

# Splitting and Extracting MPEG video files with MEncoder

January 02, 2012

One of the nice things about [MythTV](#) is that it lets me save any broadcast as an unencrypted, [DRM-free mpeg](#) file.

I recently found out how to use [MEncoder](#) to split and trim those mpeg files into single or multiple clips.

MEncoder is a good tool to use because it's free (as in [both freedom and beer](#)), and runs on all major platforms (there are even [pre-built binaries for Mac OSX](#)).

MEncoder has two command line options, `-ss` and `-endpos`, which let you define the start or end position of the clip you want to extract.

Unfortunately, [the default command](#) doesn't work with mpeg files.

The work-around is to convert the mpeg file to avi format first:

```
$ mencoder original.mpeg -ovc lavc -oac lavc -o original.avi
```

Then, create a copy starting or ending at a given point in time, defined as `hour:minute:second` using either the `-ss` or `-endpos` options.

For example, to extract a clip from the 17 minute 50 second mark to the 57 minute 47 second mark from a one-hour file, these two commands will do the trick:

```
$ mencoder -ss 00:17:50 -oac copy -ovc copy original.avi -o clip_start.avi
$ mencoder -endpos 00:39:57 -oac copy -ovc copy clip_start.avi -o clip.avi
```

Note that the `-endpos` was recalculated for the second command as 39:57, not 57:47.

That's because the `clip_start.avi` file is 17 minutes and 50 seconds shorter than the original, and so we need to recalculate the clip end position in terms of the new length.

The file `clip.avi` contains the clip from 17:50 to 57:47 extracted from the original file, and we can discard the intermediate `clip_start.avi` file.

It takes two commands because MEncoder seems to ignore the second `-ss` or `-endpos` option it finds, and uses just the first one.

It would be nice if it would just let us do this instead:

```
$ mencoder -ss 00:17:50 -endpos 00:57:47 -oac copy -ovc copy original.avi -o clip.avi
```

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