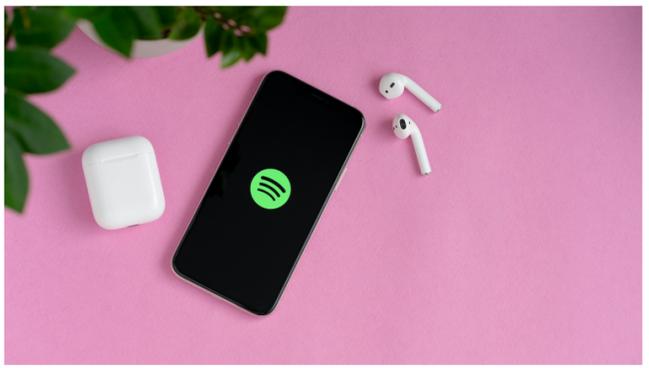


Spotify: How to compare to the most popular music streaming service?

by Sydney Fishback

If you're debating between what service is worth trying, or driving yourself in circles to figure out what makes this platform better than yours, then welcome; I invite you to continue reading. In an age full of technology, we can find anything at the tap of a finger. Narrow that down to music and podcasts, and well you're left with an insanely amount of search results to pick from. Back in the stone age, when there were cassette tapes and portable CD players, you were limited to what you had from your collection and convenience. It takes time and investment to have a well-developed collection. Well fortunately enough, we don't have to worry about trips to buy that 1 album or scramble to find that misplaced tape. Don't get me wrong, there is nostalgia and a sense of comfort walking into a record shop or using your dad's Walkman. Yet, what if there could be a level up to your listening game? Want to take a guess? Here's a hint: with Spotify, you can have access to over 140 million songs... which sounds pretty sweet if you ask me.

You might be wondering, well what's so great about it? Spotify is a digital streaming service that gives its members a plethora of audio and media for free (yes - FREE). The platform entered the game back in 2006 when founders, Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon created the startup in Sweden. In 2015, Spotify made its big climb to fame and becoming the lead trailblazer for many. Continuing to grow year after year, their ability to bring in billions of revenue, allows them to provide the best variety to music and podcasts—wherever and whenever. With top competitors such as Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Pandora, Spotify still ranks in at #1 in popularity, with over 271 million active users listening globally.



Want to know how they do it?

Listen up.



1. Membership: Which listener are you?

Despite being dominated by Millennials, Spotify reaches a large audience, ranging from 18-55+ years old. They are very cognizant of all their listeners and make an effort to find different avenues that fit best for each individual. Now, what does that mean exactly? Options. By creating options, there is a plan that accommodates every lifestyle, and while keeping cost affordable. You could throw in a cherry on top for the long trial periods as well. This gives enough time for the listener to have the chance to enjoy the upgrade features, as decide if it's the right fit for them.

So first things first – creating an account. Spotify is pretty simple. You input an email of your choice and password to create your profile – boom! From there, you go onto customizing your profile by entering your name, picture, and birthday. There is an option available to login through Facebook, which syncs user settings over if desired. Once a profile is set, a basic streaming plan is put into action. These can always change upon the user's wishes to upgrade at any time and may be found under 'Settings'. Here is a guide showcasing the different plans offered.

BASIC

Foundation of every listener. It's the plan you are automatically enrolled in when creating an account.

- Listen freely with advertisements
- Limited Skips to 6 per hour
- No free downloads

\$0 / month

PREMIUM DUO

Intended for pairs or couples living under one room, providing 2 accounts.

- Premium + 2 accounts plus a Duo mix curated for music both accounts enjoy

\$12.99 / month, 1 month trial

PREMIUM

Upgrade from Basic.

- No ad interruptions
- Unlimited Skips
- On-demand Playback
- Listen offline

\$9.99 / month, 3 month trial

PREMIUM STUDENT:

Arguably for the college students out there eating ramen every night – they were looking out for you with this one.

- Premium + Hulu + SHOWTIME

\$4.99 / month (with student email), 1 month trial

PREMIUM FAMILY

No more interruptions while sharing.

