TubeGrab User Manual

Version: v0.4.18

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.