

Spotify slaps limits on free music service

April 14 2011



A man listens to music playing through a mobile phone. Swedish music streaming service Spotify has said it would cut back on its free version, slashing the amount of times a track can be played and the total amount of music users can listen to.

Swedish music streaming service Spotify said on Thursday it would cut back on its free version, slashing the amount of times a track can be played and the total amount of music users can listen to.

Spotify co-founder Daniel Ek said in a post on Spotify's official blog that new users would be able to enjoy the free services "as it is today" for the first six months.

"As of May 1, any user who signed up to the free service on or before November 1, 2010 will be able to play each track for free up to a total of five times. Users who signed up after the beginning of November will see these changes applied six months after the time they set up their

[Spotify](#) account," Ek said.

The total amount of [music](#) users of Spotify's free service can access per month will also be slashed six months after they join Spotify.

"The total listening time for free users will be limited to 10 hours per month after the first six months," Ek explained.

Spotify stressed the changes would mainly affect the heavy users of its free version, saying most users accessed the service to discover new music.

As for the limit on the amount of times a song can be played "the average user won't reach the limit on plays for seven out of 10 tracks, after a year of using Spotify," Ek said.

The Swedish company said last month it had reached one million paying customers -- a number that doubled in under a year -- and Ek said the ratio of paying [subscribers](#) to free users was 15 percent, which put the total amount of Spotify users at 6.5 million as of last month.

Founded in 2006, Spotify is one of the world's largest streaming websites and is available only in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Britain, France, Spain and the Netherlands because of copyright issues.

The service reached one million total users two years ago. In July 2010, it had about 500,000 paying users.

Spotify users can stream music for free from the service in exchange for listening to advertising, but can also pay five or 10 euros (\$6.9 or \$13.8 dollars) to gain ad-free access to the service.

The 10-euro version allows users to listen to their playlists whilst offline

and to access their music through their mobile phones.

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Citation: Spotify slaps limits on free music service (2011, April 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-spotify-limits-free-music.html>

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