

VHS to DVD

Lesson 1: Getting started

The VCR may be dead, but your videotaped treasures aren't. Fortunately, it's pretty easy to bring those dust-collecting VHS tapes into the DVD age. All you need is a device that can connect your VCR to your PC, plus some authoring software that can copy your videos to DVDs.



Dazzle DVD Recorder video input adapter - Hi-Speed USB

We found both in Pinnacle Systems' [Video Creator Platinum](#), which includes both the Dazzle analog-to-digital converter (the device that bridges the gap between VCR and PC) and Pinnacle's straight-to-DVD authoring software. Other manufacturers offer similar hardware/software packages ([ADSTech's DVD XPress DV2](#) is another capable option), but if your PC has a video card that supports analog inputs (look for red, white, and yellow connectors that match up with your VCR's outputs), you may be able to get by with software alone. In that instance, consider [Pinnacle Studio 11](#) and [Ulead VideoStudio 11](#), both of which offer rich video-editing and DVD-authoring capabilities.



Red, yellow and white analog inputs

For purposes of this course, we focused on Pinnacle's Dazzle product, but the overall process should be similar no matter which solution you choose.

The equipment that you need includes:

- VCR
- An analog-to-digital video converter
- Analog audio/video cables (S-Video cable optional)
- DVD-authoring software
- DVD burner
- Blank DVD media

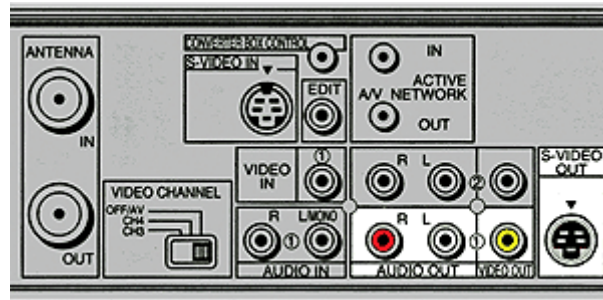
Lesson 2: Connect your components

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Locate the audio- and composite-video-output jacks on the rear panel of your VCR. These are usually color-coded white (left audio), red (right audio), and yellow (video). If the rear panel also has an S-Video output (black, four-pin), use that instead of the yellow video output. S-Video delivers a higher-quality signal than the conventional composite-video output. Now, run the cables from your VCR to the matching inputs on the Dazzle (or whatever analog-to-digital converter you're using).



Connect the VCR's audio and video outputs (red, white, and yellow; shown) to the corresponding ports on the input adapter. For video, use the S-Video connection instead, if available.



Tip:

It's worth noting that you can connect other analog devices as well, including camcorders and DVD players. The same instructions apply: Just run cables from the composite (and/or S-Video) outputs to the Dazzle.



Connect the VCR outputs to the jacks shown at the top and the USB output on the left (second from bottom) to a USB port on your PC.

Next, install all the software that came with the Dazzle kit. (If you're a Windows Vista user, be sure to download the latest drivers and software updates from [Pinnacle's support site](#), otherwise the kit will not work.) When that's done, you can connect the analog-to-digital converter to a USB 2.0 port on your PC.

This video shows exactly how to make the connections. Please note, Brian is using MovieBox in this demonstration. If you are using a Dazzle product, your adapter will look different.

NOTE: This tutorial requires [Macromedia's free Flash player](#) installed in your browser. If you have trouble click [here](#) for help.

Lesson 6: Start the transfer

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By now you should have a blank DVD in your burner, your VCR connected to the Dazzle analog-to-digital converter, and the converter connected to your PC. Double-check that your tape is rewound to a few seconds before the desired starting point (remember, you can use the Instant DVD Recorder software's preview window at any point during the setup process).

Press Play on your VCR, then immediately click the Start Recording button. Now sit back and wait while your video is played and recorded in real-time. When the process is complete, your PC will eject the DVD. Slap on a label and pop it into your DVD player!



