



Tagging Guidelines

Learn how to tag your music library for optimal use with Navidrome, including best practices for tagging files, handling multiple artists, and using tag editors.

Why Proper Tagging is Important

Navidrome organizes your music library *entirely* based on the metadata tags in your audio files. Unlike some music players, it does not use folder names or file names to group tracks ([why?](#)). This means that having clean and consistent tags is crucial for your music to display correctly. Proper tagging ensures that albums aren't split up, artists are listed correctly, and you can easily browse or search for your music in Navidrome.

Good tagging practices not only make your music library more enjoyable to use, but also make it future-proof: If you ever switch to a different music player/server, or want to use a different music management tool, having well-tagged files will make the transition smoother.

Tagging Basics and Best Practices

Consistent and Complete Metadata

- **Fill in essential tags for every song:** At minimum, each music file should have the **Title** (song name), **Artist**, **Album**, **Album Artist**, and **Track Number**. Optionally include **Genre**, **Year/Date** and **Disc Number** (for multi-disc albums). Consistent use of these fields allows Navidrome to accurately group and identify your music.
- **Be consistent with naming:** Use the same spelling and punctuation for artist and album names across all tracks. For example, decide whether an artist is "AC/DC" or "ACDC", "The Beatles" or "Beatles", and stick to one. Consistent naming prevents duplicate entries for what is actually the same artist or album.
- **Avoid unknown or blank tags:** Make sure important fields aren't left blank or set to generic values like "Unknown Artist". Tracks with missing tags may be hard to find or get grouped incorrectly in Navidrome.

Key Metadata Fields and Usage

Each tag field has a specific purpose. Here are the important ones and how to use them:

- **Title:** The name of the song. (*Example: "Imagine"*)
- **Artist:** The performing artist(s) for the song. (*Example: "John Lennon"*) If a track has multiple artists, include all of them here (see *Handling Multiple Artists* below).
- **Album:** The name of the album the song belongs to. All tracks in the same album should have exactly the same Album tag.
- **Album Artist:** The primary artist for the album. This is usually the album's main artist or group, or "Various Artists" for a compilation. Every track in an album should share the same Album Artist so Navidrome knows they belong to one album. For example, on a soundtrack or compilation album, set Album Artist to "Various Artists". If a track has multiple album artists (like collaboration albums), include all of them here (see *Handling Multiple Artists* below).
- **Track Number:** The song's track number on the album. This can be just the track number (like "5") or a fraction like "5/12" to indicate track 5 of 12. Use leading zeros if your tag editor requires (e.g., "05"). Proper track numbers help Navidrome sort songs in the album's order.
- **Disc Number:** If an album spans multiple discs, use this to differentiate disc 1, disc 2, etc. For example, "1/2" for Disc 1 of 2. Ensure all tracks that are on the same disc have the same disc number, and all tracks share the Album name. Navidrome will group multi-disc albums together and may show disc divisions.
- **Year/Date:** The year (or full date) of the album's recording. While not strictly required, the year is useful information and some views or clients might use it. Formats accepted are: YYYY (for YEAR and DATE) and YYYY-MM-DD or YYYY-MM (for DATE). For a more precise date information, you can leverage other Date fields:
 - DATE / YEAR : The date of the track recording.
 - ORIGINALDATE / ORIGINALYEAR : The original release date of the album.
 - RELEASEDATE / RELEASEYEAR : The release date of the album.
- **Genre:** The genre of the music (e.g., Rock, Jazz). This is a multi-valued field and can help when browsing or creating genre-based playlists.
- **Compilation (Part of a Compilation):** A special flag for various-artists albums. For a "Various Artists" compilation album, set this tag on all its tracks so Navidrome treats them as one album. In MP3/ID3 tagging, this is often labeled "Part of a Compilation" (technically the TCMP frame) which should be set to "1" (true). In FLAC/Vorbis tags, use a tag named COMPILATION with value "1". Not all editors show this field explicitly, but many (like iTunes or Picard) will mark an album as a compilation for you if you specify it. If you can't find this tag, simply ensuring Album Artist is "Various Artists" usually works, but using the compilation tag is a best practice.

