

Digital Television (DTV) Transition

What is Digital Television (DTV)?

Digital television (DTV) is a new type of broadcasting technology that is transforming television as we now know it. By transmitting the information used to make a TV picture and sound as "data bits" (like a computer), a digital broadcaster can carry more information than is currently possible with analog broadcast technology. The difference between analog and digital broadcasting is similar to that between compact discs and cassette tapes.

Digital TV offers a better viewing experience with vastly improved picture and sound quality. DTV is also more efficient than analog TV technology so broadcasters will be able to produce additional signals using the DTV system.

Digital television Quality Levels

There are many quality levels of digital television programming. The most common are:

Standard Definition TV (SDTV) - SDTV is the basic level of quality display and resolution for both analog and digital. Transmission of SDTV may be in either the traditional (4:3) or widescreen (16:9) format.

Enhanced Definition TV (EDTV) - EDTV is a step up from Analog Television. EDTV comes in 480p widescreen (16:9) or traditional (4:3) format and provides better picture quality than SDTV, but not as high as HDTV.

High Definition TV (HDTV) - HDTV in widescreen format (16:9) provides the highest resolution and picture quality of all digital broadcast formats. Combined with digitally enhanced sound technology, HDTV sets new standards for sound and picture quality in television. (Note: HDTV and digital TV are not the same thing — HDTV is one format of digital TV.)

How to Transition

TV sets that currently receive programming through cable or satellite are not likely to be affected by the transition to digital. February 17, 2009 is the deadline by which traditional analog TV service will be shut off.

TV sets that rely on "over the air" broadcasting with an antenna (set-top or rooftop) to receive a signal will be affected by the cutoff of analog broadcasts in 2009. You will need to consider one of the following options:

- Purchase a digital-to-analog converter box that plugs into an existing television. The boxes, which are expected to cost between \$40 - 70 will be available for purchase in 2008. Beginning in February 2008, U.S. households can request up to two coupons valued at \$40 each. Each coupon can go toward the purchase of a single set-top converter box that will allow you to continue watching FREE "over-the-air" television on an analog set.
- Subscribe to a cable, satellite or telecommunications service provider if all desired local broadcast stations are carried by that service.
- Purchase a new television set with a built in digital tuner.

Converter Box Coupon Program

Between Jan. 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be eligible to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of up to two, digital-to-analog converter boxes. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has responsibility for administering the coupon program. For more information, call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322)

Do you still have questions about DTV?