Start recording

Lesson 3: Configure your software

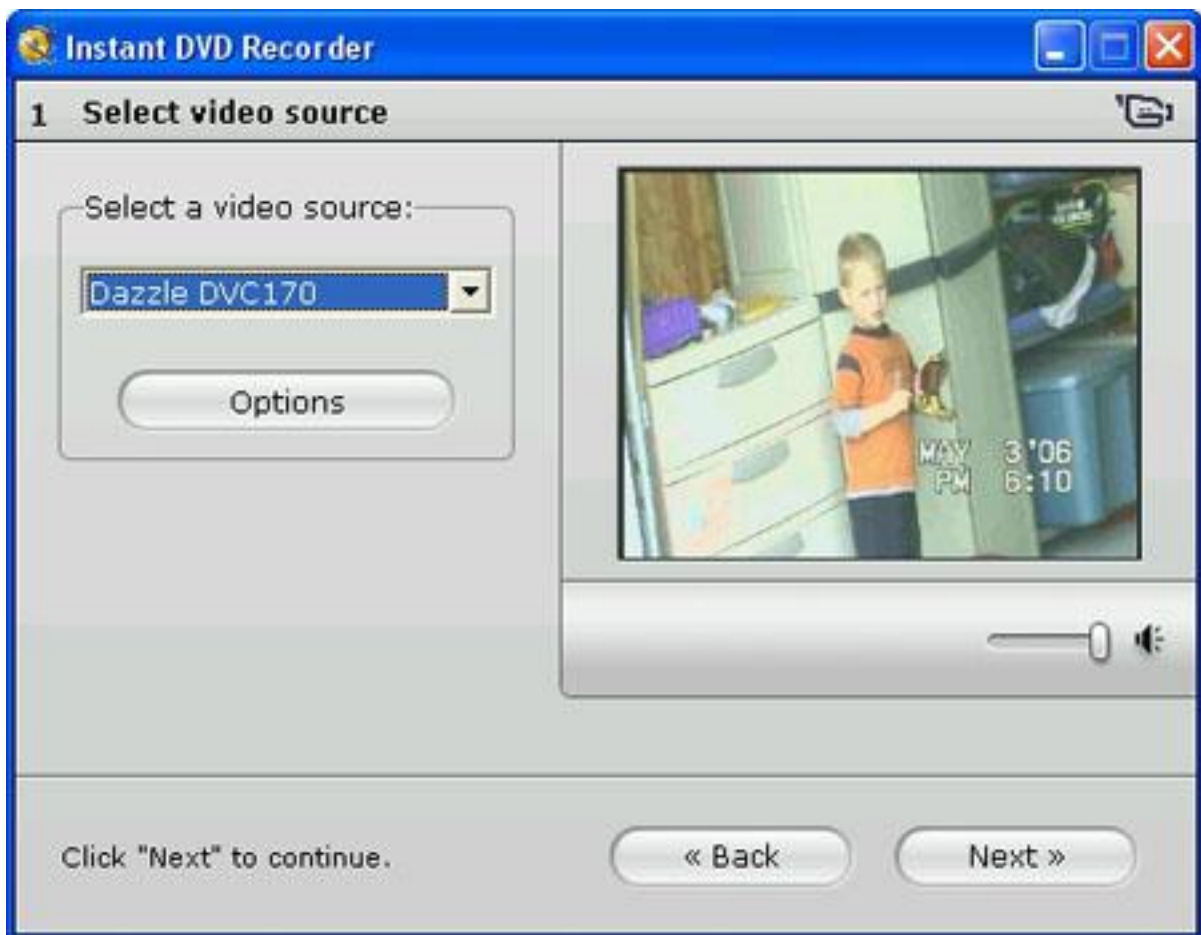
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With your VCR powered on and the Dazzle converter plugged into your PC, launch the Pinnacle Instant DVD Recorder software. Choose the wizard-guided option, which will walk you through the four steps required to create a DVD.

