

# Useful contacts

## Digital Television

The Government's digital switchover website

[www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk](http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk)

0845 650 5050

## Digital UK

The official digital TV switchover site

[www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk)

0845 650 5050

## Freeview

Digital TV through your aerial

[www.freeview.co.uk](http://www.freeview.co.uk)

0870 1111 270

## Top up TV

Premium channel selection through Freeview

[www.topup.tv](http://www.topup.tv)

0870 054 3210

## Virgin Media

Digital cable TV, broadband, mobile and home phone services

[www.virginmedia.com](http://www.virginmedia.com)

0845 840 7777

For a free online video featuring Ricky Tomlinson which offers no nonsense information about digital TV visit

[www.virginmedia.com/rickytomlinson](http://www.virginmedia.com/rickytomlinson)

## Sky

Digital satellite TV

[www.sky.com](http://www.sky.com)

0870 5800 874

## Tiscali

Internet TV formerly known as Homechoice

[www.tiscali.co.uk/tv](http://www.tiscali.co.uk/tv)

0800 107 9000

## BT Vision

BT's internet TV service

[www.btvision.bt.com](http://www.btvision.bt.com)

For further information and terms and conditions for Virgin Media products, please go to

[www.virginmedia.com](http://www.virginmedia.com)



# Relax

## Digital TV made simple



# Introduction

The digital age is here. The digital switchover is on its way, technology is rapidly changing and television will never be the same again.

If you feel digitally dazed by the latest developments and want some simple advice, we're here to help. That's why we've created this guide, to make digital TV the simple, exciting and jargon-free world it should be.

This handy guide is bursting with no nonsense information and will answer all the questions you've been afraid to ask. By the end you'll be up to speed about the digital switchover, the latest gadgets, and you'll know all about the wonderful world of digital TV.



Richard Branson



# The big switchover

## What's happening and why?

The switchover is a Government initiative and later this year the UK will begin the switch from analogue TV to digital TV. Whitehaven in Cumbria will be the first town to have the analogue TV signal switched off. During the next four years all analogue TV signals will be turned off region by region.

Analogue signals are being turned off to allow for more powerful digital broadcasts, bringing digital TV to the one in four households who can't currently receive it through their aerials. Switching analogue signals off also frees up space for more services such as TV on demand, high definition TV pictures and TV via your mobile phone.

## What do I need to do?

You'll know the digital switchover is coming to your region because months before analogue signals are switched off, you'll receive a Government leaflet telling you what to do. This leaflet will take you through the different ways you can get set up with digital TV and start enjoying the many benefits. These include increased channel choice, clearer picture quality, on demand services, digital teletext and interactive services.

## Important

If you're over 75 or have certain disabilities, you will be eligible for help with the digital switchover. You will be contacted by Digital UK before the analogue signals are switched off in your region. Digital UK is an independent, non-profit organisation which is responsible for co-ordinating the switchover.

## When your region will be totally digital

| Regions                    | Border ITV | West Country<br>Wales<br>Granada | Grampian<br>Scottish | Central<br>Anglia<br>Yorkshire | Meridian<br>London<br>Tyne Tees<br>Ulster |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Complete switch to digital | 2008       | 2009                             | 2010                 | 2011                           | 2012                                      |

# Everything you need to know about digital TV

By Tom Dunmore, editor-in-chief of *Stuff*, the world's best-selling gadget magazine.



## Digital TV is a wonderful thing.

It means more channels, better picture quality and revolutionary new interactive services. It also means change – but that's not always a bad thing so don't be scared. Do be prepared!

## You have more choice than ever before.

There are four ways of receiving digital TV – through your aerial (Freeview), cable (Virgin Media), satellite (Sky) and phone line (Tiscali TV and BT Vision). This guide will tell you more about all of them.

## The switch is coming soon.

Between 2007 and 2012, old analogue television signals will be switched off and replaced with digital signals. The first area of the country to go totally digital will be the Border region. The last region will be London in 2012.

## You'll still be able to receive TV through your aerial.

At present 75% of UK households can receive digital TV through their aerial with a Freeview digital tuner. However, this will rise to 99% after analogue signals are switched off.

