

Getting started with Light-O-Rama can be a overwhelming task. This page is designed to give you some basic information about Light-O-Rama, and how to get started.

What is Light-O-Rama?

Light-O-Rama (or LOR) is a hardware and software solution that allows you to control incandescent or LED Christmas lights in many different ways. While the most popular application is to synchronize ones Christmas lights to music, LOR can also act as a simple timer for your lights, control an 'animation only' display, or even connect to DMX equipment for movie style effects.

In order to create your own display you need a minimum of the following LOR components:

A controller - To control the lights

The software - To program the lights

A connector / Director - A connector connects your computer to the LOR controller(s), while the director will control the lights for you.

Let's look at each of these components

HARDWARE

Light-O-Rama has many different styles of controllers, and each of them are going to do essentially the same thing; control objects connected to them. Depending on how much money you wish to spend, or how much free time you have, you may choose the "Showtime" controllers, which are ready to go, or the PC Line of controllers, which (for the most part) require some assembly. (Don't worry, though, instructions are included!)

SOFTWARE

The LOR system is controlled by the LOR Software Suite. The current version is simply known as "S2" and contains everything you need, including a way to program the lights, a scheduler to program when the lights run, and a utility to test the lights.

Connector/Director

There are two different ways to control the lights. The first is to use one of the many LOR connectors to connect your computer to the LOR Controller. Please note: You can NOT plug the LOR controllers directly into your computer. Doing so could cause damage to your computer or the controller. You must connect your computer to the LOR approved connectors.

If you don't wish to tie up your computer while the lights are on, then you will want to consider one of the two LOR Director units. You can choose between the MP3 Director, or the

mini-director. Each has it's own unique uses; you will want to research which is right for you.

YOUR FIRST PURCHASE

Still slightly confused? Here are some suggestions for your first LOR purchase.

Goal: Synchronized light display, using a computer to control the lights.

Purchase: [16 Channel Starter Package](#) . (You do NOT need the MP3 upgrade.)

Alternate Purchases: [CTB16PC-ReadyToGo](#) and the [Generic Starter Package](#) .

Goal: Synchronized light display, with no computer to control the lights.

Purchase: [16 Channel Starter Package](#) . (You must select the MP3 upgrade.)

Alternate Purchases: [CTB16PC-ReadyToGo](#) , the [Mini Director/MP3 Player](#) and the [Generic Starter Package](#)

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Where do I start?

You are going to get many different answers to this question. My answer to you is, "How much do you want to spend?" This is a hobby, and like any hobby the costs can add up over the years. Many of the larger displays that you see out there were built up over two, three or four years. Yes, you are going to have large displays that were created year one, but realize they spent what some would consider a large amount of money to do so! Another question to ask is, "What do you want to do with your display?" That is, do you want to do simple animation, or do you want to synchronize to music? Do you want your entire house to be connected, or just parts. Once you start answering these questions, you can get an idea of how much hardware you are going to need.

I've bought my hardware, software and connector/director, what do I do now?

The key to effectively planning a display lies in calculating your electrical needs in the early stages of your display. If your entire display is composed of C9 bulbs, you are going to use more power than someone who uses incandescent mini-lights. If you use LED lights in your display, your planning isn't as critical, but should not be overlooked. You should first get a reading of every single Christmas light strand and decoration you wish to control, and write down the amperage rating on the tag. This will let you know exactly how many amps your

display is going to use.

Once you know the amperage, you can start deciding what you want to control. LOR uses a 'channels' concept; this means that each channel can operate independently of each other. In it's most basic description, this means you can have 16 strands of mini-lights, each doing something different.

These 16 channels, though are limited in the number of amps they can carry. You should refer to the documentation of your controller to verify the amperage limits that apply to you.

Now you are ready to start assigning objects in your display to a channel. For example, if you've decided you want 16 mini-trees in your display, and each tree is only going to pull 1 amp of power, all you have to do is write that down. However, if you have a roof line that takes 15 amps, you are going to have to break that down into seperate channels in your display. (This is where people get into trouble. They assume that they can put everything on a 16 or 32 channel setup, only to learn at the last minute they are using to much power, and have to change their plans, or buy more controllers at the last minute.

NEXT STEPS

Now that you have a good design for your display, you are ready to start selecting songs, and programming your display. This is what you are going to spend the most time on, so get started early!