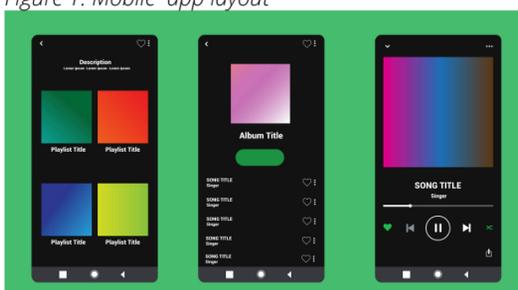
- Premium + 6 accounts + a Family playlist created for you all + Block explicit music + Spotify Kids

\$14.99/month, 1 month trial

Learn more about which plan sounds right for you. [Spotify plans](#)

2. Experience: What's your preference?

Figure 1: Mobile app layout



The platform may be accessed on a desktop and an app for Smartphones. In a SEMRUSH analytics report, 55% of listeners were on desktop with the other 45% on the app. Featuring its iconic, bright green, and black branding, Spotify is not shy to experiment with bold color and shapes. It's not only easy on the eyes, but its pops of color are what gives it that spunk. Although

similar, there are small tweaks between the two. On a desktop, there is a physically larger difference in view, resulting in a better-overall layout. However, navigation on the app is seamless throughout and is user friendly. The app also features a "Car Mode" activation that automatically enlarges all text on screen when driving behind the wheel. This is an act of safety prevention against texting and driving, as it encourages the driver to interact less with their phones. It solves the squinting problem that's for sure! The feature has an option to be turned off if preferred. Both platforms offer private sessions which allows a listener to access anything incognito aka without their followers seeing what they're listening to. A huge difference between the two is wifi necessity. A Smartphone could run off wifi and on cellular data whereas a desktop needs wifi. All in all, regardless which way is used, they both do justice, and all content are still easily accessible on either or.

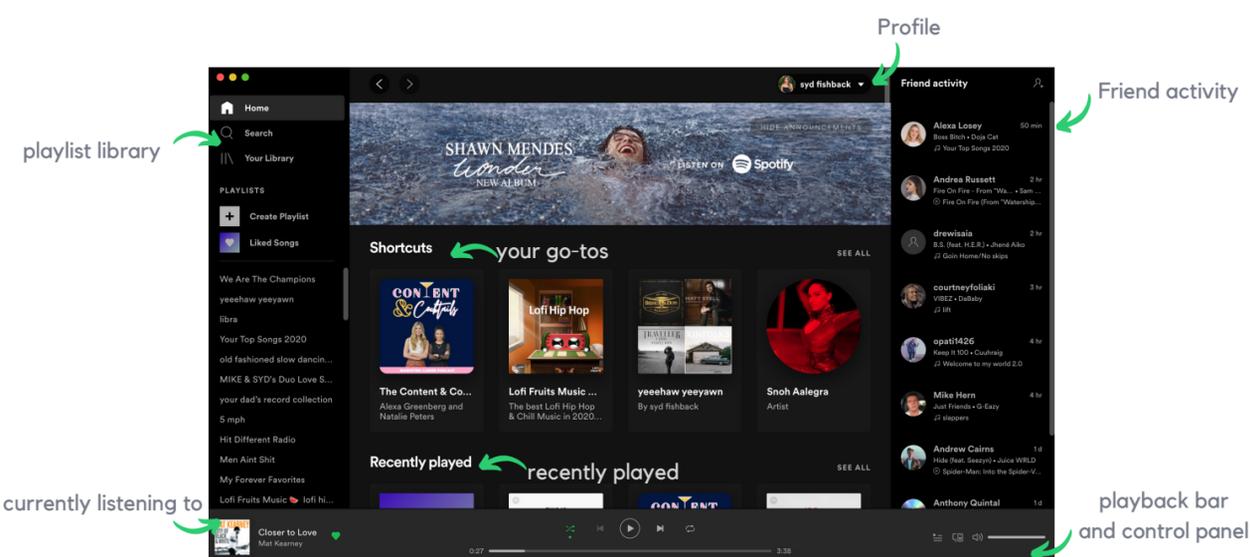


Figure 2: Desktop front page

Oh, one more thing –

With the help of a toggle button near playback, there is an ability to switch the device you're listening on to another device of yours with the software or app. It's great for fueling your workouts when having your mobile device next to you, but wanting distance from the desktop which could be farther away from your setup. Any time a transfer is made regardless, it resumes from where you left off on your last used device.