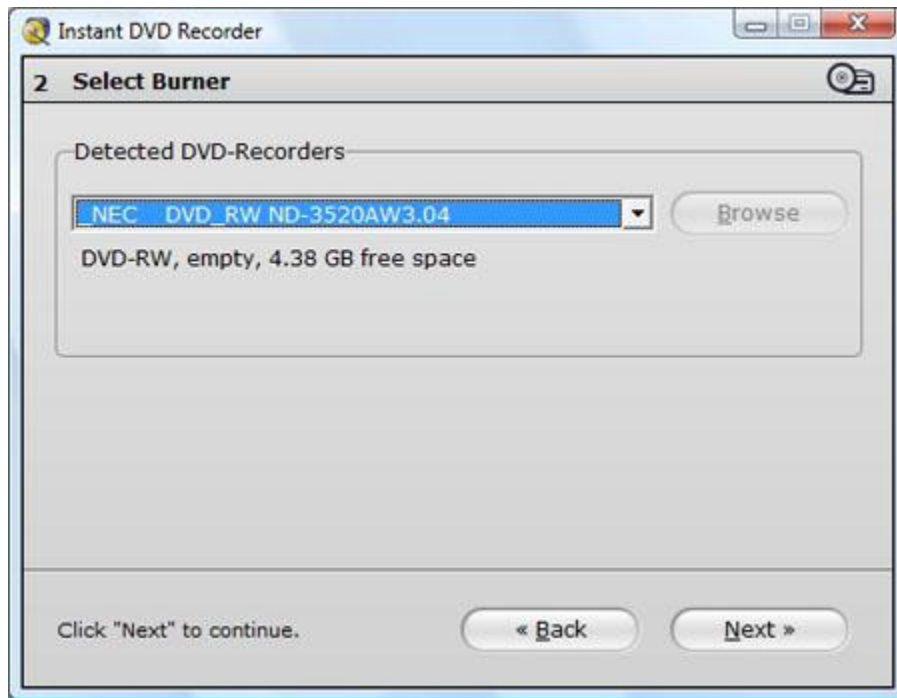
Step one is to choose a capture source. Although technically your VCR is the source of your video, you'll want to choose Dazzle DVC170 (or your video-capture product) from the Capture Source menu. You should immediately see and hear the feed from your VCR in the software's preview window. (If all you see is blue, try playing your tape. Don't worry — nothing's being recorded yet.)



Be sure to choose Dazzle DVC170 from the Capture Source menu.

If you want to adjust the picture settings, click the Options button and move the brightness, contrast, saturation, and/or hue sliders until your video looks its best.

Before proceeding to the next step, insert a blank DVD in your DVD burner. Wait about 10 seconds for the system to recognize the disc, then click Next. Choose your DVD burner from the menu if it's not already listed.



Choose your DVD burner from the menu.

Lesson 4: Choose your menus

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A typical DVD includes a menu system, one that lets you play the video from the beginning or jump to a specific scene. Instant DVD Recorder lets you create DVDs with or without menus. Unless the video you're copying is very short, you'll probably want them — so click Yes on the "Select menu style" screen.



Select menu style

The menu consists of chapters, which the software creates at specified intervals. The longer your video, the higher you'll want to make this interval. If it's an hour, for instance, the default setting (three minutes) will give you about 20 chapters. That's a lot, so consider bumping the interval to five or even 10 minutes.

Next, you'll choose a menu style. Instant DVD Recorder shows you a thumbnail preview and the name of each style; use the scroll bar to find one that's suitable. To fine-tune your chosen menu, click Edit. You'll now be able to make alterations to the background image, chapter frames, overall layout, text style, and even the background music that plays while you're navigating the DVD (if you want any, that is). Just click each of the five tabs across the Custom Menu window to make your selections. When you're done, type a name for your custom menu in the "Style name" field, then click OK. Click Next and you're ready for the next lesson.



Create Custom Menu

Lesson 5: Choose recording settings

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You've got just two quick steps to complete before you start copying your tape to DVD. First, you need to specify a recording time. In other words, how long is your tape? How much video needs to be transferred? Type the number into the appropriate field.

Next, choose a video quality. This will be determined by the amount of video you're copying and the storage capacity of your blank DVD. A single-layer disc can hold about 70 minutes of uncompressed video; double-layer media holds about 140 minutes. As you can see, Instant DVD Recorder gives you four video-quality options: Automatic, Good, Better, and Best. Ideally, you want to choose Best, as that will copy your VHS tape to DVD without applying any compression (which reduces image quality).

For example, if you're copying a 45-minute video, you can use a single-layer disc and set the video quality to Best, no problem. Okay, but what if it's a 90-minute video? If you still want to use single-layer media (or you simply don't have a double-layer DVD burner), you should choose the Automatic setting. The software will compress your video only as much as necessary to fit the available space (which is why there's little reason to choose Good or Better, both of which will invariably over-compress).



Select recording settings

Keep in mind that your source video probably doesn't look that great to begin with (it is, after all, low-resolution VHS material), so try to keep compression to a minimum. If you try to squeeze, say, two hours of video onto a single-layer disc, you're likely to end up with image quality that's mediocre at best.

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