
**Information technology — Coding of
audio-visual objects —**

**Part 14:
MP4 file format**

Technologies de l'information — Codage des objets audiovisuels —

Partie 14: Format de fichier MP4

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 29, *Coding of audio, picture, multimedia and hypermedia information*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC 14496-14:2003), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the previous edition are the incorporation of ISO/IEC 14496-14:2003/Cor.1:2006 and ISO/IEC 14496-14:2003/Amd.1:2010 as well as some minor editorial changes.

A list of all parts in the ISO/IEC 14496 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document defines MP4 as an instance of the ISO Media File format (ISO/IEC 14496-12).

The general nature of the ISO Media File format is fully exercised by MP4. MPEG-4 presentations can be highly dynamic, and there is an infrastructure — the Object Descriptor Framework — which serves to manage the objects and streams in a presentation. An Initial Object Descriptor serves as the starting point for this framework. In the usage modes documented in the ISO Media File, an Initial Object Descriptor would normally be present, as shown in the following diagrams.

[Figure 1](#) gives an example of a simple interchange file, containing two streams.

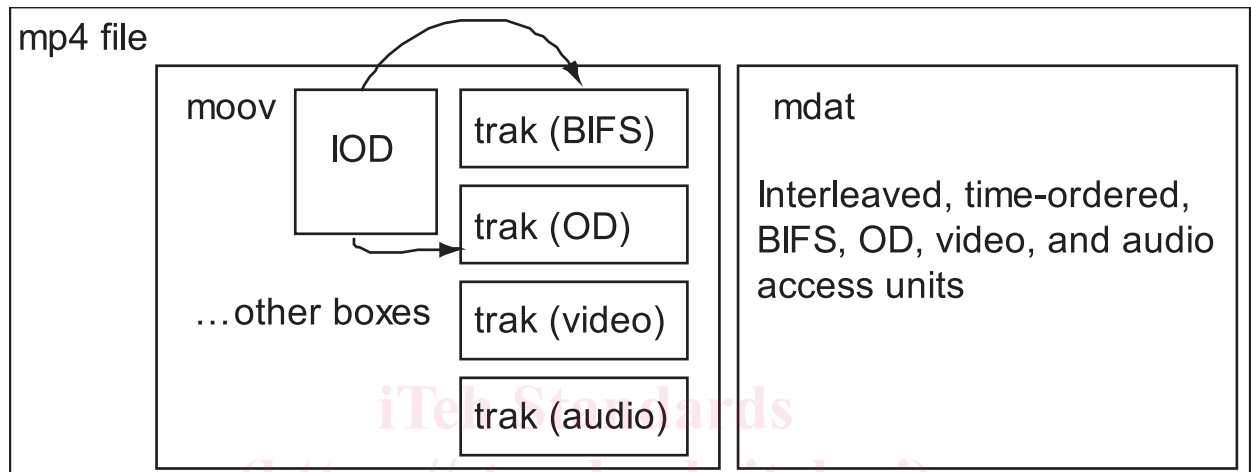


Figure 1 — Simple interchange file

In [Figure 2](#), a set of files being used in the process of content creation is shown.

