



Metadata Basics

Get it right once, everywhere.

Essential metadata fields, ISRC and UPC codes explained, and how naming, credits, and genre tagging actually differ on Anghami, Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, YouTube Music and TikTok.



12

CHARACTER ISRC

1

UPC PER RELEASE

The same metadata, delivered once through WKS, populates every platform below — but a few have their own rules about what can and can't go in a title, how featuring artists are credited, or how accurate your genre tag needs to be. The shared fields and identifiers are laid out once, then each platform's own section covers only what's different.

Last updated: September 2026. This guide is produced by WKS Music Distribution as an independent walkthrough of each platform's metadata rules — it is not official documentation published by Anghami, Spotify, Apple, Amazon, YouTube, or TikTok. Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube (Content ID), Amazon Music for Artists, Anghami, and SoundOn (TikTok's own distribution arm) all publish some guidance directly, and this guide draws on that wherever possible; anything not confirmed in a platform's own documentation is labeled as such. Requirements change over time, so verify anything critical against the platform's current documentation.



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BEFORE YOU START

The fields and codes every release needs

- **Artist name(s)** — every contributor in their own field, spelled and formatted identically to how they've appeared on your past releases, including punctuation and abbreviations.
- **Track and release title** — the actual name only; version info like "(feat. Artist)", "(Remix)", or "(Acoustic)" belongs in parentheses, never promotional text, dates, or explicit/clean labels.
- **ISRC — International Standard Recording Code:** a 12-character code that identifies one specific recording forever, even if it's reused across multiple releases. A new recording (remaster, re-record, true remix) gets a new ISRC; the same audio reused elsewhere keeps its original.
- **UPC — Universal Product Code:** the barcode-style identifier for the release as a package (single, EP, or album). Every new release gets its own UPC, even if it reuses previously-released tracks.
- **Explicit / Clean flag** — set as its own metadata field, not as text added to the title.

SHARED STEPS

The metadata checklist every release follows

- 1 List every contributing artist in their own field — don't stack names into the title or the main artist field.
- 2 Keep the title clean — the song or release name only, with any version info in parentheses and nothing promotional anywhere in it.
- 3 Set the explicit/clean flag accurately at the field level; mismarking a track either way can get it excluded from certain playlists or features.
- 4 Supply your own ISRC and UPC if you have them (for catalog moving between distributors); otherwise let WKS assign fresh ones at delivery.
- 5 Deliver once to WKS — the same metadata reaches every platform, though a couple of them display or apply specific pieces of it differently.

The sections below cover each platform individually — but only what's different from this shared spec, so you're not re-reading the same checklist six times.



Anghami

The only platform in this guide with dedicated fields for a second language alongside English.

LANGUAGE FIELDS

Arabic + English

FEATURING

Auto-generated

ISRC / UPC

Same as shared

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Extra prerequisites

- For Arabic-language releases, Anghami's own upload form has separate Arabic song name and Arabic artist name fields alongside the English ones — fill in both if either applies.

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- Anghami auto-generates the "(feat. Artist)" suffix in the displayed title when you select a featuring artist from its own system — you don't type "feat." into the title field yourself.
- Its dual-language metadata support is a genuine point of difference from the other five platforms in this guide, reflecting a catalog built MENA-first.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Leaving the Arabic fields blank on an Arabic-language release can hurt discoverability for listeners searching in that language — fill in both scripts when they apply.
- Use the same spelling and transliteration of your artist name every time, in both scripts, to keep your catalog linked to one profile.



Spotify's own metadata guidelines are the most detailed and directly published of any platform here.

ARTIST FIELDS

One per contributor

KEY ROLES

Main / Feat / Remixer

EXPLICIT TAG

Field, not title

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- Spotify's own guidelines are explicit: list every contributing artist in a separate field, and never include an artist's name inside the track or release title itself — that's what the featuring and role fields are for.
- Roles need to be set at both track level and release level, and should cover non-performers too — composers, lyricists, producers, and for classical releases, conductors and orchestras.
- Spotify explicitly bans SEO-style artist names such as "Christmas Hits" or "Sleep Music."

GOOD TO KNOW

- Spotify's own advice is to set your live date at least 7 days out — that's the window their guidelines say you need to pitch an unreleased track to editors for playlist consideration.
- Keep spelling, punctuation, and abbreviations of your artist name identical release to release — Spotify calls this out directly as a common cause of split or duplicate artist profiles.



