

# TubeGrab User Manual

Version: v0.4.20

## Overview

TubeGrab is a desktop app for downloading audio or video from YouTube and YouTube Music. It stores your preferences in a local `settings.json` so your choices persist between launches.

## Quick Start

1. Paste a YouTube or YouTube Music URL (including `youtu.be` links).
2. Choose a download folder, or click **Default** to use your OS Downloads folder.
3. Select **Download Type** (Audio or Video).
4. Pick an audio format or video container.
5. Click **Download** and watch progress in the log panel.

## Download Types

- **Audio**: Extracts audio and converts it to the chosen format (mp3, m4a, opus).
- **Video**: Downloads the best available video+audio and merges into the chosen container (mp4, mkv).

## Playlist Mode

- **Single item**: Forces a single video even if the URL belongs to a playlist.
- **Playlist (multiple)**: Downloads the full playlist when a playlist URL is provided.
- Playlist downloads are saved into a subfolder named after the playlist. The name is sanitized for cross-OS safety (spaces become `_`, dots become `-`, quotes are removed, invalid path characters are stripped, and Windows-reserved names are prefixed). If the title is unavailable, the folder name defaults to `playlist`.
- Private playlists require authentication. Use the **Cookies** options in the app to read browser cookies or pick a cookies file.

## Smart Defaults

TubeGrab automatically adjusts defaults based on the URL: - YouTube Music links switch to Audio + MP3 + the music template. - YouTube links switch to Video + MP4 + the legacy template. - Playlist URLs toggle playlist mode automatically.

## Toggles

- **Embed thumbnail**: Adds the video thumbnail to the output file when supported.
- **Embed metadata**: Writes metadata and clears the description field for cleaner tags.
- **Dry run (no download)**: Simulates a download without saving files. The app still validates the URL and shows output in the log.
- **Lazy playlist (start faster)**: Starts playlist downloads immediately instead of enumerating every item first.

## JS Runtime & Cookies

Some playlists and videos require a JavaScript runtime for signature solving or authentication. Use the **JS Runtime** selector to enable Deno (auto-download) or Node.js. Private playlists also need authentication; use the **Cookies** options to read browser cookies or pick a cookies file. These options are part of the Pro edition.

## Planned Improvements

- Add in-app sign-in for private playlists so authentication happens inside the app.

## Log Panel

The log panel is hidden by default. Use the **Log Output** accordion header to expand or collapse the panel.

## Settings

The app auto-saves your preferences to `settings.json` in your OS app config folder. Saved items include: - Download folder - Filename template - Download type and formats - Playlist mode - Embed metadata/thumbnail toggles

Windows stores this file under `%LOCALAPPDATA%\tubegrab\TubeGrab\settings.json`. Other platforms use the standard app config location.

## Update Check

On launch, TubeGrab checks for a newer version and will prompt you to open the download page if one is available. If there is no internet connection, the check is skipped.

## Filename Templates

The filename template controls how saved files are named. It uses `yt-dlp` field tokens.

Common tokens: - `%{title}s` - `%{artist}s` (when available) - `%{ext}s`

Examples: - `%{artist}s - %{title}s.%{ext}s` - `%{title}s.%{ext}s`

## Buttons

- **Open Folder:** Opens the current download folder in your file manager.
- **About:** Shows the app version.
- **Donate:** Opens the support page in your browser.
- **Cancel:** Stops the current download.

## Tips & Troubleshooting

- If `yt-dlp` or `ffmpeg` is missing, the app downloads them automatically when you start a download.
- macOS downloads are Apple Silicon (arm64) only: M1, M2, M3, M4.
- On Linux, the automatic tool download targets x86\_64 only; install compatible `yt-dlp/ffmpeg` manually on other architectures.
- If downloads fail, update `yt-dlp` and `ffmpeg` and retry.
- Canceling a download stops the process cleanly without showing an error popup.
- Use the **Default** button to reset the folder to your OS Downloads location.