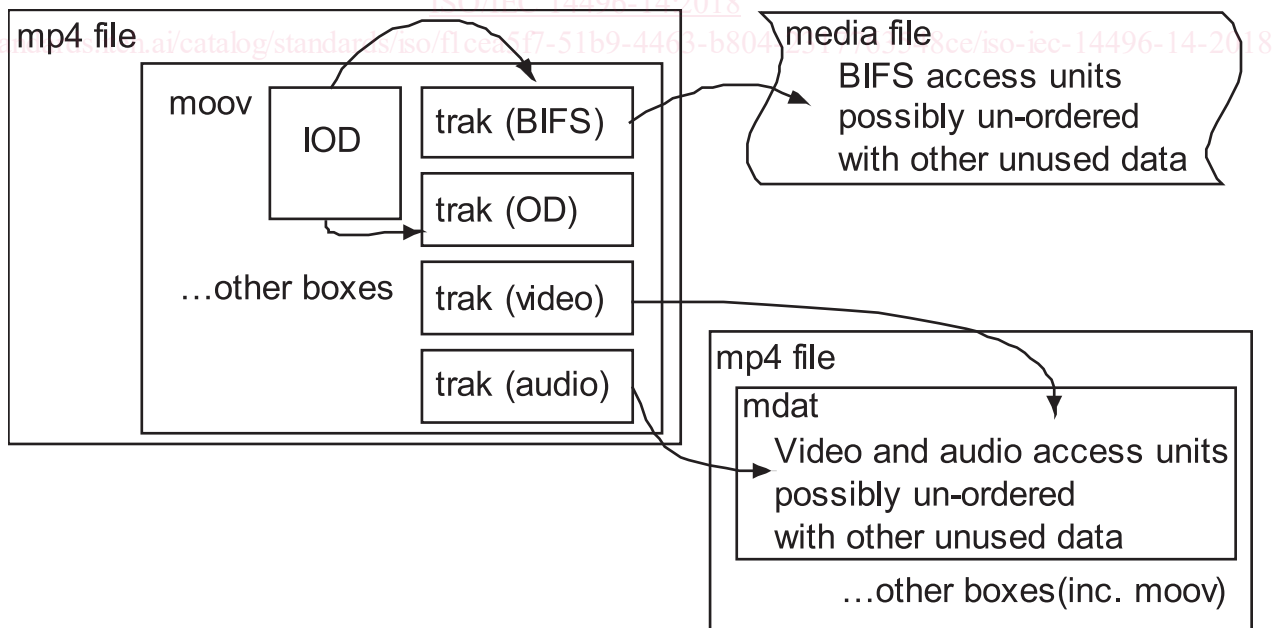


Figure 2 — Content creation file

[Figure 3](#) shows a presentation prepared for streaming over a multiplexing protocol, only one hint track is required.

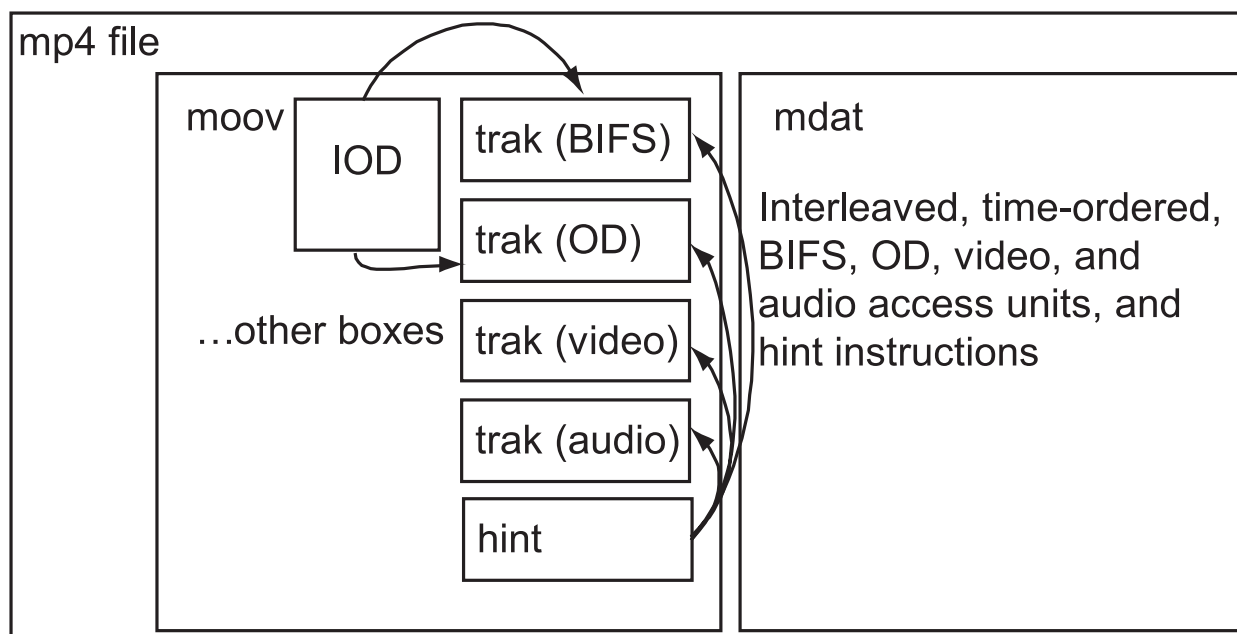


Figure 3 — Hinted presentation for streaming

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Information technology — Coding of audio-visual objects —

Part 14: MP4 file format

1 Scope

This document defines the MP4 file format, as derived from the ISO Base Media File format.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC 14496-1:2010, *Information technology — Coding of audio-visual objects — Part 1: Systems*

ISO/IEC 14496-12:2015, *Information technology — Coding of audio-visual objects — Part 12: ISO Base Media File Format*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 14496-12 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

4 Storage of MPEG-4

4.1 Elementary stream tracks

4.1.1 Elementary stream data

To maintain the goals of streaming protocol independence, the media data is stored in its most 'natural' format, and not fragmented. This enables easy local manipulation of the media data. Therefore media-data is stored as access units, a range of contiguous bytes for each access unit (a single access unit is the definition of a 'sample' for an MPEG-4 media stream). This greatly facilitates the fragmentation process used in hint tracks. The file format can describe and use media data stored in other files, however this restriction still applies. Therefore if a file is to be used which contains 'pre-fragmented' media data (e.g. an M4Mux stream on disc), the media data will need to be copied to re-form the access units, in order to import the data into this file format.

