LIMEWIRE
BITCOMET
BITTORRENT
EMULE
BITLORD
IMESH
BEARSHARE
SHAREAZA
MORPHEUS
UTORRENT
VUZE

PEER-TO-PEER FILE SHARING

BITZIP
EDONKEY
KAZAA
CARRACHO
DC++
BITTORNADO
FROSTWIRE
STRONGDC++
ARES

HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT P2P?

P2P ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Every year, students across the U.S. receive copyright infringement notices from organizations such as the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) because they have illegally exchanged files through P2P networks.

Some of these students have paid thousands of dollars to settle lawsuits related to copyright infringement. In certain cases, the cost of settlement ranged from approximately $3,000 to $8,000 or more for the initial offense—sometimes no more than the downloading or uploading of a single song. Some students were unaware that their P2P program was making the content that they had legitimately purchased available to the P2P network.

In December 2008, the RIAA announced a new strategy and said that it would work more closely with Internet service providers to combat illegal file sharing.

WHAT IS P2P?

P2P stands for peer-to-peer file sharing. The term refers to a decentralized computing network in which participants exchange files directly with other participants.

Although there are many legitimate uses of P2P technology, P2P has become associated with the illegal sharing of copyrighted materials—especially music, movies, videos, and software—because P2P programs make it so easy to find and download content.

P2P networks operate with the understanding that members share in providing and maintaining the resources of the network. In exchange for being able to download files from the network, you are expected to make files available to other members of the network.

In a P2P networking structure, your computer may act as a server, providing content to the computers of other members.

HOW DOES P2P WORK?

P2P is an evolving technology, and there are significant differences in the ways that particular programs operate.

P2P applications allow you to search for, download, and upload files through a desktop program instead of a web browser. In general, you begin by downloading a client, or program, for a particular P2P network. By installing the client, you agree to the terms of use of the network and designate a default sharing folder on your computer for use by the P2P program.

DOWNLOADING

When you request a file through the P2P network, the file may be downloaded from any computer in the network. Files are commonly downloaded from multiple computers in different locations, and the packets are then reassembled on your computer.
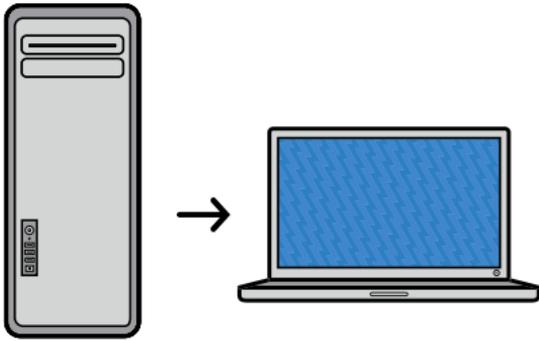
UPLOADING

Because P2P networks rely on their members to supply files to other members, P2P programs contain features designed to allow the network to access and distribute files stored on your computer. Such activity may occur without your awareness. If you do not pay attention to default settings, you may inadvertently share materials with any member of the P2P network.

RISKS OF P2P

Accepting files from people you do not know is a high-risk practice. When you accept files through a P2P network, you expose your computer to malicious programs, including Trojan horses, worms, and viruses.
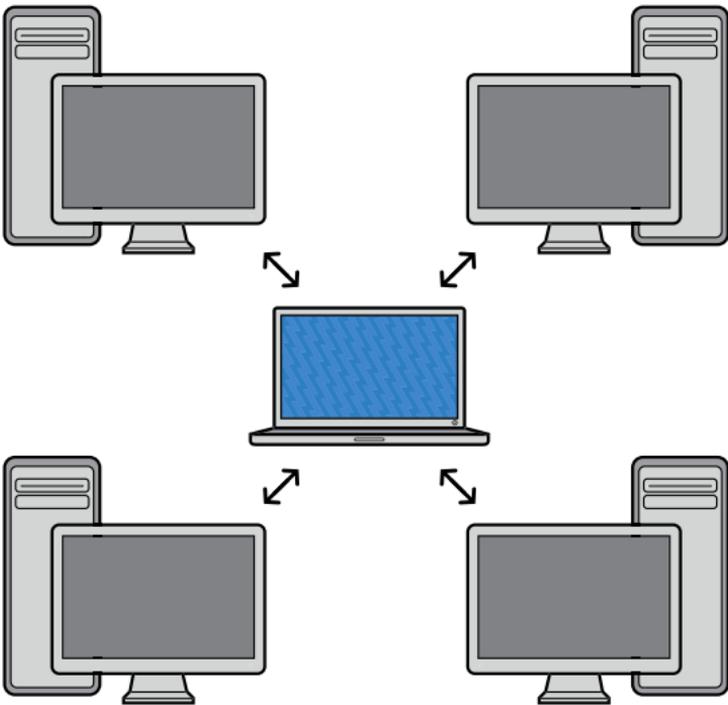
You should also be aware that organizations such as the RIAA and the MPAA monitor P2P networks and have been known to upload content to P2P networks in order to identify users who download copyrighted materials.

CLIENT-SERVER MODEL

In a client-server model, your computer receives files from a single, centralized server, such as the iTunes store.

P2P MODEL

In the P2P model, your computer shares files by connecting to many computers on the Internet.

ABOUT COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

U.S. federal law treats copyright infringement—including copyright infringement that occurs over peer-to-peer networks—as a serious offense that carries serious consequences. Civil penalties may include actual damages and profits, or statutory damages, ranging from $750 to $30,000 per work that is infringed. The court can also award reasonable attorney's fees and costs and increase the damages in the case of a willful infringement. Criminal penalties can include fines and imprisonment.

USC policy prohibits any infringement of intellectual property rights by any member of the USC community. Additionally, USC's computing policies prohibit operating file servers in USC residential housing.

USC account holders are responsible for all activity that transpires through their computing accounts and the devices that are registered to them. It is important to understand how P2P software functions, be vigilant about default settings, and use P2P software only for legitimate purposes.

You can learn more about USCs computing policies at **www.usc.edu/its/policies**. For more information about copyright infringement and fair-use exceptions, please visit **www.usc.edu/its/accounts/letter**.