Here's a [complete list of tags](#) that Navidrome import and use by default. For adding custom tags, see the [Custom Tags](#) page.

File and Folder Naming (Optional but Helpful)

Navidrome ignores actual file names and folder structure when organizing music (it relies on tags), but a clear naming scheme is still recommended for your own sanity and compatibility with other tools:

- Use a folder structure like `Artist/Album/` for your files, and file names like `"01 - Song Title.mp3"`. For example: `Music/Queen/A Night at the Opera/01 - Death on Two Legs.mp3`. This isn't required for Navidrome, but keeping your files organized logically makes management easier and reduces confusion.
- Keep naming conventions consistent. For instance, decide on a pattern for file names (`Track - Title` or `Artist - Title`, etc.) and apply it across your library. Similarly, maintain consistent folder naming (avoid having one folder called "Greatest Hits" and another called "GreatestHits" for example).
- If you use a tool like Picard or MediaMonkey, you can often configure it to rename and sort files into folders based on tags automatically. This can help enforce consistency after you've tagged everything.
- Remember, if you do rename or move files, Navidrome will update on the next scan (since it scans the library folder). Just make sure the tags inside the files are correct, because that's still what Navidrome will use to display your music.

Album Art Handling

Including album cover art enhances the Navidrome experience. Here's how to manage artwork:

- **Embed cover art in audio files:** Embedding the album cover in each music file's tags is a reliable way to ensure Navidrome finds it. Most tagging tools allow you to add an image (JPEG/PNG) to the file's metadata. Navidrome will display embedded cover art when browsing albums or playing songs.
- **Use folder images:** Additionally, save the album cover image as a file in the album's folder (common names are `cover.jpg`, `folder.jpg`, or `front.png`). By default, Navidrome looks for images with those names. If it finds one, it will use it for the album cover. This is useful if you prefer not to embed large images in every file, or to provide artwork for players that look for folder images.
- **Image quality:** Use reasonably sized images. 500x500 to 1000x1000 pixels is usually plenty.

Extremely large images (e.g., 3000x3000) will work, but keep in mind they take more space and can make the UI sluggish. Navidrome will cache thumbnails for performance, but it's good practice not to go overboard.

- **Consistency:** Ensure all tracks of an album have the same album art. If you embed art, embed the same image in each track of that album (most tools can do this in batch). If you're using a folder image, one image in the folder is enough for all songs in that album.
- **Handling missing art:** If you don't have art for an album, Navidrome might try to fetch it from the internet (Last.fm or Spotify) if enabled, but it's best to supply your own for completeness and offline use. Taking the time to add cover art makes browsing much nicer.

Organizing your music in a logical and consistent folder structure can also help Navidrome find your artwork files. Check the [Artwork Resolution](#) page for details.

Handling Multiple Artists and Collaborations

When tagging tracks with multiple artists or collaborators, it's important to clearly and consistently represent each artist. Navidrome supports both singular (`ARTIST` and `ALBUMARTIST`) and plural (`ARTISTS` and `ALBUMARTISTS`) tags. However, **multi-valued tags** (`ARTISTS` and `ALBUMARTISTS`) **are preferred**, as they allow Navidrome to more accurately identify individual artists and improve library organization.

Recommended Approach: Multi-Valued Tags

- **Preferred:**
 - Use multiple `ARTISTS` tags to explicitly specify each artist individually.
 - Example (FLAC/Vorbis comments):

```
ARTISTS=Alice  
ARTISTS=Bob
```

- Navidrome clearly distinguishes each artist.
- Facilitates better searching, sorting, and browsing.

Singular vs. Plural Tags

- **Singular** (`ARTIST`): Typically a single text entry (e.g., "Artist1 feat. Artist2").