This is true for all stream types in this specification, including such 'meta-information' streams as Object Descriptor and the Clock Reference. The consequences of this are, on the positive side, that the file format treats all streams equally; on the negative side, this means that there are 'internal' cross-links between the streams. This means that adding and removing streams from a presentation will

involve more than adding or deleting the track and its associated media-data. Not only is it necessary that the stream be placed in, or removed from, the scene, the object descriptor stream might also need updating.

For each track the entire ES-descriptor is stored as the sample description or descriptions. The `SLConfigDescriptor` for the media track shall be stored in the file using a default value (predefined = 2), except when the Elementary Stream Descriptor refers to a stream through a URL, i.e. the referred stream is outside the scope of the MP4 file. In that case the `SLConfigDescriptor` is not constrained to this predefined value.

In a transmitted bitstream, the access units in the SL Packets are transmitted on byte boundaries. This means that hint tracks will construct SL Packet headers using the information in the media tracks, and the hint tracks will reference the access units from the media track. The placement of the header during hinting is possible without bit shifting, as each SL Packet and corresponding contained access unit will both start on byte boundaries.

4.1.2 Elementary stream descriptors

The `ESDescriptor` for a stream within the scope of the MP4 file as described in this document is stored in the sample description and the fields and included structures are restricted as follows:

- `ES_ID` – set to 0 as stored; when built into a stream, the lower 16 bits of the `TrackID` are used.
- `streamDependenceFlag` – set to 0 as stored; if a dependency exists, it is indicated using a track reference of type 'dpnd'.
- `URLflag` – kept untouched, i.e.: set to false, as the stream is in the file, not remote.
- `SLConfigDescriptor` – is predefined type 2.
- `OCRStreamFlag` – set to false in the file.

The `ESDescriptor` for a stream referenced through an ES URL is stored in the sample description and the fields and included structures are restricted as follows:

- `ES_ID` – set to 0 as stored; when built into a stream, the lower 16 bits of the `TrackID` are used.
- `streamDependenceFlag` – set to 0 as stored; if a dependency exists, it is indicated using a track reference of type 'dpnd'.
- `URLflag` – kept untouched, i.e.: set to true, as the stream is not in the file.
- `SLConfigDescriptor` – kept untouched.
- `OCRStreamFlag` – set to false in the file.

Note that the `QoSDescriptor` may also need re-writing for transmission as it contains information about PDU sizes, etc.

4.1.3 Object descriptors

The initial object descriptor and object descriptor streams are handled specially within the file format. Object descriptors contain ES descriptors, which in turn contain stream specific information. In addition, to facilitate editing, the information about a track is stored as an `ESDescriptor` in the sample description within that track. It shall be taken from there, re-written as appropriate, and transmitted as part of the OD stream when the presentation is streamed.

As a consequence, ES descriptors are not stored within the OD track or initial object descriptor. Instead, the initial object descriptor has a descriptor used only in the file, containing solely the track ID of the elementary stream. When used, an appropriately re-written `ESDescriptor` from the referenced track replaces this descriptor. Likewise, OD tracks are linked to ES tracks by track references. Where

an `ESDescriptor` would be used within the OD track, another descriptor is used, which again occurs only in the file. It contains the index into the set of `mpod` track references that this OD track owns. A suitably re-written `ESDescriptor` replaces it by the hinting of this track.

The `ES_ID_Inc` is used in the Object Descriptor Box:

```
class ES_ID_Inc extends BaseDescriptor : bit(8) tag=ES_IDIncTag {
    unsigned int(32)    Track_ID;    // ID of the track to use
}
```

`ES_ID_IncTag = 0x0E` is reserved for file format usage.

The `ES_ID_Ref` is used in the OD stream:

```
class ES_ID_Ref extends BaseDescriptor : bit(8) tag=ES_IDRefTag {
    bit(16)    ref_index;    // track ref. index of the track to use
}
```

`ES_ID_RefTag = 0x0F` is reserved for file format usage.

`MP4_IOD_Tag = 0x10` is reserved for file format usage.

`MP4_OD_Tag = 0x11` is reserved for file format usage.

`IPI_DescrPointerRefTag = 0x12` is reserved for file format usage.

`ES_DescrRemoveRefTag = 0x07` is reserved for file format usage (command tag).

NOTE The above tag values are defined in ISO/IEC 14496-1:2010, 7.2.2.1 and 7.2.2.3.2 (Tables 1 and 2), and the actual values are referenced from those tables.