## Welcome to the age of the set-top box.

The vast majority of older televisions have analogue tuners built in, which receive broadcasts through a standard TV aerial. After analogue signals are switched off, you'll need a digital set-top box unless you've got a newer TV with a digital tuner built in. The good news is that digital set-top boxes can open up a whole new world of entertainment from browsing on-screen programme guides to pausing live TV.

Continued overleaf

### **Don't forget the bedroom.**

Over 70% of homes already have one digital set-top box. But don't forget that every TV in your house will need to be ready for digital.

### **High definition will change the way you experience television.**

If you have a modern plasma or LCD TV, chances are that you can experience the ultimate in picture quality – high definition TV. High-definition programming is more detailed, colourful and realistic than anything you've seen before.

### **Your TV is now a hi-fi.**

All digital TV services allow you to access a wide range of digital radio shows. What's more, cable and internet TV on demand services are stuffed full of music videos, allowing you to turn your television into a video jukebox. With thousands of songs at your fingertips, you'll always find something you want to listen to.

### **Now you can join in.**

Digital TV gives you a truly interactive experience. From pressing the red button to accessing information about the show you're watching, voting on reality shows, sending and receiving emails, playing games and catching up on the latest news headlines.

### **TV schedulers will no longer rule your life.**

And if you subscribe to Virgin Media TV or some internet services, you'll be able to use TV on demand, choosing from a library of films and TV shows to watch whenever you like. It's like having the biggest video collection in the world.



**Barry Cook from Swindon wants to know how he can stop his children from watching unsuitable material.**

Many digital services come with parental controls that can prevent children from watching unsuitable material. For example, Virgin Media TV customers have the option of turning on PIN protection, allowing the bill payer to control which services can be accessed by children in the house.

# What are the benefits?

**With digital TV comes a whole host of new features – here's what you can look forward to.**

## **More channels, more choice.**

Digital TV offers greater choice with a whole host of channels automatically available for viewing. Almost all new TV shows and movies are shot in widescreen – but only digital TV allows you to enjoy them in their true cinematic glory.

## **Stunning detail.**

Today's plasma and liquid crystal display (LCD) screens aren't just bigger and flatter – some are also capable of showing high definition (HD) images up to four times more detailed than what you're used to. That means incredible depth, rich colours and the sort of realism that'll have you diving behind the sofa. If you want to enjoy HD entertainment you will need an HD box (a special set-top box available from Virgin Media or Sky), but you can still be entertained by a wide choice of channels without one.

## **A revolution in recording.**

Setting the timer on an old video cassette recorder (VCR) was always tricky. Fortunately, all that is changing in the digital age. Personal video recorders, or PVRs, make setting a recording easy. Simply flick through the on-screen TV guide until you find the show you want, and then hit the record button. You'll also be able to pause and rewind live TV – so you never have to miss your favourite programme to answer the call of nature.

## **TV on demand.**

If you receive digital TV through your aerial or satellite dish, you'll have to watch shows and films when they're broadcast, unless you have a PVR. But if you use cable or internet TV services, you can choose which shows you want to watch and when you want to watch them. This is called 'TV on demand' and it means you can take your pick from a vast library of movies, music videos and TV shows. You can even catch up with the stuff you missed earlier in the week.

**Marianne Muir from Glasgow wants to know if there's anything she can do if she misses one of her favourite TV programmes.**

There's nothing more frustrating than missing your favourite shows. Fortunately, if you subscribe to cable or internet TV, you'll be able to access some of the previous week's top shows whenever you want. Virgin Media customers just need to press the 'home' or 'on demand' button on their remote control, and choose 'Catch-up TV on demand' from the menu for a list of available shows.



# How do I get digital TV?

There are four ways you can receive and enjoy digital TV.

## Through cable.

**Virgin Media** supplies cable services in the UK. An engineer installs the TV service which uses a set-top box. Virgin Media can provide a choice from over 200 channels and access to TV on demand, interactive services and its V+ HD box allows you to pause and rewind live TV and watch high definition content.

## Through your aerial.

**Freeview** You need to buy a set-top box (available from electrical retailers) or a TV with a built in digital tuner (iDTV). It gives you access to over 50 digital TV and radio stations through your aerial, with no monthly subscription.

**Virgin Media** If your home does not have access to cable, you can still get digital TV with Virgin Media Free TV, a set-top box you simply plug straight into your aerial. It's completely free if you have a landline and broadband bundle with Virgin Media.