- Navidrome will attempt to parse this field into multiple artists if common separators (e.g., " / ", " feat. ", "; ") are used.
- However, relying on separators is less precise than multi-valued tags.
- **Plural (ARTISTS)**: Explicitly multi-valued tag allowing multiple distinct entries.
 - Each artist can have individual associated metadata (like MusicBrainz IDs).
 - Preferred method, as it avoids ambiguity and parsing errors.

Note that if you have both singular and plural tags, Navidrome will use the singular one (ARTIST or ALBUMARTIST) as a "Display Name" for the artist (or album artist)

If you use Picard, check the scripts available in the [Picard specific tips](#) below. These scripts can help set up multi-valued artist tags automatically.

Examples:

Ideal tagging (FLAC/Vorbis Comments example):

```
TITLE=Sunshine
ARTIST=Alice feat. Bob
ARTISTS=Alice
ARTISTS=Bob
ALBUM=Brighter Days
ALBUMARTIST=Alice
TRACKNUMBER=7
```

Less ideal (single-valued ARTIST):

```
TITLE=Sunshine
ARTIST=Alice feat. Bob
ALBUM=Brighter Days
ALBUMARTIST=Alice
```

In the ideal example, Navidrome clearly identifies each artist separately. In the less ideal example, Navidrome may split the artist names based on common separators (like " feat. ", " / ", or

" ; "), but it's less accurate.

Avoid using separators for multiple artists

Relying on separators in tags can cause issues with some artist names (Ex: AC/DC , Earth, Wind & Fire). If possible, use multi-valued tags (ARTISTS and ALBUMARTISTS) to avoid such problems.

If multi-valued tags are not supported by your tag editor, you can, as a last resort, use a common separator (like " / " or " ; ") to combine values in a single tag. Navidrome will attempt to split them based on the separator.

Note on other Artist Roles

Other role tags (COMPOSER , LYRICIST , ARRANGER , ENGINEER , ..) do not have a plural version. For those, you can add the singular tag multiple times (for Vorbis/FLAC) or make it multi-valued (for ID3v2.4). Navidrome will recognize and display them correctly. For example, in a FLAC file, you could have:

```
COMPOSER: Alice  
COMPOSER: Bob
```



In this case, Navidrome will treat both Alice and Bob as composers for the track.

Multi-Valued Tags Support by Format

- **Vorbis/FLAC, Opus:** Multi-valued tags are fully supported and straightforward.
- **ID3v2.4 (MP3):** Supports true multi-valued tags, similar to Vorbis.
- **ID3v2.3 (Older MP3 format):** Does **not** officially support multiple artists. Instead, use a consistent separator (ex: " ; ") if you must combine artists into one tag, though this approach is less ideal. **Avoid using this format if possible and prefer the newer ID3v2.4**
- **Other tag formats (APE, MP4, WMA):** Check your tag editor's documentation for multi-valued tag support. Most modern tools can handle multi-valued tags in any format.

Best Practices:

- Always prefer multi-valued tags (`ARTISTS` and `ALBUMARTISTS`) when supported by your tagging software.
- If multi-valued tags are unavailable, use consistent separators (" feat. " , " / " , or " ; ").
- Maintain consistency throughout your library to avoid duplicate or misidentified artist entries.
- Always verify how your tags appear in Navidrome and adjust tagging accordingly.

Proper use of multi-valued tags significantly enhances the accuracy and enjoyment of your music library in Navidrome.

Example: For a song **"Sunshine"** by **Alice** featuring **Bob** on the album *Brighter Days* (which is primarily Alice's album):

- In a FLAC (Vorbis comments) file, you might have tags:

```
TITLE=Sunshine
ARTIST=Alice
ARTIST=Bob
ALBUM=Brighter Days
ALBUMARTIST=Alice
TRACKNUMBER=7
```

- In an MP3 with ID3v2.3, the tags could be:

```
Title: Sunshine
Artist: Alice / Bob
Album: Brighter Days
Album Artist: Alice
Track: 7
```

In the FLAC example, there are two separate `ARTIST` fields (one for Alice, one for Bob). In the MP3 example, the two artist names are combined in one field with a " / " separator. Both will display correctly in Navidrome, but the FLAC method more explicitly preserves the two distinct artist entries.