A hinter may need to send more OD events than actually occur in the OD track: for example, if the `ES` description changes at a time when there is no event in the OD track. In general, any OD events explicitly authored into the OD track should be sent along with those necessary to indicate other changes. The `ES` descriptor sent in the OD track is taken from the description of the temporally next sample in the `ES` track (in decoding time).

4.2 Track identifiers

The track identifiers used in an MP4 file are unique within that file; no two tracks may use the same identifier.

Each elementary stream in the file is stored as a media track. In the case of an elementary stream, the lower two bytes of the four-byte `track_ID` shall be set to the elementary stream identifier (`ES_ID`); the upper two bytes of the `track_ID` are zero in this case. Hint tracks may use track identifier values in the same range, if this number space is adequate (which it generally is). However, hint track identifiers may also use larger values of track identifier, as their identifiers are not mapped to elementary stream identifiers. Thus very large presentations may use the entire 16-bit number space for elementary stream identifiers.

The next track identifier value, found in `next_track_ID` in the `MovieHeaderBox`, as defined in the ISO Base Media Format, generally contains a value one greater than the largest track identifier value found in the file. This enables easy generation of a track identifier under most circumstances. However, if this value is equal to or larger than 65535, and a new media track is to be added, then a search in the file is needed for a free track identifier. If the value is all 1s (32-bit maxint) then this search is needed for all additions.

If it is desired to add a track with a known track identifier (elementary stream identifier) then it is necessary to search to ensure that there is no conflict. Note that hint tracks can be re-numbered fairly

easily while more care should be taken with media tracks, as there may be references to their `ES_ID` (`track ID`) in other tracks.

If hint tracks have track IDs outside the allowed range for elementary stream tracks, then next track ID documents the next available hint track ID. Since this is larger than 65535, a search will then always be needed to find a valid elementary stream track ID.

If two presentations are merged, then there may be conflict between their track IDs. In that case, one or more tracks will have to be re-numbered. There are two actions to be taken here:

- Changing the ID of the track itself, which is easy (`track ID` in the track header).
- Changing pointers to it.

The pointers may only occur in the file format structure itself. The file format uses track IDs only through track references, which are easily found and modified. Track IDs become `ES_IDs` in the MPEG-4 data, and `ES_IDs` occur within the OD Stream. Since all pointers to `ES_IDs` in the OD stream are replaced by means of track references there is no need to inspect the OD stream for cross-references within MPEG-4 streams.

In the file format, `ES_DescriptorRemove` command and `IPI_DescriptorPointer` descriptor are converted to `ES_DescrRemoveRef` and `IPI_DescriptorRef` by:

- changing the tag value to `ES_DescrRemoveRefTag` or `IPI_DescriptorRefTag` respectively,
- changing any `ES_ID` to the appropriate track reference index (using references of type `mpod` and `ipir` respectively – see [subclause 4.3](#)).

When hinting or serving, the tag value and track reference index changes shall be reversed.

4.3 Synchronization of streams

In the absence of explicit declarations to the contrary, tracks (streams) coming from the same file shall be presented synchronized. This means that hinters and/or servers have to either pick one of the streams to serve as the OCR source for the others or add an OCR stream to associate all the streams with it. Track references of type 'sync' may be used in the file to defeat the default behaviour. In MPEG-4 the `OCRStreamFlag` and `OCR_ES_ID` fields in the `ESDescriptor` govern the synchronization relationships. The mapping of MP4 structures into those fields shall obey the following rules:

- The MPEG-4 `ESDescriptor`, as stored in the file, usually contains `OCRStreamFlag` set to `FALSE`, and no `OCR_ES_ID`. If an `OCR_ES_ID` is set, it is ignored.
- If a track (stream) contains a track reference of type 'sync' whose value is 0, then the hinter or server shall set the `OCRStreamFlag` field in the MPEG-4 `ESDescriptor` to `FALSE` and shall not insert any `OCR_ES_ID` field. This means that this stream is not synchronized to another, but other streams may be synchronized to it.
- If a track (stream) contains a track reference of type 'sync' whose value is not 0, then the hinter or server shall set the `OCRStreamFlag` field in the MPEG-4 `ESDescriptor` to `TRUE` and shall insert an `OCR_ES_ID` field with the same value contained in the 'sync' track reference. This means that this stream is synchronized to the stream indicated in the `OCR_ES_ID`. Other streams may also be synchronized to the same stream, either explicitly or implicitly.
- If a track (stream) does not contain a track reference of type 'sync', then the default behaviour applies. The hinter or server shall set the `OCRStreamFlag` field in the MPEG-4 `ESDescriptor` to `TRUE` and shall insert an `OCR_ES_ID` field with a value selected based on the rules below. This