## Through a satellite dish.

**Freesat** is a service very similar to Freeview, but requires a satellite dish and receiver box. It gives you access to over 200 channels of TV and radio and, like Freeview, there is no subscription.

**Sky Digital** offers a selection of packages via a satellite dish with hundreds of channels. And for a one off fee you can get a Sky+ box which allows you to pause and rewind live TV.

## Through broadband.

**Tiscali TV** (formerly known as Homechoice) streams up to 80 channels of live TV on demand via a phone line to a television. It is available through a monthly subscription, however this service is currently only available in London and Stevenage.

**BT Vision** is a new TV service that combines a Freeview box with additional on demand TV and music via a phone line. It is available with a monthly subscription.

**Rob and Donna Clulee from Birmingham want to know if they'll need to change every TV in their home to go digital.**

No, they shouldn't need to change any TV. The great thing about digital is that in most cases all you need to do is just adapt your TV to receive it.





**Martyn Clark from Leeds wants to know what Virgin Central is.**

Virgin Central is a revolutionary new type of channel exclusive to Virgin Media customers. It creates TV that revolves around you. You simply tune to channel 119 and pick what you want to watch, when you want to watch it. And, if you want to fast forward or rewind the good bits, you can do that too.

# Your choice

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*Why fit your life around a TV schedule? Digital TV makes everything easier and lets you watch what you want, when you want.*

## **TV you control.**

*Every element of digital TV has been designed to make your viewing easier and better, you get hundreds of channels to suit all tastes. You may not always find a programme you want to watch on TV so that's where on demand services help out. Wanna' watch a movie? Well you can with Virgin Media on demand which has over 500 films and hundreds of TV shows and music videos to choose from. Not only that, but set-top boxes give you the ability to pause live TV and record your favourite programmes.*

## **Even greater choice.**

*And the beauty of digital TV is that it is still evolving, with new services and features being added all the time. For example, the new Virgin Central channel from Virgin Media gives you more choice and control than ever before.*

*It's an exciting new world, so stay tuned and enjoy it for all it has to offer.*



**Gary and Jon Moses from Nottingham already have an HD-ready TV and want to know if they will need to upgrade their DVD collection to use it.**

Standard definition digital TV channels and DVDs will work with your HD-ready TV, but they're not high definition. So if you want to watch HD DVDs you'll not only need to buy them, you'll also need to buy an HD-DVD or Blu-Ray player to play them on. Don't forget, though, there are HD films available on Virgin Media's on demand movie service. All you'll need is a V+ HD box.

# Are we talking your language?

## **Blu-Ray**

This is a rival to HD-DVD. It lets you watch crystal clear DVDs on your TV – but you'll need to have an HD-ready TV and Blu-Ray compatible DVD player.

## **EPG**

Electronic Programme Guide. An on-screen TV listings guide.

## **Freeview**

The UK's free digital TV service that works through standard television aerials but requires a set-top box or a TV with a built in digital tuner (iDTV).

## **HDTV**

High definition TV pictures have up to four times more detail, amazing vibrant colours and an incredible sense of depth. Often accompanied by improved audio quality and multi-channel surround sound.

## **HD-ready**

A TV that displays the 'HD-ready' logo is able to handle high definition TV broadcasts when attached to a high definition receiver, such as the Virgin Media V+ HD box or Sky HD box.

## **HD-DVD**

A next-generation DVD disc format that offers high definition video but requires the purchase of a new HD-DVD player. Rival to Blu-Ray.

## **iDTV**

Integrated digital TV. A television set with a Freeview receiver built in, so there's no need for a set-top box in order to get the Freeview service.

## **IPTV**

Internet Protocol TV. It lets you watch TV on your computer over the internet, delivered using similar technologies that deliver the internet to your home.

## **Pay-per-view**

Movies and sports events available for a one-off fee.

## **PVR**

Personal video recorder. A modern set-top box with a built-in video recorder that uses a hard disk instead of tapes.

## **Set-top box**

While most older TVs have analogue tuners that work with an external aerial, set-top boxes are usually required for digital broadcast services such as Freeview, Virgin Media and Sky.

## **TV on demand**

Movies, music videos and TV shows delivered to your TV screens exactly when you want to watch them. You choose what you watch, when you want to watch it.