

DTV Basics: What You Need to Know About the Transition to DTV

Television is changing to a new, digital format called DTV. DTV is already available, and starting in February 2009, it will be the only way to broadcast in America. The new system looks and sounds great, but changing over does raise a few questions.

Be more  informed

What exactly is DTV?

DTV can refer to either:

- the system for sending higher quality, digital television signals over the air;
- the higher quality, digital television signals themselves; or
- the TV set that displays digital television signals.

Is DTV the same thing as HDTV?

No. HDTV, or high definition television, is the highest quality form of digital television. Not all DTV is high definition.

What do I need to know?

If you receive over the air television with an antenna and your TV does not have a built-in digital tuner, you will need to take steps to prepare before February 17, 2009.

What are my options?

If your TV receives its signal over the air with an antenna and does not have a digital tuner, you have three options to continue receiving TV after February 17, 2009:

1. Purchase a TV converter box. A TV converter box will cost \$40.00 - \$70.00. The Government is offering coupons to reduce the cost of the boxes. To request coupons or learn more about the coupon program, call 1.888.DTV.2009 or visit www.dtv2009.gov;
2. Connect your TV to cable, satellite or another pay service; or
3. Replace your TV with a new digital tuner equipped TV. A wide range of DTVs is available starting at \$100.00.

What about digital cable, FiOS, IPTV and all that?

These TV sources depend on digital information and should not be affected by the current transition to DTV, which affects over the air broadcast television.

What does DTV look like?

DTV looks better than today's analog format. As long as you have good signal strength, the picture with most TV programs should look as crisp and clear as a DVD.

Is anything else about DTV different?

Another benefit of DTV that comes with the higher quality picture and sound is program information. Depending on the channel and show, your DTV tuner or converter box might display information describing the show and the TV schedule. You also may have read about "multicasting." That's a technology that allows a station to send multiple channels at the same time.