Differences in Tag Formats (ID3, Vorbis, APE, etc.)

Different audio file formats use different tagging standards. You don't need to know all the technical details, but it's useful to understand the basics so you can tag consistently:

- **MP3 (ID3 tags):** MP3 files use ID3 tags (versions 2.3 and 2.4 are common). Most tagging tools default to ID3v2.3 for compatibility with older players. ID3v2.4 is a newer standard that supports features like multiple values in one field. Navidrome can read both. If available, use ID3v2.4 for better multi-artist and multi-genre support. Key ID3 tag frames include:
 - *TIT2* (Title)
 - *TPE1* (Artist)
 - *TALB* (Album)
 - *TPE2* (Album Artist, in practice)
 - *TRCK* (Track number)
 - *TPOS* (Disc number, called "Part of a set")
 - *TYER/TDRC* (Year/Date)
 - *TCOM* (Genre)
 - *TCMP* (Compilation flag)You normally don't need to remember these codes; tag editors handle them for you. Just be aware that some older software might not show an "Album Artist" field for MP3 because ID3v2.3 didn't officially have it (those tools might be writing it as a custom tag or using *TPE2*).
- **FLAC, Ogg Vorbis, Opus (Vorbis comments):** These formats use Vorbis Comments for tags. Vorbis comments are simple "FIELD=Value" pairs and are very flexible. Common field names are in all caps by convention: e.g., *TITLE* , *ARTIST* , *ALBUM* , *ALBUMARTIST* , *TRACKNUMBER* , *DISCNUMBER* , *DATE* (year), *GENRE* . You can have multiple instances of a field to represent multiple values (e.g., two *ARTIST* lines). Vorbis comments don't have fixed frames like ID3; you can even add non-standard fields (Picard, for example, can add a *MUSICBRAINZ_ALBUMID* tag for its own use). The main thing is to use **standard field names** so that Navidrome (and other players) know what to do with them. Navidrome will read these tags and support multi-valued fields natively.
- **APE tags:** APE is another tagging format, used primarily in Monkey's Audio (.ape files) and sometimes WavPack or Musepack. APE tags also consist of key-value pairs (similar to Vorbis comments). Field names might be similar (often not all-caps; could be "Artist", "Album", etc.). If you're dealing with APE files, just ensure your tag editor writes the standard fields. APE tags, like Vorbis, allow multiple entries of the same field name as well. One caveat: Some MP3 files might have APE tags attached (left over from old software or for ReplayGain data). It's generally best to avoid having both ID3 and APE on the same MP3, as it can confuse some

programs. If you encounter this, use your tag tool to remove or synchronize one of them (Navidrome reads ID3 by default for MP3).

- **MP4/M4A (AAC files):** These use the MP4 container's metadata format (often called MP4 tags or atoms). You'll see tag codes like `©ART` (Artist), `©a1b` (Album), `aART` (Album Artist), `trkn` (track number), etc. Most tag editors (Picard, iTunes, etc.) let you edit these without worrying about the codes. Navidrome fully supports M4A/MP4 metadata, so just make sure to fill in the equivalent fields (including Album Artist and track numbers) and you're set.
- **WMA (Windows Media):** Uses ASF tags. If you have WMA files, fill in the standard fields (Title, Artist, Album, Album Artist, Track number, Year, Genre) in your tag editor. Navidrome will read those as well.
- **Other formats:** Navidrome supports many formats (MP3, FLAC, Ogg, Opus, AAC, WMA, APE, etc.). The best practice is to use a good tagging tool which provides a unified interface for editing tags, regardless of the underlying format. The tool will handle mapping your input to the correct tag type for that file. As long as you fill out the tags consistently in the software, you don't need to manually worry about the format differences – just be aware when switching formats that the same concept might have a different technical name under the hood.