3. Social: Connecting through sound

Engagement without a traditional feed calls for innovative thinking. The act of showing love or liking is translated with the tap of a heart shaped button. Once tapped, the heart turns green. Spotify currently encourages social interaction through its 'Friends activity' element, displaying it's listeners and the listening activity of people they follow. If Facebook is synced, all contacts with Spotify will show the ability to add as a friend. This is a fun way of engaging with others even when there is no direct-verbal dialogue.



What you listen to can say a lot about how you feel. Sometimes it's not that deep, but sometimes, it could indicate the need to reach out to a friend based on that sad playlist you caught them checking out—or that 'post-breakup' podcast. The cool thing here is that you can follow a page of someone you discovered, maybe an artist, and still see those updates. For celebrities, there may be a struggle with that, but for the majority, you can. In addition, Spotify is always putting out new content that is relevant and relatable, which in turn promotes social engagement when people reference the app in their daily conversations.

4. Individuality: Curated just for you

From *Discover Weekly*, to *Daily Mixes*, there are a number of fixed playlists made specifically and solely for each, individual user. Through Spotify's algorithm, it takes in all aspects of listening history and creates a variety of playlists from every little detail—from your most frequently listened artists to songs on repeat. There is a playlist for everything and it feels so cool when it's tailored to your liking.

Here are some notable favorites:

Discover Weekly: This is a way of discovering new music as Spotify collects data your music tendencies. Each week, a new playlist is generated, full of songs the algorithm predicts you will like. **(a)**

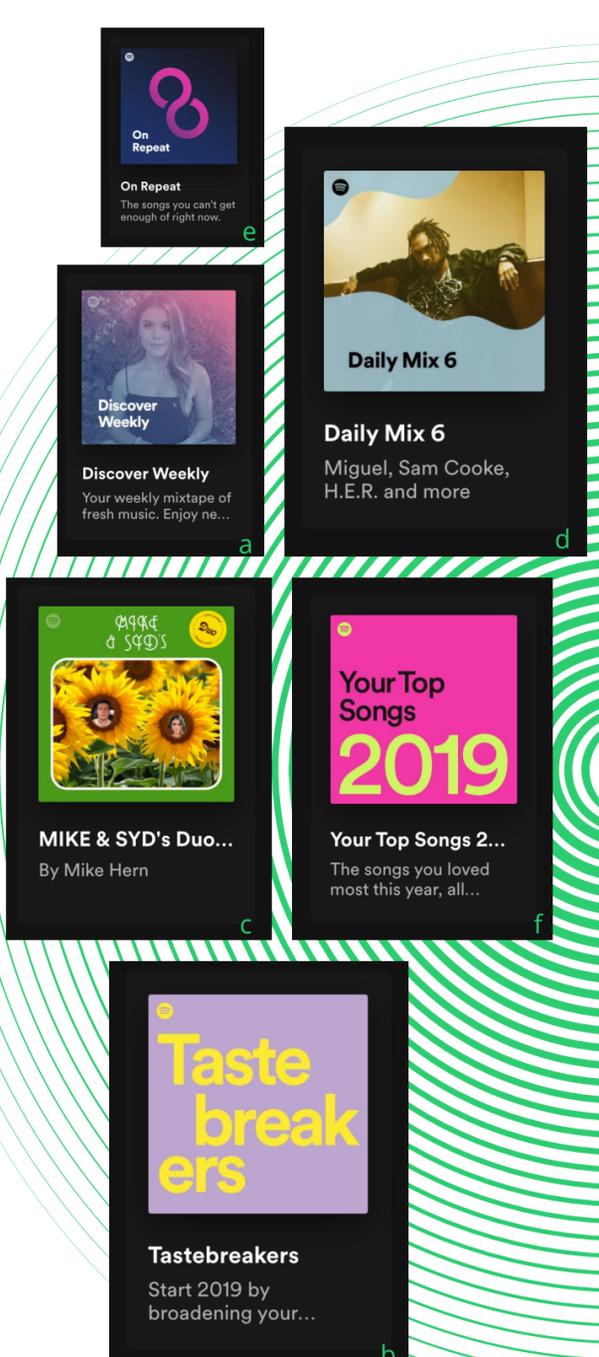
Tastebreakers: A long playlist created by the end of every year as a recommendation of some different artists to try out based on artists listened throughout the year**(b)**

