

Cut the Cord

Streaming Premium Television Without Cable or Satellite Service

This guide is intended to outline alternatives to traditional cable and satellite services. All prices discussed in this guide are estimates and are subject to change. Please check with each provider for exact service prices. We are not advocating for any specific service, company, or method of viewing your favorite shows. Helpful websites and terminology are listed on the back of this guide for your reference.

Can I watch TV for free anymore?

Surprisingly, yes! Local television programming and national networks are still free of charge, as long as you have a digital tuner and antenna for your TV. Some televisions come with a built-in digital tuner but you may need to purchase one, depending on the age of your TV. If you are uncertain about your TV's tuner status, contact the manufacturer. Please call the Adult Services Desk at (847)-244-5150 for help finding contact info for your TV manufacturer.

What Exactly Is Streaming?

Streaming is watching or listening to media that is actively, digitally sent to a media device. When you watch a YouTube clip, you are streaming; if you watch a sports highlight video online, you are streaming.

Please Note: Streaming requires Internet service. You must have adequate Internet data and speed in order to stream programming (5 mbps is recommended for high-definition). Check with your home Internet provider to verify your data speed.

Before Making the Switch — Set A Budget

We will discuss the cost of equipment and services in this guide. To see the potential benefit of streaming over cable, it helps to evaluate and create a budget goal for your monthly entertainment costs. A good starting point is your current cable or satellite bill — can you watch all of the same shows that you currently enjoy for less than your current cable bill? Make a list of all of the shows that you enjoy, including free network shows. Then begin your list of paid services and shows. Don't forget to calculate one-time costs like DVRs or digital antennas, Roku sticks, or other items, if necessary. You should also budget for monthly movie rentals like Red Box or Vudu.

Digital Antennas & Receivers

Most newer televisions already have built-in digital receivers. To access local broadcasts, you may also need a digital antenna. You can test your digital-ready TV or digital receiver to see if you can access broadcast channels without it, but you may still need an antenna to receive the strongest signal.

- [AntennaWeb](http://www.antennaweb.org/Address) <http://www.antennaweb.org/Address> will show you your proximity to broadcast towers and strength of signal
- [Tom's Guide to OTA Antennas](http://www.tomsguide.com/us/best-tv-antennas.review-2354.html) <http://www.tomsguide.com/us/best-tv-antennas.review-2354.html>
- Over-the-Air DVRs <http://www.cutcabletoday.com/ota-dvr-comparison/> This article will help you select a DVR to use with your antenna and streaming services
- Do I need a digital receiver? <http://electronics.howstuffworks.com/digital-converter-box.htm>

Smart TVs and Smart Devices

If you own a "Smart" TV, you already have access to free programming via your television's Wi-Fi connection. Smart TVs are essentially computers with the ability to stream data to your TV screen over your home Wi-Fi connection. Using free video services like YouTube, you can watch everything from whole episodes of TV shows to clips from popular shows and movies.

If you have a newer TV but not a “Smart” TV, you can still gain access to free Internet programming via smart devices like the Chromecast (\$35-\$69), Roku (\$50), Apple TV (\$149), Amazon Fire (\$40-\$100) sticks, or Android TV/ NVIDIA Shield (\$199+). These plug-in devices run from a USB port on your television and can provide access to Internet-based programming. There is a one-time charge to purchase the device, but much of the programming is free after that. Additional Internet-based programming can be accessed for a much lower price than the cost of cable or satellite service.

What to Watch, and How?