Tagging Tools and Workflow

Because Navidrome is read-only with respect to your files' metadata, you'll need to use external tools to edit tags. Here are some recommendations and tips on workflow:

- **Use a tag editor or music manager:** Pick a tool that fits your comfort level. For beginners, a user-friendly tag editor with a GUI is ideal. Some popular options:
 - **MusicBrainz Picard** – *Free, open source (Windows/Mac/Linux)*. Great for auto-tagging files by matching them to the huge MusicBrainz database. Picard can lookup albums by track info or acoustic fingerprint, fill in all tags (including Album Artist and album art), and even rename/move files based on a template. It's a powerful tool that can greatly speed up tagging and ensure consistency.
 - **Mp3tag** – *Free (Windows, with a Mac version available)*. Excellent for editing tags in bulk. You can manually edit multiple files, copy/paste tag fields, or use online database lookups. Mp3tag has a simple interface but lots of power under the hood.
 - **beets** – *Free, command-line (cross-platform)*. Very powerful for auto-organizing and tagging using MusicBrainz data (or Discogs, using plugins), but it requires comfort with terminal commands. Great if you want automation and don't mind writing a configuration file.
 - *Other options:* **Kid3** (GUI, multi-platform), **MusicBee** (Windows, a player with strong

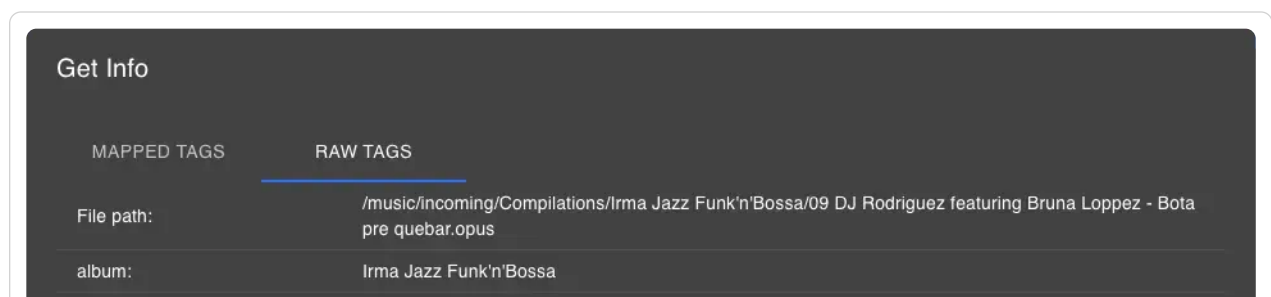
tagging features), **MediaMonkey** (Windows), **foobar2000** (Windows, has tagging capabilities), or even iTunes/Apple Music for editing tags of files. All of these can write tags that Navidrome will read.

- **Workflow tips:**

1. **Backup first:** Before mass editing tags, especially with auto-tagging tools, back up your music files. Mistakes can happen, and you might not like the results of an automated tag rewrite.
2. **Work album by album (or artist by artist):** Load a manageable chunk of files in your tag editor (for example, one album at a time). This ensures all tracks in an album get the same Album and Album Artist, etc., and it's easier to spot and correct inconsistencies.
3. **Use online databases:** Leverage tools like Picard to fetch tags and album art from databases. This can fill in missing info and standardize spelling (for instance, ensuring " feat. " is used consistently for "featuring").
4. **Review and edit:** Even with Picard or other auto-taggers, double-check the tags before saving. Make sure the album and artist names match your preferred format. Sometimes database entries have variations (like an album title including a subtitle or different punctuation).
5. **Save (write) tags:** Apply the changes and save the tags to the files. If you're renaming/moving files as part of this (many tools can do so based on tags), ensure the files end up in the correct location (your Navidrome music library folder).

