

## TV Streaming Services

With the increase in choices, 85% of households are using at least one TV streaming service. Most households require multiple services to get all the content they need. Streaming can be bewildering with all the choices we have today. No one solution is right for everyone, compare your needs with what is available to find the best fit. I cut the cord in February 2017, and was paying \$35 month with 70 channels and HBO. Today my streaming bill for the same content is \$90+. Streaming can be cheaper than cable, but costs continue to go up.

## Requirements to Stream

- High-speed Internet to avoid buffering and get high quality. A 1K TV stream requires 5 Mbps, 4K 25 Mbps, and 8K 100 Mbps per user per channel. A family with 3 members watching 4K content and doing other Internet functions should have about 200 Mbps service.
- Wi-Fi router fast enough and a strong signal of 802.11ax. A wired Ethernet connection will always provide faster speed and reliability. Buy your own modem and Wi-Fi devices to avoid costly rental fees from your Internet provider and upgrade every 3-5 years.
- Device - Smart TV see Feb 2021 meeting on "Smart TVs", Tablet, SmartPhone, Computer or a TV device below.
- Smart features in a TV or TV device become outdated after 3-5 years.
- TV devices.
  1. Roku -\$29 to \$179 Nine models. Most popular devices with support for the most services. No support for movies or shows from iTunes (it's exclusive to Apple TV).
  2. Chromecast - \$29 WiFi only. \$49 4K WiFi only.
  3. Amazon Fire TV - \$19-\$59 sale. Best for people with Amazon Prime Video.
  4. Apple TV - 32 GB \$149. 4K 64 GB \$199. All models have voice, rechargeable remote, and WiFi & Ethernet. For people who love Apple products. Pricey.
  5. Nvidia Shield TV - Two models \$149-\$199. Both 4K, voice remote, and WiFi & Ethernet. For gamers and geeks. Pricey.
  6. Many other devices - I recommend buying one of the top 5 after you know the services you need.

## Service Options

Most users subscribe to 2-4 services to get what they need. 22% of households have 9 or more subscriptions. New Services are constantly being created and old ones change content, which makes it hard to stay on top of it. To find the services you need, take an inventory of your must-have shows and channels. You can even log your viewing for a month or two to see what you need. Other considerations - Do you need to watch Live TV, On Demand, or use a digital video recorded "DVR"? Number of concurrent TVs streaming at the same time? Content Quality?

- 1K - Most common content - HDTV - high-definition - 1080p with 7.1 Dolby surround sound.
- 4K - Limited content\channels. Multiple standards. Most TVs support some form of 4K.
- 8K - Limited content\channels. Introduced 2018. Usually only available in high end TVs.
- 3D - Novelty with very little content\channels today. Never caught on.

Best Live TV Services:

- Local over the air broadcast TV channels - Free. Requires a good Indoor or Outdoor Antenna \$20-\$100. Buy locally so you try several models and can return the ones that don't work. Good for local and network news, live sports, primetime lineup, and more. No DVR unless you purchase a separate device like TiVo or Amazon Fire TV Recast.
- MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, etc. - About \$11 each month. Each run their own service and usually blacks out local games.
- ESPN+ - \$10 month. Thousands of exclusive live sports events and channels. Does not include ESPN network channels. Included in some other services.
- FuboTV - \$70-\$100 month. Most comprehensive options for sports fans. It features all the major broadcast networks, national sports league channels and even some entertainment options.
- Next are the major services with live TV:
  - Most have a free trial, no annual contract, and cancel anytime.
  - All offer different channels for various prices and plans. Check if they have what you need.
  - Limited local channels. Some DVR support.
- DirecTV Stream - \$70-\$150 month. No dish required. 75 channels. DVR with 20 hours. What I have.
- Hulu + Live TV - \$70-\$76 month. 75+ channels, Disney+, and ESPN+. DVR with unlimited storage.
- Philo - \$25 month. 60 lifestyle networks (A&E, AMC, Food Network, HGTV, etc.) and a DVR.
- Sling TV - \$35-\$50 month. Orange, Blue, or both plans. DVR with 50 hours.
- YouTube TV - \$65 month. 85+ channels. BTN & NFL network. DVR with unlimited storage.

