tap, explained, 8
- M**
- MAC address, determining, 30
 - magazines
 - adding to Favorites, 59
 - Buy Current Issue button, 71–72
 - getting information about, 71
 - number of, 55
 - page view, 55
 - searching, 67
 - "See all" links, 70
 - Subscribe Now button, 71–72
 - subscriptions on Amazon.com, 74
 - text view, 55
 - Manage Your Kindle website, 48–49, 97
 - memory, amount of, 101
 - Menu button, accessing, 41
 - messages. *See* Email app
 - micro-USB port, location of, 11
 - More setting, 30–31
 - movies. *See also* IMDb app
 - buying, 127
 - displaying synopses of, 127
 - renting, 127
 - searching, 125–126
 - Watch Trailer button, 126
 - watching, 126
 - MP3 store
 - buying songs, 121
 - listing songs on albums, 121
 - previewing songs, 121
 - searching, 122
 - shopping in, 120–122
 - MP3s
 - buying from Amazon, 43
 - Uploader, 43–44, 116–117
 - music. *See also* Now Playing screen; songs
 - adding to Cloud Drive, 113–119
 - adding to Fire, 113
 - buying on Fire, 120–122
 - equalizer modes, 113
 - formats, 43–44
 - playing, 107–113
 - Shop artist in store option, 111
 - storing, 43, 114
 - transferring, 119–120
 - uploading, 43–44
 - uploading to Cloud Drive, 115–119
 - View artist option, 111
 - volume slider, 110
 - Music directory, moving files to, 120
 - Music library
 - adding music to, 114
 - Albums section, 103
 - Artists section, 103
 - Cloud library, 102
 - Device option, 102
 - described, 35
 - displaying, 102
 - entering, 102
 - Playlists section, 103–107
 - searching, 103–104
 - Songs section, 103
 - My Account options, accessing, 48
 - My Notes and Marks, navigating to, 89
- N**
- name of Kindle Fire, displaying, 21
 - Navigation bar, 34–36
 - Apps library, 35
 - Books library, 35
 - Docs library, 35

- Music library, 35
- Newsstand library, 34
- Video library, 35
- Web library, 35
- navigation options
 - Beginning, 88
 - Cover, 88
 - Location..., 89
 - My Notes and Marks, 89
 - Sync to Furthest Page, 89
 - Table of Contents, 88
- networks. *See* Wi-Fi networks; wireless networks
- New Oxford American Dictionary, loading, 83
- news. *See* Pulse app
- newspapers, number of, 55
- Newsstand library, 34
 - accessing, 56
 - Amazon.com subscriptions, 73–74
 - canceling subscriptions, 75–76
 - changing orientation, 64
 - Cloud view, 58
 - contextual menu, 57
 - delivery of issues, 56
 - displaying issues, 57
 - exiting store, 73
 - features of, 55–56
 - identifying, 57–58
 - Kindle Account button, 73
 - list view, 58–59
 - listing periodicals in, 56
 - Magazines section, 68–69
 - menu button in store, 73
 - Newspapers section, 68–69
 - options bar, 58
 - page view, 59–63
 - page view magazines, 55
 - privacy settings, 76–78
 - Refine button, 70
 - Search field, 70
 - searching, 66–67
 - sort options, 58, 70
 - store sections, 68–69
 - Storefront button, 73
 - subscriptions, 55, 58
 - text view, 60, 65–66
 - text view magazines, 55
 - toggle between content, 57–58
- Newsstand store, link to, 58
- Next, tapping, 20
- notes
 - adding, 84
 - deleting, 89
 - reading, 84
 - viewing, 89
- notifications, displaying, 22
- novels, graphic, 96
- Now Playing queue, clearing, 111
- Now Playing screen. *See also* music; songs
 - displaying, 108
 - leaving, 111
 - list view, 109
 - A number of x of y, 108–109
 - song position, 108–109
 - Song Scroll, 109
- Now Playing window, Unlock icon in, 112
- numbers, entering, 15
- O**
 - options bar, 41–42
 - orientation, changing in Newsstand, 64
 - Other Network screen, displaying, 14–16
- P**
 - page view
 - Contents icon, 63
 - double tapping, 61
 - magazines, 55
 - navigation, 62
 - options bar, 63
 - pinching, 61
 - reading, 61–63
 - status bar, 62
 - tapping, 62
 - view toggle, 62
 - zooming in, 61
 - pages, turning, 82
 - password, showing, 18
 - password protection, enabling, 52–54
 - PDFs, support for, 142
 - photos, displaying, 146
 - pinch, explained, 8–9
 - play controls
 - displaying, 111
 - displaying in landscape mode, 110
 - Repeat, 109
 - Shuffle, 109
 - playback settings, 111
 - playlists
 - adding songs to, 104, 106
 - contextual menu, 106
 - creating, 104
 - deleting, 106
 - downloading, 106
 - editing, 105
 - generating automatically, 107
 - Latest Purchases, 107
 - Latest Uploads, 107
 - naming, 104
 - playing songs from, 106
 - renaming, 106
 - repeating, 109
 - saving, 105
 - searching songs, 105
 - song positions in, 108–109
 - updating, 105
 - portrait versus landscape mode, 10