Caution: If you are retagging files that are already in Navidrome, avoid retagging and moving in one step, as this could cause Navidrome to lose track of the files. Instead, retag and save, rescan, then move the files and rescan again. See details [here](#).

6. **Rescan in Navidrome:** Navidrome usually auto-detects changes, but you can trigger a library rescan or restart the server to be sure. Once scanned, check in the Navidrome interface that everything appears as expected. You can check the tags of any file in Navidrome by looking at the "Get Info"->"Raw Tags" tab:



albumartist:	Various Artists
albumartistsort:	Various Artists
artist:	DJ Rodriguez featuring Bruna Lopez
artists:	DJ Rodriguez • Bruna Lopez
artistsort:	Rodriguez, DJ featuring Lopez, Bruna
asin:	B00004R653
barcode:	5099749506329
catalognumber:	IRMA 495063 - 2
compilation:	1
date:	1999

- 7. Iterate as needed:** If something looks wrong in Navidrome (e.g., an album is split into two entries, or is missing artwork), go back to your tag editor to fix those tags and then re-save and rescan. Common fixes include making Album Artist and Release Dates consistent, correcting typos or extra spaces, or adding missing compilation flags.

Picard specific tips

- In Picard's settings, you can enable options to embed cover art *and* save a cover image file. Doing both is ideal (embed for portability, and cover.jpg for any software that looks for it). Picard also allows scripting for file naming — handy if you want to auto-organize your folders as mentioned.
- Because Navidrome matches artists based on their name, enable the “Use standardized artist names” option in Picard (Preferences -> Metadata). This helps ensure consistent naming (e.g., always using “[Osees](#)” instead of variations like “Thee Oh Sees”, “Oh Sees”, etc.).
- For a better integration with Navidrome, you can add the following scripts to your Picard configuration, to add extra tags that can help Navidrome organize your library:

```
# Multiple artists
$setmulti(albumartists,%_albumartists%)
$setmulti(albumartistsort,%_albumartists_sort%)
$setmulti(artistssort,%_artists_sort%)
```

```
# Album Version
$set(musicbrainz_albumcomment,%_releasecomment%)
$if(%_recordingcomment%, $set(subtitle,%_recordingcomment%))
```

```
# Release and Original dates
$set(releasedate,%date%)
$set(date,%_recording_firstreleasedate%)
$set(originaldate,%originaldate%)
$delete(originalyear)
```



Final Tips and Recap

- **Consistency is key:** Uniform tags result in a well-organized Navidrome library. If you notice duplicates or split albums, it's almost always a tagging inconsistency – fix the tags and the issue will resolve.
- **Leverage Album Artist and Compilation tags:** These tags are your friends for ensuring albums stay together. Always set Album Artist (even if it's the same as Artist for a solo album), and use “Various Artists” + the compilation flag for multi-artist albums.
- **Keep tags tidy:** Little details like extra spaces at the end of names or inconsistent capitalization can lead to multiple entries (e.g., “The Beatles” vs “The Beatles ”). Try to keep things tidy. Many tag editors can batch-clean or case-correct tags.
- **Continuous tagging:** Make tagging part of your routine. When you add new music, tag it properly before (or immediately after) adding it to Navidrome. **It's easier to keep a library organized from the start than to fix a messy library later.** Your future self will thank you!
- **Use Navidrome's strengths:** Navidrome reads a [lot of tags](#) (including comments, lyrics, grouping, mood, etc.). If you want to enrich your library, consider adding lyrics or other info via your editor – Navidrome will display lyrics if present, for example, and has filters for various tags, like Genre, Grouping, Mood, Album Type, etc.
- **Enjoy your music:** A bit of effort in tagging goes a long way. Once everything is tagged well, Navidrome will present a beautiful, browsable collection. You'll spend less time searching for songs or fixing metadata and more time listening. Happy tagging!

Last modified January 28, 2026: [Change local anchor link for full link \(#278\) \(fd9e672\)](#)