- Consider your viewing experience—will you watch shows primarily on your TV or on a computer or other device? Do you want shows on demand for “binge watching” or do you hope to watch shows during their regular broadcast time? Make the choice that will be most convenient for you.
- Make a list of shows and stations that you currently watch (Big Bang Theory, Sunday Night Football, etc.)
- Make a list of shows / stations that you would like to begin watching (Game of Thrones, The Walking Dead, etc.)
- Use an online tool like The Cord Cutter (<http://www.theverge.com/a/online-tv-stream-price-guide>) or Canistream.it (<http://www.canistream.it>) to determine which stations and shows you can stream, and find out which services stream them.
- Consider adding a DVR to in order to record your favorite programs and movies.
- If you are looking for the traditional channel-surfing TV experience, streaming may feel somewhat limiting. Streaming can require multiple access points, logins, searches for shows, loading times, buffering, etc. If you don't mind a few extra steps, though, streaming can be a very rewarding experience.

NOTE: Many streaming services provide a free trial period, and most are a month-to-month services that can be cancelled at any time. Try out as many services as you would like before committing to streaming alone. Since there is no contract involved with streaming, you can always go back to cable or satellite if the experience is not what you had hoped.

Streaming Content Options

Not Free, But Less Than Cable / Satellite

- Hulu Plus(\$8/mo) -- Hulu Plus carries the primetime lineups from Fox, NBC, ABC, and the CW, as well as current and archived content from the networks and cable channels like Comedy Central and FX, as well as some exclusive content, like the Mindy Project. The monthly fee is for unlimited streaming.
- Netflix (\$9.99/mo in HD) – Netflix has its own exclusive programming like “Stranger Things” and “Orange is the New Black” as well as regular movies and TV shows. The monthly fee is for unlimited streaming, though there is a delay in getting blockbuster movies (instituted by the movie studios, in order to encourage movie purchases). Netflix also offers three pricing structures: Budget is \$7.99/mo and lets you watch standard definition movies on one screen at a time; Standard is \$9.99/mo for HD on two screens; Premium is \$11.99 for up to four screens at once and includes Ultra HD movies.
- Amazon Prime (\$99/year or \$8.50/month)—Amazon Prime includes a wide selection of movies, in addition to all of the other amenities that come along with a Prime membership (free 2-day shipping, free music streaming, etc.). Also includes Amazon's exclusive programming (Transparent, Alpha House), not to mention, free product shipping as well – a great all around value.

- Sling TV (\$20/mo) – Sling TV provides access to programming from basic cable channels (**ESPN**, AMC, CNN, **HGTV**, Comedy Central, **Cartoon Network**, HISTORY, Disney Channel, ESPN2, **TNT**, **Food Network**, **TBS**, BBC America, Freeform (formerly **ABC Family**), Adult Swim, IFC, A&E, El Rey, Viceland (formerly H2), Lifetime, Travel Channel, Newsy, Bloomberg TV, Local Now, Polaris+, Maker, Flama, and Galavisión). Enjoy “The Walking Dead” and ESPN, as well as other shows. Please note, not all shows are fully archived for each channel.
- HBO Now (\$15/mo) – Finally, viewers can enjoy HBO without a cable provider. HBO Now allows access to all current HBO programming, as well as a library of all HBO exclusive shows and miniseries (Sopranos, Band of Brothers, The Pacific, etc.)
- Showtime (\$11/mo, \$9/mo if you also sign up for Hulu Plus) -- Get Showtime’s exclusive programming like Homeland and Ray Donovan, in addition to movies.
- CBS All Access (\$6/mo) – Watch all of CBS’s programming, like NCIS and The Big Bang Theory. NFL games are blocked out, but other live programming is available (like golf and newscasts).
- ESPN (\$20/mo; for an additional \$5, you get access to ESPNU, ESPNNews, and the SEC Network)

Rental and DVR Services

- Vudu (pay per movie) – Vudu is akin to Pay Per View, where you select, pay for, and watch movies on an individual basis. You can rent them or purchase them in a variety of formats (from standard definition to ultimate hi-def) which is reflected in the price (i.e., “Legend of Tarzan” can be rented for 24 hours in SD for \$3.99 or in UHD for \$9.99; you can own it in SD for \$9.99 or in UHD for \$29.99). Vudu also provides a DVD / Blu-ray conversion service where you can convert movies that you own in DVD/Blu-ray format to digital copies that can be stored with Vudu for access anywhere. They charge per DVD but offer a discount for 10 or more.
- There are other DVR options, too — check out these resources. (There are a host of OTA [over the air] DVR devices that you can purchase in lieu of traditional DVR – see <http://www.cutcabletoday.com/ota-dvr-comparison/>) or <http://www.techhive.com/article/3058783/streaming-services/catching-up-with-playon-the-dvr-for-streaming-video.html>)