The Love Duo Playlist: This past Summer, this popped up as a creative way for the algorithm to generate a playlist based on a questionnaire about your love relationship. Similarly to creating your own playlist, customizations of the album cover were provided which placed headshot images of you and your partner over a ridiculous, yet cute, cut out head graphic. **(c)**

Daily Mixes: Definitely most used when in the car and driving. Each playlist has roughly 20-50 songs. There are 6 mixes with each one grouping artists you currently listen to already. The album visuals always look the best. **(d)**

On Repeat: As it says.. a go-to for when you wanna bust out that song you love for the 100th time in a row, with zero judgement. **(e)**

Your Top Songs 20?? Some songs truly belong to a time of life and what better way to have that categorized of the songs you loved the most in a given time. **(f)**



Playlists are the peanut butter and jelly for this platform. It's what it thrives to do so well in. From a simple master playlist composed of all your liked songs; to a playlist dedicated to each zodiac; to every genre; there is freedom on how people can organize their songs. Pro-tip: organizing playlists make locating a song so much easier, instead of back scrolling through all liked songs which could take forever. Alternatively, there is a search engine within each individual playlist to make that hunt much easier.

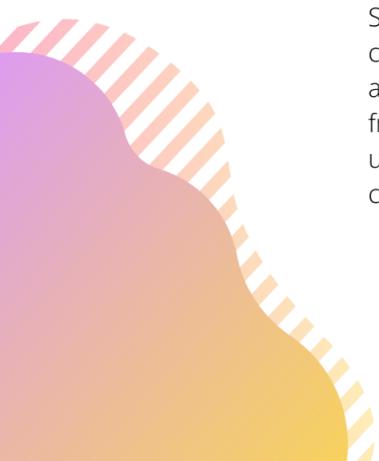
Playlists are like a form of art. For some, it works as an outlet by creating something to capture a feeling. Some examples can include: working out, studying, getting over a breakup, or a road trip with best friends. The fun part is customizing the album cover and giving it a name! There is an option to make it private or public for others to discover.

The possibilities are endless when creating playlists. From a humanizing standpoint to the work of an AI's algorithm, there is a niche for every single thing. The search engine can locate keywords on all content to provide top results for what you are looking for. Should be noted: this isn't just exclusive to music, but to podcasts as well.

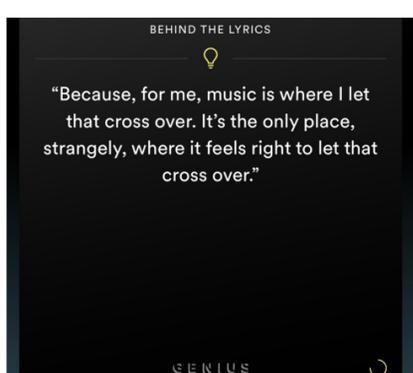
Spotify gives a space for embracing all of what makes up an individual and gives their listeners all the free rein to explore into new territories of music, knowledge and creativity.

5. Infographic: Tell me more!

Spotify is not shy to providing immaculate designs and captivating layouts for its platforms. There are always aesthetic graphics paired with audible content, ranging from textual images, fun facts, bright campaigns, and a use of dynamic video visuals. Clearly, Spotify is a constant cycle of entertainment.

