

# Streaming TV: Or How to Make a “Dumb” TV a Smart TV

Streaming TV refers to the trend of people getting movies and television shows from streaming providers instead of – or in addition to – traditional cable providers. In some cases, people are getting rid of their cable or satellite TV service in exchange for much cheaper online streaming services. With a number of inexpensive devices and services on the market today, it’s easy to start streaming TV.



## Is it for me?

For most people, streaming TV provides most of what you get from regular TV at a fraction of the price. If you are primarily interested in watching movies or TV shows, you’ll find that streaming TV can replicate what cable or satellite TV offers quite easily.

Up until recently, if you wanted to watch live sports or news, there were not that many options for you. In the past few months, however, there have been some huge developments for sports fans and news junkies.

YouTube TV, Hulu Live, and SlingTV have all joined the streaming TV game, and offer a small yet broad selection of available networks, all starting around \$40 / month.

## What device will I need?

For starters, you’ll need a device that will allow you to view streaming services on your TV. If you have a smart TV, it may have built-in apps for services like Netflix. If your TV doesn’t offer this feature, you can purchase a cheap device such as the Roku Streaming Stick, Chromecast, or Amazon Fire TV Stick for less than \$50.

If you want the ability to still rent or purchase physical discs, a smart Blu-Ray player is a good option. Many Blu-Ray players feature apps for streaming services. Recently released video game consoles also provide access to streaming services. If you already have an Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, or Nintendo Wii, it might be a good idea to utilize the hardware you already have.

Finally, you can always connect a laptop to your TV using an HDMI or VGA cable. This is a bit more inconvenient if you don’t have a wireless keyboard, but it might be the cheapest option if you already have a computer.

## Finding a service

In addition to hardware, you'll also need to subscribe to a service of your choice. Netflix is a solid place to start; it offers plans starting at \$7.99 per month and features a massive catalog of movies and TV shows. Netflix also offers a one-month free trial.

There are lots of other options out there, though, some of which cater to particular interests. Hulu, for instance, specializes in TV shows, offering complete series of many popular and obscure shows. And if you already pay for Amazon Prime, you might as well take advantage of their Instant Video service.

## What you need to turn your “dumb” TV into a Smart TV

You only need a few things to make your TV “smart”- or to begin streaming television on your TV. Here is the list:

1. **Wifi.** Streaming TV delivers TV to your home through the internet. So you may not be able to completely cut the cord from your cable provider – you still might need their wifi services. If you do want to completely cut the cord from your cable provider, then another option for wifi would be jetpacks/personal mifi devices available through cellular companies like Verizon or AT&T.

Many people ask what level of wifi is needed to stream television or movies. Here is some information from the Help page on the Netflix website:

If these numbers don't mean anything to you that's ok. You can Google “hi speed internet test” and click on any of the free internet speed tests available online. Compare your results to what Netflix recommends to help you determine whether or not you need to upgrade.



[← Back to Help Home](#)

### Internet Connection Speed Recommendations

Below are the internet download speed recommendations per stream for playing TV shows and movies through Netflix.

- 0.5 Megabits per second - Required broadband connection speed
- 1.5 Megabits per second - Recommended broadband connection speed
- 3.0 Megabits per second - Recommended for SD quality
- 5.0 Megabits per second - Recommended for HD quality
- 25 Megabits per second - Recommended for Ultra HD quality

#### Watch Netflix in HD

To watch Netflix in HD, ensure you have an HD plan, then [set your video quality setting to Auto or High](#). Titles will play in HD as long as you have a connection speed of 5.0 megabits per second or faster.

#### Manage Netflix Bandwidth Usage

Higher quality video uses more bandwidth than lower quality video. If your service provider applies a bandwidth or data cap to your internet service, you can [Manage Bandwidth Usage](#) by changing the video quality settings to **Low** or **Medium** to consume less data.

#### Check Your Connection Speed

Many devices allow you to check your connection speed within the Netflix app. To check your connection speed, follow the steps below.



2. **A subscription to one of the streaming providers like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, etc.** Most of the streaming content providers come with a monthly fee. You can subscribe to any one or all three.
3. **Some sort of box that can plug in to your TV, receive streaming content, and display it on the television screen.** Some of these devices come with pre-loaded apps like Netflix, Amazon, etc. Others have an app store that you can use to download the apps from if they are not already installed. Connect the device to your TV through either an HDMI cable or composite cable (which is included with the device.) The device will act as a middle man allowing you to log into your Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, accounts then displaying the content on your television screen.

Options of devices available:

- Apple TV
- Roku
- Smart DVD/Blu Ray player
- An old video game console – Nintendo Wii, Play Station, Xbox, etc.

## **Other cord cutting / cost saving options:**

1. Purchase your own modem – cable companies like Time Warner charge you monthly for you to use their modem. This started a few years ago as a \$5 fee that started to pop up on your bill every month. It is now up to \$8 -\$10 per month. You can purchase your own modem for less than \$100 and eliminate this fee from your bill. Check Time Warner’s website for “approved” modems that you can purchase.
2. Take advantage of apps –cable companies charge you money for each cable box used in your house. Save money by having only one box then use the setup described above to log into individual networks’ apps. Time Warner also has an app that lets you watch TV from your phone or tablet – you can even log in to their website and watch live TV.
3. Digital rabbit ears – this is a common question when I do this program. I have never used them. People that I have talked to report various levels of success with these – some say they’re great; others say they are not so great. I think it matters where you live and what kind of obstructions might be near your house.
4. Password sharing – make deals with friends/family members: “I’ll share my Netflix password with you if you share your Hulu password with me.” This is technically not legal but is very common.