### Best Paid On Demand Services:

- Some have ads, some no ads, or some with no fast forward.
- Some get content the next day or up to six months after it first aired live. Also, the number of past seasons or episodes varies from just the current season to all seasons.
- Amazon Prime Video – \$139 year. Some original series and older HBO series. No current episodes of programs from other channels, lag before getting blockbuster movies. NFL Thursday night games. With Prime you also get music-streaming, free two-day shipping on Amazon orders, unlimited photo storage, and more.
- Apple TV+ - \$5 month or free with some cell phone plans. New original programming.
- BET+ - \$10 month. Collection of dramas, movies and sitcoms featuring Black culture.
- Discovery+ - With ads \$5 or without \$7 month. Access current and former shows from Animal Planet, Discovery Channel, Food Network, HGTV, Investigation Discovery (ID) and TLC.
- Disney+ - \$80 year. Disney owns Marvel, National Geographic, Pixar and the Star Wars franchise, provides thousands of movies, such as the Broadway production of Hamilton, and shows to stream.
- HBO Max - With ads \$10 or without \$15 month. Contains a library of every hit HBO series as well as its original movies, documentaries, and major sporting events.
- Hulu – With ads \$7 or without \$13 month. Most shows are available the day after they are shown. Includes ABC, Fox, NBC, CBS, TBS, Discovery, TLC, USA, History, IFC, AMC, BBC, Nickelodeon, and many more.
- Netflix – \$11 HD on 2 screens, \$14 on 4 screens with 4K. Movies, original series, and old episodes. No current episodes of programs from other channels, lag before getting blockbuster movies.
- Paramount+ - With ads \$5 or without \$10 month. Former CBS All Access. Stream shows from BET, CBS, Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon and the Smithsonian Channel, and live television from their local CBS station, CBS News, CBS Sports and Entertainment Tonight Live 24/7. The addition of Paramount means there are now films to stream after a short theatrical release and over 50 original series.
- Peacock Premium - \$5 month movie options, live sports and next-day access to NBC programming with ads, or \$10 month ad-free. Shows from MSNBC and NBC, along with its own original series.
- Showtime - \$11 month.
- Vudu Fandango – \$4-\$6 month with some free. 20,000 titles.

### Best Free Services. Usually have ads, older content, no 4K, and some require a free account:

- Most TVs brands like LG, Samsung, Vizio, and Tivo have free streaming service.
- AARP Members Only Access - Exclusive content for members, including a selection of on demand full-length films and documentaries, as part of an AARP membership. View on PC or Mac or cast it to a TV.
- Amazon Freevee - Owned by Amazon, with original and licensed programming. Previously called IMDb TV.
- Crackle - Owned by Chicken Soup for the Soul. Mainstream titles like old TV shows.
- Free Movies [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) – A wealth of free video content, but you will have to poke around a bit to find it.
- Kanopy and Hoopla - Content from public libraries and universities with your library card. St Paul Library is not a member. 30,000 movies.
- PBS Passport - Free limited content. Full access with a \$60 year sustaining member to PBS. Public Broadcasting Service's version of on-demand.
- Peacock - Owned by Comcast which owns NBCUniversal. 10,000+ titles and some live channels.
- Pluto TV - Owned by Paramount which owns CBS. 250+ channels and on-demand content.
- Redbox - Owned by Chicken Soup for the Soul. Top rated independent and award-winning documentaries.
- Roku Channel – Owned by Roku. 250+ channels and on-demand content. Not just for Roku devices.
- Tubi - Owned by Fox. Live channels and 40,000+ titles.
- TV Land - Episodes of classic TV shows. Examples: Gunsmoke & The Andy Griffith Show.
- Vix - Owned by Univision. Spanish-language.
- Xumo - Owned by Comcast. 190 channels and 10,000+ titles. Comcast service not required.

### Tips

- Determine your must-have channels and services by logging what you watch for a month. <https://www.mybundle.tv/> and <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/stream-favorite-live-tv-channels-top-100-guide/>
- Service Hopping - Services don't charge for installation, starting, or canceling, so subscribe for a month, watch what you want, then cancel. You can resubscribe later when new shows are available. 36% of households are doing this.
- Once a year check your credit card and bank statements to identify services to cancel.
- Some services offer a cheaper tier with commercials.
- Services limit the number of active connections for shared log-ins and devices (2-4-6-unlimited).
- A cell phone plan or buying a phone/tablet may come with free or discounted services.
- Before you buy any hardware device, check to see it supports the services you need. You may need multiple devices.
- Devices with voice remotes are the easiest to search and find content.

## DVR – Digital Video Recording of Live TV

- All live Major TV streaming services offer some form of DVR.
- Content is stored in the Cloud “Internet”. Usually a limit on the number of hours kept and how long they are kept.
- Vary on how easy it is to select shows and options to record.
- Most let you skip past ads, they vary on how easy to use.
- DirecTV Stream offers 20 hours for 30 days with an option to pay another \$10 to get 100 hours of storage and the ability to keep shows for 90 days.

## Sample Streaming Styles and cost per month:

- Bare Bones \$0 - Over the Air TV \$0, Free Ad-supported streaming services \$0.
- Bargain Hunter \$25 - Over the Air TV \$0, Free Ad-supported streaming services \$0, Philo \$25.
- Movie Lover \$54 - Amazon Prime \$12, Netflix \$16, Criterion Channel \$9, Fandor \$5, Disney+ \$14, Kanopy/Hoopla \$0.
- Have it all \$111 - YouTubeTV \$65, Apple TV+ \$5, HBO Max \$13, Netflix \$16, Paramount+ \$5, Peacock Premium \$5.
- Sports Fanatic \$104 - DirecTV Stream choice \$90, Amazon Prime \$12, NFL+ \$3.

## Additional Links and Information

- Cnet Picks Best TV Streaming services:  
<https://www.cnet.com/news/live-tv-streaming-services-channel-lineups-compared>  
<https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/best-streaming-service-of-2022/>
- PCMag Picks Best Streaming Services:  
<https://www.pcmag.com/picks/the-best-video-streaming-services>

Carondelet Tech Help Resources: <https://carondeletvillage.org/tech-help-resources/>

Questions or comments can be sent to [TCKreuzer@gmail.com](mailto:TCKreuzer@gmail.com)