

# Case Study : YT-DLP-IS-TOPS

## Streamin' Video Downloadin'

If you're like me, you've been using some version of **youtube-dl** for at least a decade. You've also probably used it in bursts, for a specific project or thing, and then forgotten the structure, and then re-learned it. Over and over again! Youtube-dl eventually died and then rose from the ashes as yt-dlp. It's great!

You've also probably figured out a very specific use case that makes you a repeat customer. But typically it's that you need some clip that your client owns but lost and the best quality version that you can get immediately is on youtube (or vimeo).

Enter yt-dlp-is-tops, a UI for YT-DLP that allows you to do a lot of things, but doesn't have unnecessary bells and whistles. There are tons of tops (UIs) for yt-dlp, but I didn't like any of them hah.

I built this on and off over a few weeks with Claude.

The screenshot shows the 'yt-dlp is tops' web application interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Download', 'Settings', 'Help', and 'Changelog'. The main content area includes a status bar showing 'yt-dlp 2026.3.17\_1' with an 'update available' badge and 'ffmpeg 7.1.1' with a checkmark. Below this is a URL input field containing 'https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtrQYRoMnj0', a 'Get formats' button, a 'Clear' button, and a 'GIMME THE BEST' toggle. Underneath, there are 'Auth options' and a 'yt-dlp output' section displaying terminal-style logs for downloading webpage, API JSON, player, JS challenges, m3u8 information, and finally 1 format(s): 137+251. A video player section shows a thumbnail for 'The Prodigy - Breathe Instrumental' by BRAINKILLER PRODIGY, with a duration of 5:25 and video ID dtrQYRoMnj0. At the bottom, there is a table of 'AVAILABLE FORMATS' with columns for ID, EXT, RESOLUTION, FPS, SIZE, VIDEO, AUDIO, and NOTE. Two formats are listed: ID 137 (mp4, 1920x1080, 30 FPS, 54.3 MB, avc1.640028, 1080p, ANDR-V) and ID 251 (webm, audio only, 5.5 MB, opus, medium, ANDR-V). A link for 'the rest (14 additional formats)' is also present.

yt-dlp is tops Download Settings Help Changelog


STATUS · yt-dlp 2026.3.17\_1 **update available** · ffmpeg 7.1.1 ✓

Get formats Clear  GIMME THE BEST

▶ Auth options

▼ yt-dlp output

```
[youtube] dtrQYRoMnj0: Downloading webpage
[youtube] dtrQYRoMnj0: Downloading android vr player API JSON
[youtube] dtrQYRoMnj0: Downloading player 886cbf26-main
[youtube] [jsc:deno] Solving JS challenges using deno
[youtube] dtrQYRoMnj0: Downloading m3u8 information
[info] dtrQYRoMnj0: Downloading 1 format(s): 137+251
```

 **The Prodigy - Breathe Instrumental**  
BRAINKILLER PRODIGY · 5:25 · dtrQYRoMnj0

AVAILABLE FORMATS

ID	EXT	RESOLUTION	FPS	SIZE	VIDEO	AUDIO	NOTE
* 137	mp4	1920x1080	30	54.3 MB	avc1.640028		1080p, ANDR-V
* 251	webm	audio only		5.5 MB		opus	medium, ANDR-V

▶ the rest (14 additional formats)

yt-dlp-is-tops is a lightweight local web app (Node.js + Express, no framework) that wraps `yt-dlp` and `ffmpeg` in a clean browser UI, replacing the usual copy-paste terminal workflow for downloading video.

## Core workflow

- Paste any URL → the app fetches full video metadata and all available formats via `yt-dlp --dump-json`
- A format table shows every stream (ID, extension, resolution, FPS, filesize, video/audio codecs, note), sorted best-first
- Click a row to download it, or select a video row + an audio row to MUX them — yt-dlp downloads both and ffmpeg merges them losslessly into an mp4

## Format & metadata display

- Video metadata block: title, uploader, duration, video ID, thumbnail
- "Gimme the best" checkbox auto-selects the top video + audio streams
- Best formats are auto-highlighted in the table
- Format IDs are shown and usable directly

## Download experience

- Live streaming progress bar (parses `[download] X%` lines in real time)
- Collapsible verbose log below the progress bar
- Show in Finder button after download completes
- Download history with persistence across sessions

## Subtitle support

- Subtitle track selection with options to embed subs into the file or download them as a separate file

## Auth support

- Options for password-protected videos (username/password)

## Settings

- Configurable default download folder or "ask every time" mode
- Accent color theme (CSS variable, applied globally via `theme.js`)

## Status bar

- Shows yt-dlp and ffmpeg versions + whether Homebrew updates are available for each
- One-click upgrade for yt-dlp via the UI

Check out those pre-requisites!!! Awesome.

## DEFAULT DOWNLOAD FOLDER

~/Downloads

Use an absolute path or ~ for home directory.

## FOLDER PROMPT

Ask me where to save before each download

When enabled, you can override the folder on the main page before downloading.

## TERMINAL READOUTS

Auto-expand download output log

Auto-expand "Get formats" terminal readout

When enabled, terminal output panels start expanded instead of collapsed.

## ACCENT COLOR



Changes the highlight color across the whole app.

Save

## PREREQUISITES

<b>Homebrew</b>	5.1.10	Installed and up to date	
<b>Node.js</b>	v25.5.0	Installed and up to date	
<b>yt-dlp</b>	2026.3.17_1	Installed, update available	<code>brew upgrade yt-dlp</code>
<b>ffmpeg</b>	7.1.1	Installed	
<b>ffprobe</b>	7.1.1	Installed and up to date	
<b>ExifTool</b>	12.65	Installed and up to date	

Everything this app needs to run.

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