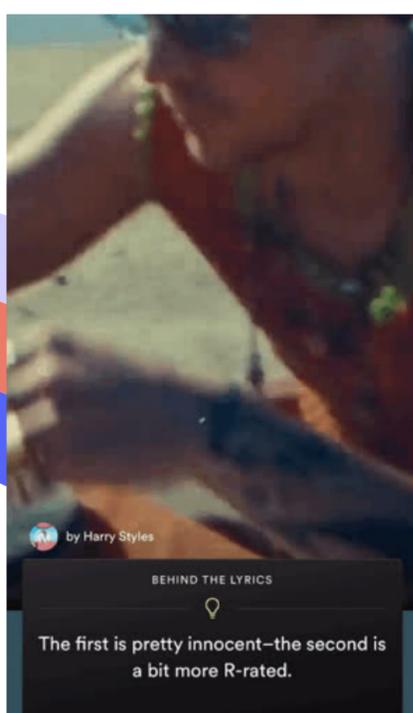


In 2016, Spotify partnered with Genius, an annotating lyric platform, to create "Fact Track" which is a clever name for a soundtrack that spits all the FAQs a listener might have about a song. All albums have their released cover art, but some have a provided video montage. This video is a short loop that the artist chose for that song, many times it is a snippet from the song's music video. It plays with the track of the song, and cues the lyrics as well (see *figure 3a and 3b*) Not all songs have this feature, so when you come across it, take advantage of it!



Pictured Right:

Top: Figure 3a (lyrics), Bottom: Figure 3b (montage, lyrics, facts).
Musical Artist: Harry Styles
Song: "Watermelon Sugar"



The start of 'Wrapped: A Year in Review' debuted in 2019, creating buzz among all listeners, curious about their data consumed throughout that last year. Spotify does two versions, one for the Global Spotify community, and one for every individual. It composes a list of rankings, cultivated from data from all listeners. Accessed through their website on mobile and desktop, active members will login to retrieve their personalized report. A list of insights are made and from there, well-surprise! Finding out your year in review is exciting, interesting, or even predictable. However, it dives into curiosity and amusement. Every member has the ability to share their insider report on multiple social media platforms. Through this form of UGC (User-Generated Content), the brand's popularity increases. You start seeing everyone's feed full of this personalized list, and suddenly want to know how to get it on the trend. It's like rushing to the back of a yearbook for the superlatives, but instead it's geared towards your audible library. People love to learn more about themselves and the world, so getting to do so in this fun way is genius!



6. Allyship: Take a stand for others

Spotify excels at being an advocate for their listeners. 2020 has amplified the importance of being compassionate to others, and now it is extremely imperative to acknowledge, learn, and grow. One of the best ways to do that is by educating yourself on larger issues, and Spotify brings that awareness to listeners who may not be aware.

One of the biggest spotlights to focus on is racial inequality among the Black community. This summer, the world shook with the murder of George Floyd, another black life killed at the hands of a police officer. Spotify took a stand to show their support in the long needed change in the fight against racism and injustice. On June, 2, 2020, Spotify dedicated a day called "Black Out Tuesday" to project the voices of Black creators and address the demand for change towards Black lives. Soon after, a 'Black Lives Matter' playlist and a "Black History Month" hub were created to educate and inspire. The company then donated 10 million dollars to BLM charities.

During the month of June, Spotify continued to show their support to LGBTQIA+ creators and members with a dedicated page to Pride month composed of artists, podcast hosts, songwriters, playlists and more.

Playlists devoted to bring appreciation for different ethnic backgrounds can also be found in the search column with the different music genres. From 'Caribbean, Arab, Desi, and Afro,' there is representation being shown. There could definitely be more, but it is a start to the expansion of inclusivity for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).

Spotify has been evident of being open arms to all listeners, which allows them to succeed as a company. In order to have their fans' support, they have to give support to *all* of their fans which encompasses a mass of all backgrounds. As a support for many, it provides a resource for others by invoking awareness to love all.



The background is a light yellow gradient. It features several decorative elements: small yellow squares, pink and purple wavy lines, and large, overlapping organic shapes in shades of green, pink, and purple. Some of these shapes have diagonal stripes.

"...creates the **most memorable experience** for everyone..."

Becoming the leading digital music streaming service is far from simple—it takes time, intricate, and well thought out planning. It is progressive, innovative and and regularly bettering itself. It inspires its members and its competitors. Understanding your audience is what this brand does so well, and as a result, both creators and listeners come back for more. The hidden secret lies within its values which has shown its colors, evident in the brand's visuals. It's accessibility and easy to use formatting, makes it available to a larger audience spectrum. While highlighting the individual, the importance of community channels through in every aspect. Spotify outperforms because it creates the most memorable experience for *everyone*, every time.