

# Audio-Consumer Buying Guide

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## Myths of Audio Explained

MYTHS	FACTS
<b>General</b>	
I need two audio systems, one for my music and another one for movies.	<p>While this would give you some extra flexibility, many of today's audio systems can do both well. Consider that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most multi-channel receivers and processors have a stereo-only mode so you can enjoy your current music collection in two-channel mode.</li> <li>• Many two-channel recordings reveal extra depth and complexity when played back through a Dolby Pro Logic II® or DTS Neo®: 6 decoder.</li> <li>• There are hundreds of multi-channel music discs available today.</li> </ul>
I hate buying consumer electronics because I know that whatever I buy now will be obsolete in a year or two.	<p>Not true today, especially in audio! "Backwards compatibility" means that new technologies benefit all sources. For example, DVD players play CDs. And Dolby Pro Logic II® or DTS Neo®: 6 decoders do a great job with your older two-channel sources, even cassettes! Buy with confidence!</p>
<b>Sources</b>	
The analog outputs on a CD player sound much better than the digital outputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All CDs carry musical information in digital form and those "0s" and "1s" have to be converted to analog waveforms somewhere – in the CD player itself, a separate D/A converter, or in a receiver or processor. The important thing is the real-world quality of the conversion and the analog stage that follows. And that can be judged only on a case-by-case basis.</li> </ul>
Dolby Digital and DTS are always 5.1 channel surround formats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not true. Both Dolby Digital® and DTS® can carry up to a 5.1 channel sound track but don't have to. So a Dolby Digital® or DTS® sound track may be mono. Or stereo. Or three-channel (left and right front channels and a single surround channel). Or anything up to 5.1 channels. You'll have to check your DVD to make sure just how many channels are on the sound track..</li> <li>• Dolby Digital EX® and DTS ES® encoded discs, on the other hand, usually carry a 6.1 channel sound track. And generally do. (The extra channel is a "center back" channel.)</li> </ul>
THX is better than Dolby Digital or DTS.	<p>Lots of people are confused by this one. THX is nothing like Dolby Digital® or DTS®. Both Dolby® and DTS® provide the pipeline to get up to 5.1 channels (or 6.1 if you're talking "EX" or "ES") of information into your system. Once a THX certified receiver or processor sorts out the channels with either Dolby® or DTS® decoding, it sends those signals through additional THX developed circuitry to make home theater reproduction closer to a real theater experience.</p>
MP3 is fine for headphones, but not for my audio system.	<p>MP3 certainly isn't what some audio enthusiasts would call "high fidelity." In fact, some MP3 encoded tracks are really poor sounding. But most, particularly those tracks encoded at one of MP3's higher bit rates, can be quite good. And with so many solutions available for listening to MP3 music through your audio system, it's easy to listen at home as well as on the go.</p>
<b>Command and Control</b>	
The most important component in an audio video system is the receiver.	<p>This is VERY wrong! The single most important component in any system is the loudspeaker. And the second most important component (the one we can't really replace either) is the room in which we put those loudspeakers. That being said, a receiver (or a processor/power amp combination) is pretty important, but the sonic signature of loudspeakers varies greatly. Spend some time and choose carefully.</p>
If you buy a 100 watt per channel receiver, you need to match it to 100 watt speakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, try to select speakers with a bit more power handling capacity than your receiver's power per channel rating. It's no guarantee, but at least you'll be on the right track.</li> </ul>
If I want my music to be twice as loud I need a receiver that is double the power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not true. At all. All else being equal, you'll need a receiver with ten times the power of your current model to play twice as loud! If your current unit produces 100 watts/channel, you'd need a receiver that kicked out 1,000 watts (one kilowatt!) per channel to play twice as loud. But there are no 1,000 watt/channel receivers, are there?</li> <li>• And remember speaker limitations, too. Even if you could find a kilowatt/channel receiver, how long would your speaker stand up to it? And how much distortion would your speaker produce when you hit it with that much power?</li> <li>• A better answer than more power might be to substitute speakers with a higher sensitivity rating. That will increase volume without the need for a larger amp.</li> </ul>