IPod to Computer
(from Kim Komando)

Q. After my computer crashed, I had to reinstall everything. My iPod was linked to the library on my computer before it crashed. So I can't access the music and pictures. Can I retrieve my music and photos off the iPod? Or do I have to delete everything and start over? iTunes wants to erase everything from the iPod and re-associate it with the computer. -- Mayrel in Naples, FL, listening on WNOG 1270 AM

A.  When it comes to backing up data, redundancy is always your best bet.

And, given the constraints of synchronizing your iPod, it's best to keep two copies of an iTunes library – not including what's stored on the iPod.

For those who aren't aware, an iPod can only be synchronized with one computer. This is intended to prevent users from easily sharing their music collections with others. But in situations such as yours, it can be frustrating.

However, there is an easy way to get your music off your iPod. First, connect your iPod to your computer. iTunes will open automatically. It will ask you if you want to associate the iPod with that computer, which will erase all the data.

Do not do anything with iTunes. Rather, open Windows Explorer. You should see your iPod listed as a disk drive. Double-click on it to open it. You'll see several folders listed there. For example, you'll see Notes, Calendars, Contacts and Photos.

You probably won't see the folder you need, iPod_Control. It is a hidden folder. If you don't see it, click Tools>>Folder Options. On the View tab, click "Show hidden files and folders." Click Apply and OK. Now you should see the folder.

When you open the folder, you will see three folders. The one labeled Music contains all your music files. If you open the folder, you'll see more folders numbered sequentially, such as F00, F01, F02, etc.

Inside these folders are your music files. If you take a look, you'll get a shock: The file names look like gibberish. But don't fret.

Copy all of the folders from the iPod onto your computer's hard drive.  This will save as much of your data as possible. But you will probably lose your playlists. And keep in mind that the photos stored on the iPod won't be the full resolution ones that were on your computer. That is, unless you opted to save them to your iPod at full resolution.

Once you've copied the data from the iPod, close out Windows Explorer. In iTunes, click No on the box asking if you want to sync the iPod with your computer. Disconnect your iPod.

Now, you can drag and drop your music into iTunes. From Windows Explorer, select the individual music files (you can select multiple ones) and drag them to the iTunes Library window. Your songs will appear in the library – with the correct file names.

Finally, click Advanced>>Consolidate Library. Then click Consolidate. This will move all your music into the iTunes library, renaming the files with the track information

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