

TAPE BAKING RECIPE

1. An oven with a fan for circulating the air is preferable. If a commercial oven is not available, a consumer oven may be okay to use. Use the following test:
 - a. Thoroughly clean the oven. Burn off the excess at the highest oven temperature for an hour or two.
 - b. Set the temperature for around 115 °F (46 °C).
 - c. Place a single glass thermometer or three (any type) thermometers in the oven and use one of the two with the same reading.
 - d. Over a period of several hours, read the thermometer every 10 or 15 minutes.
 - e. The oven should be okay if the temperature stay between about 112 °F and 122 °F (44-50 °C).
 - f. If the oven has large temperature swings, put a lot of iron in the bottom of the oven to help keep the temperature variation to a minimum.
2. Adjust the temperature to be in the 112 to 122 °F range (44-50 °C). Don't let the temperature go over 130 °F (55 °C). Some cassettes will warp around 140 °F (60 °C).
3. Shut off the oven and let it cool down.
4. Place each tape on a couple of wooden spacers and don't let any tapes or reels touch the oven walls. Stack tapes so that air can circulate between each reel. Keep plastic reels/cassettes away from the oven heating elements.
5. Turn on the oven and keep the tapes in for at least 12 hours. 15 to 20 hours is preferable. The longer time does not harm the tape.
6. When finished, turn off the oven and let the tapes sit for at least two hours before opening the door. Open the door and let the tapes cool down to room temperature before taking them out. Handle them gently.

The tapes will be playable for several days or weeks before the low molecular weight molecules ooze back to the surface again. The baking process can be repeated many times over many years. But, the fact that it is shedding indicates that the tape is near the end of its life and it should be copied.

If this process doesn't work for a tape, repeat it again for about another 15 hours. This process works and very few tapes have to be baked a second time.

The tape baking procedure is discussed in "Sticky Shed Syndrome—Tips on Saving Your Damaged Master Tapes," *Mix* (magazine), May 1990, p. 148.

For audio tapes, do not copy them until they have been fast-wound to the end and back a couple of times. This decreases print through.

Be sure that the problem is shedding debris (oxide and binder) that clogs the heads. If the problem is oxide flaking off in sheets, don't bake the tape. Oxide flaking is countered by storing the tape for a couple of weeks in a cool and dry environment. Seal the tape in a bag with desiccant and put it in a refrigerator.



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Work