- power button
 - location of, 11
 - pressing, 12
- Prime. *See* Amazon Prime
- Prime Instant Videos, 125–130
 - Movie section, 125
 - Prime and All options, 130
 - renting versus buying, 130–133
 - “See all” button, 131
 - TV section, 125, 128–130
- Pulse app,
 - described, 146
 - including in Favorites, 38
- R**
 - rebooting Fire, 13
 - registered Kindles, listing, 49–50
 - registering Fire, 14, 17–19. *See also*
 - deregistering Fire
 - Repeat control, described, 109
 - Reset to Factory Defaults, 51
 - Roku website, 4
- S**
 - screen
 - going back to, 41
 - moving things around on, 8
 - navigating, 20
 - protection against scratching, 10
 - setting brightness, 26
 - turning off, 12
 - unlocking, 7–8
 - Search box, 32–34
 - Search button, accessing, 41
 - search options, accessing, 85
 - search results, viewing, 34
 - security, password protection, 52–54
 - setup requirements, 13
 - Shop app, described, 146
 - shortcuts, including in Favorites as, 38–41
 - Shuffle control, described, 109
 - shutting down Fire, 12–13
 - sideloading
 - apps, 163–164
 - enabling, 163
 - Silk browser, 35, 45–47
 - Accelerate page loading, 175
 - Add bookmark option, 170
 - blocking pop-up windows, 175
 - Bookmark link option, 172
 - Clear all cookie data, 175
 - Clear cache setting, 175
 - Clear history setting, 175
 - closing tabs, 171
 - Copy link URL option, 172
 - Downloads option, 171
 - Enable plug-ins setting, 175
 - Find in page option, 171
 - History option, 170, 174
 - integration with cloud, 46
 - loading pages in, 168
 - opening links, 172
 - opening tabs, 171
 - privacy policy, 46–47
 - Save link option, 172
 - saving images from websites, 172
 - searching words, 171
 - Set search engine setting, 175
 - setting bookmarks, 172–174
 - settings, 174–175
 - Settings option, 171
 - Share link option, 172
 - Share page option, 170
 - Terms & Conditions, 46
 - text-size setting, 174–175
 - thumbnails tab, 168
 - URL field, 169–170
 - sleep mode, going into, 12
 - songs. *See also* music; Now Playing screen
 - adding, 105
 - adding to playlists, 104, 106
 - buying from MP3 store, 121
 - clearing, 110
 - downloading, 110
 - downloading from Cloud Drive, 118
 - long tapping, 110
 - playing, 105
 - playing from playlists, 106
 - previewing in MP3 store, 121
 - Remove from Now Playing, 110
 - removing, 105
 - repeating, 109
 - searching, 105
 - searching in MP3 store, 122
 - space. *See* storage space
 - static IP address, assigning, 28–29
 - status bar
 - battery indicator, 23–24
 - displaying in page view, 62
 - hiding, 21
 - location of, 21
 - notifications, 22
 - Quick Settings icon, 23–24
 - time, 23
 - Wi-Fi signal strength, 23
 - storage space
 - availability of, 44
 - built-in, 44, 113–114
 - checking, 114
 - Store button, tapping, 91
 - subscriptions, canceling, 75–76
 - swipe, explained, 7–8
 - Sync setting, 30
 - Sync to Furthest Page, navigating to, 89

T

- table of contents, navigating to, 88
- tablet, Fire as, 2, 6
- taps
 - double, 8
 - explained, 8
 - sequences of, 8
- text
 - highlighting, 85
 - selecting, 85
- text options
 - accessing, 90
 - Font Style, 90
 - Typeface, 90
- text view, 65–66
 - changing font, 66
 - magazines, 55
 - options bar, 65
- time, displaying, 23
- time zone, setting up, 16–17
- tracks, viewing, 111
- turning pages, 82
- tutorial, accessing, 20
- TV shows
 - accessing, 128
 - Watch Now button, 129
- Typeface option, accessing, 90

U

- Unlock setting, 24–25
- unlocking screen, 7–8
- URL field, accessing, 169–170
- usage, tracking, 46
- USB Drive Mode, 12
- USB port, location of, 11

V

- Video, Instant, 4
- video controls, displaying, 135
- Video library
 - contents of, 133
 - described, 35
 - displaying, 133
 - entering, 123
- Video store
 - Prime Instant Videos, 125–130
 - sections, 124–126
 - View All button, 130
 - Watch Now button, 132
- video types, MP4 and VP8, 135
- videos. *See also* Instant Video
 - deleting, 134
 - displaying, 146

- displaying detail screen, 134
 - downloading, 133
 - duration slider, 134
 - Gallery app, 136
 - playing, 135–136
 - Play/Pause button, 134
 - progress bar, 134–135
 - resuming, 135
 - skipping to points in, 135
 - time elapsed, 134
 - time remaining, 134
 - transferring, 135–136
 - viewing after transfers, 136
 - volume slider, 134
 - watching, 127–128, 134–135
- view toggle, accessing in page view, 62
 - Volume setting, 25–26
 - volume slider
 - features of, 25
 - using with music, 110

W

- waking up Fire, 12, 42
- web browsing. *See* Silk browser
- Web library, described, 35
- Web tab, accessing, 34
- Welcome to Kindle Fire screen, displaying, 14
- WhisperSync, described, 30, 82–83
- Wi-Fi
 - capability, 3
 - setting, 26–29
 - signal strength, 23
- Wi-Fi networks
 - Add a Network, 28
 - Advanced Settings, 28
 - connecting to, 27
 - displaying, 14–15, 27
 - enabling international channels, 28
 - joining, 16
 - static IP address, 28–29
- Wikipedia, searching, 85–86
- wireless networks, listing, 14–15
- words
 - displaying definitions, 83
 - highlighting, 85
 - selecting, 85

Z

- zooming
 - double tap, 8
 - pinch, 8



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