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Connecting Your Camera to Your Computer with Windows Movie Maker 2

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Before you can start editing video with Windows Movie Maker 2 for Windows XP, you have to make sure you're set up with the right hardware.

Because there is such a wide variety of hardware available, it is impossible to detail every possible configuration. The following list describes some of the basic capture devices and explains how to connect them to your computer. Depending on the capture device and associated hardware you have on your computer, you could use none, one, or several of the listed configurations.

Digital camera connected to an IEEE 1394 card

To get the best quality from your digital video (DV) camera or mini-DV camera, you should have an IEEE 1394 capture card installed on your computer. An IEEE 1394 card is a piece of hardware that passes the information from the DV camera to your computer. Because the data is already in digital form, it can be read and transferred directly to your computer without any processing or conversion. That means you'll enjoy the highest-quality video that is possible with a consumer video camera.

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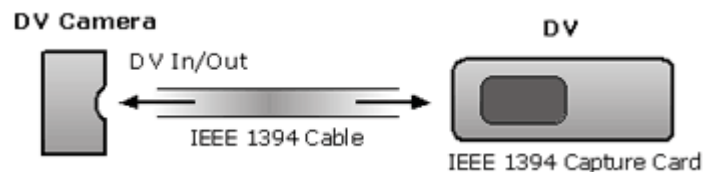


Figure 1: Connecting a DV camcorder to an IEEE 1394 capture card.

DV camera connected to an analog video capture card

If you use a DV camera, but don't have an IEEE 1394 card installed on your computer, you can still capture video recorded with your DV camera as long as you have another video capture card installed on your computer. Because the data that is passed to the capture card must be processed before the computer can use it, when you transfer video from a digital device to an analog capture card, there will be some loss in quality.

When you connect a DV device to your PC using an analog capture card, there are two main types of input: S-video or composite video. If you have the appropriate connectors and your hardware can use either S-video or composite video, you'll probably want to use S-video because it delivers higher-quality picture and sound.

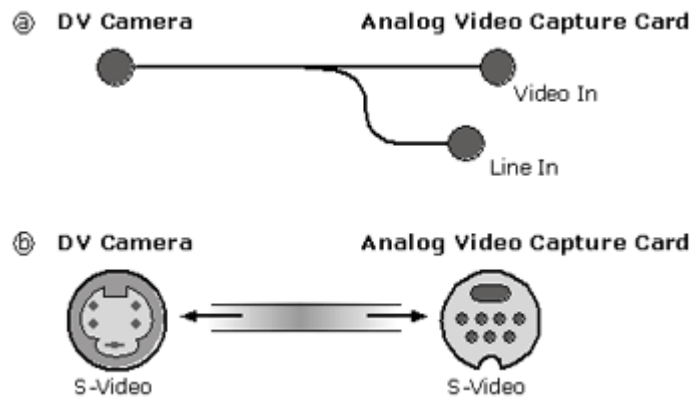


Figure 2: Connecting a DV camcorder to analog composite or S-video inputs.

Analog camcorder connected to an analog video capture card

Analog camcorders include cameras that record in formats such as 8mm, Hi-8, VHS, and S-VHS. When you transfer video from an analog camera to an analog capture card, you won't be able to achieve the picture quality of a DV camera and an IEEE 1394 capture card. However, with analog devices, you can use the software that came with your capture card to adjust the hue, saturation, brightness, contrast, and sound volume levels of your video.

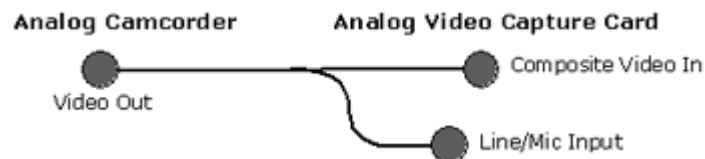


Figure 3: Connecting an analog camcorder to an analog capture card.

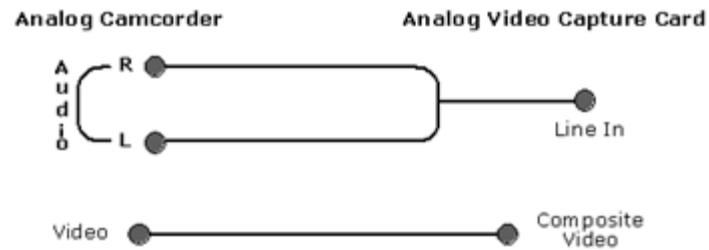


Figure 4: Using separate video and audio connections.

Web camera connected to either USB or analog video capture card

The best way to connect a Web camera to your computer will depend on the type of camera you own. While some cameras can connect to any video capture card, others require that you use a specific capture card for the camera to work. The documentation that came with your Web camera will help you determine what kind of capture card you'll need to use.

In addition, some Web cameras have a built in microphone, while others do not. If your Web camera does not have a built-in microphone, you will need a separate microphone to capture sound. Plug it into the jack (often labeled Mic) on your computer or sound card. If you do not have a microphone and your Web camera does not have one built in, you will not be able to record sound without another audio recording device, such as a camcorder.

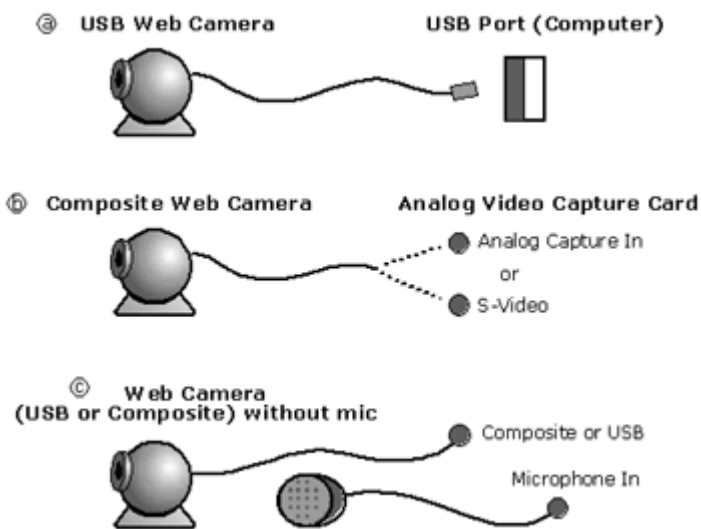


Figure 5: Connecting a Web camera.

VCR connected to an analog video capture card

As video capture cards and TV tuner cards become more common, it is becoming easier to use a computer monitor as a TV. If you have cable television, you can attach a coaxial cable from the cable outlet or the cable decoder box to your VCR, and then attach the video and audio connections to your computer: The video out connects to the video in jack on your video capture card (possibly labeled composite), and the audio jack connects to the line in jack of the sound card.

If you have home movies on standard VHS tapes, this is one way to import them into Movie Maker.

Note If both your VCR and video capture card provide S-video connections, you can connect them with a single S-video cable to transmit both video and sound. See the documentation provided with your VCR and capture card for more information about S-video connections. S-video provides higher-quality pictures and sound than composite video connections.



Figure 6: Connecting a VCR to a video capture card.

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