Apple Music

Apple's own Music Style Guide is the strictest and most literal set of metadata rules in this guide.

EMOJI

Never allowed

ARTIST FIELD

Name only

SINGLE SUFFIX

Auto-added

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- Apple's own Music Style Guide bans emoji anywhere in metadata — titles, artist names, or lyrics — and rejects tracks that include them.
- The artist name field must contain the name only — no role, instrument, former band name, or other descriptor added on, per Apple's own documentation.
- Apple automatically appends "- Single" to single releases — adding it yourself risks a duplicated or mismatched suffix.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Apple's own documentation splits metadata into three categories — descriptive (names, titles, dates), performance rights (composers, lyricists, producers), and secondary (mood, genre) — filling all three thoroughly is what feeds Shazam matching and curated playlists.
- For compilations or classical works, credit roles like conductor and orchestra explicitly — an easy detail to skip that several platforms in this guide call out by name.



Amazon Music

Amazon is the one platform where your metadata quality directly decides whether Alexa can find your song at all.

ALEXA MATCH

Depends on metadata

SPECIAL CHARS

Flag risk

GENERIC NAMES

Rejected

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- Amazon Music for Artists' own documentation states plainly that release date, version info, and clean/explicit flags directly affect whether Alexa can find and play your song by voice request.
- That same official documentation warns that stylized artist names with symbols — its own examples are "P!nk" and "6LACK" — can be difficult for Alexa's voice recognition to match, and recommends coordinating with Amazon in advance if that applies to you.
- Reported separately by distributors (not confirmed in Amazon's own release-metadata spec): generic artist names like "Sleep Sounds" or "Meditation Music" are rejected, mirroring Spotify's SEO-name ban.

GOOD TO KNOW

- If your artist name uses a symbol or unusual capitalization, flag it with WKS ahead of a release rather than after — Amazon's own guidance says this needs advance coordination.
- Genre and sub-genre tags carry more weight here than on most platforms, specifically because Alexa and Amazon's recommendation features lean on them.



YouTube Music

There's no separate YouTube Music metadata form — the same fields feed both your listing and any Content ID claims.

CONTENT ID MIN

Title, Artist, Label

SEPARATE FORM

None

SELF-SERVE FIX

No

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- YouTube doesn't give artists a separate metadata form — the fields delivered through WKS populate both your YouTube Music listing and, if you register for Content ID, the claim system used against fan uploads of your song.
- YouTube's own support documentation sets the minimum required metadata for a sound recording Content ID asset at just three fields: Title, Artist, and Record Label — everything beyond that is optional but recommended.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Getting your artist name and title exactly right matters twice here — it feeds your music listing and any future Content ID claims against fan uploads using your song.
- If YouTube's "Music in this video" panel ever shows wrong info, there's no self-serve fix — per YouTube's own help docs, it has to be corrected by your label or distributor sending an updated feed.



TikTok

SoundOn's own creator FAQ bans several things in a title that other platforms only discourage informally.

TITLE RULE

No feat./producer

EXPLICIT TAG

Field, not title

EDITS

Via distributor, 5–10 days

PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

Where it breaks from the shared steps

- SoundOn's own creator FAQ explicitly disallows titles that include the featuring artist, producer, or main artist name, and disallows "(Explicit Version)" / "(Clean Version)" text in the title — use the dedicated Explicit field instead.
- TikTok pulls metadata straight from your distributor delivery and has no direct editing tool for artists — any correction to artist name or title has to go back through WKS, and SoundOn's own FAQ puts the turnaround at roughly 5–10 business days.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Match your delivered artist name exactly to your TikTok Artist Account name — a mismatch fragments your catalog across separate, unlinked Sound Pages.
- Releasing explicit and clean versions as separate uploads can split engagement across two different Sound Pages — decide up front whether that trade-off is worth it for your release.



WRAP UP

Thanks for reading

The same accurate metadata, delivered once through WKS, is what keeps your catalog properly credited, searchable, and paid correctly on every platform — get the names, codes, and flags right at the source and you never have to untangle a mismatched profile later.

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DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

One upload, every store

Spotify, Apple Music, TikTok and 66 more, delivered from a single upload.



NEXT IN THIS SERIES

Guide 5 of 6 — Royalties & Earnings

How streaming royalties work, payment schedules and methods, and how to read your analytics dashboard.