Free Streaming Sites

There are free streaming services that allow access to selected movies and television programming. These sites make money via advertising within programs and on webpages. (NOTE: Any “free” service that asks for your credit card number is NOT a free site. Never provide personal or financial information unless you are completing a sales transaction on a trusted website.)

- **Crackle** (<http://www.crackle.com>) – This free service is an up-and-coming version of Netflix without the cost. Crackle is owned by Sony and features original content as well as a wide variety of well-known films like “Born on the 4th of July,” “Brian’s Song,” “The Natural,” and “The Thing.” Crackle also provides access to a selection of popular classic TV shows like “All in the Family” and “Firefly.”
- **TubiTV** (<http://tubitv.com/>) Another free streaming service for many “B” movies and forgotten or failed tv shows. Find movies like Top Secret and Monkey Shines, as well as TV shows like Camelot and Freaks and Geeks. They even have a category for “Not on Netflix.” A treasure-trove of free streaming.
- **Popcorn Flix** (www.popcornflix.com) Another free streaming service. Includes B and C level movies
- **Documentary Heaven** (www.documentaryheaven.com) This streaming site specializes in original

documentaries on all topics, from history to science and biography.

- **Pluto TV** (<http://pluto.tv/watch>) – This online “TV Guide” lets you click and play on a directory of streaming shows. Includes music channels for various artists like Rhianna and Eminem.
- **Hoopla** (available for free from the WNPL website <http://www.wnpl.info>, requires a WNPL library card) Hoopla offers free on-demand movies via your Warren-Newport library card. You are limited to 5 checkouts per month. The app is available from most major app stores.
- **OverDrive** (available for free from the WNPL website <http://www.wnpl.info>, requires a WNPL library card) OverDrive is offered through WNPL and it provides a small collection of documentaries, movies, and children’s shows like Sonic the Hedgehog. The app is available from most major app stores, and you may check out 5 items at a time.

Calculating the Value of Cutting the Cord: What Will This Cost Me?

Use this form to help you keep track of the costs associated with dropping cable/satellite and moving to streaming services. Again, the listed prices are estimates — please contact the provider for current total costs.

<u>My current monthly cable / satellite bill:</u>		\$ _____
<u>Streaming services:</u>		
Hulu Plus	\$8/mo.	\$ _____
Netflix Budget	\$7.99/mo.	
Basic	\$9.99/mo.	
Premium	\$11.99/mo.	\$ _____
Amazon Prime	\$8.50/mo. (\$99/yr.)	\$ _____
Sling	\$20/mo.	\$ _____
HBO Now	\$15/mo.	\$ _____
Showtime w/ Hulu Plus	\$9/mo.	
w/o Hulu Plus	\$11/mo.	\$ _____
CBS All Access	\$6/mo.	\$ _____
ESPN Basic	\$20/mo.	
Plus ESPNNews	\$26/mo.	\$ _____
<u>Rental Services (estimated per month):</u>		
Vudu or other Pay Per View	\$10/mo.	\$ _____
<u>Total Monthly Charges:</u>		\$ _____
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<u>One-Time Equipment Fees (estimated):</u>		
Digital Receiver	\$50-\$100	\$ _____
Digital Antenna	\$50-\$70	\$ _____
Streaming Device (Roku, Chromecast, etc.)	\$35-\$150	\$ _____
DVR	\$100-\$150	\$ _____
<u>Total One-Time Equipment Fees:</u>		\$ _____