

The Apple TV **CRASH COURSE**



The Unofficial
Beginners Guide to
Using Apple TV

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Disclaimer:

While this guide was written with careful detail to accuracy, things are constantly being updated. The author or publisher are not responsible for software updates that change some of the features in this guide or inaccuracies it creates; consult the manufacture user guide for the most up-to-date information

Introduction

Mac. iPhone. iPad. Apple TV? While Apple TV may not get the same press as other Apple products, that is about to change. For years, Apple TV was touted as Apple's hobby product—something they tinkered with occasionally, but not something they put as much effort in as other Apple products.

This changed in 2012. Apple announced a slimmed down version of the media device at a price people could actually afford: \$99. In March of 2015, they dropped the price again to \$69, and announced that they would be the first devices to offer HBO's monthly streaming service: HBO Now. What started as a hobby has turned into a powerhouse.

The low-cost, high-powered, streaming media player, has become the best on the market. Other companies (notably Google, Amazon, and Roku) have tried to create their own media devices, but, in this author's opinion, none of them come close to offering an operating system that just works.

This guide is an introduction to Apple TV. If you are just "thinking" about making the switch from cable to streaming TV, then this book will show you how; if you've already made the switch, but you want to get the most out of it, then it will cover that as well.

There's something for everyone here, so read on...

Part One: What Is Apple TV

Your Movies and TV...on Demand

Apple TV may be making headlines more today, but it's actually been around since 2007. Even before they announced the media streamer, they had been thinking about the living room—albeit with more costly products; The Macintosh Television and Apple Interactive Television Box both tried to make it into the consumers living room in the nineties. And both failed. People just weren't ready.

The first official Apple TV was a bit beefier than what you see on shelves today; it also had a hard drive because you had to actually download the content. The problem from the start was two-fold: one, it was more complicated than most consumers wanted; two, it didn't really do anything.

But there was actually a third problem always looming: cable television. Cable companies were doing everything possible to make sure cable channels like ESPN and HBO stayed exactly where they had existed for years—and they had the muscle to make sure it happened. As more consumers began adopting both media devices like Apple TV and Roku, and more “channels” like Netflix began popping up to provide cheap streaming content, cable channels took note: if they didn't adopt new strategies, they would not survive.

Currently Apple TV offers dozens of channels (some free, some not), but from the start Apple has made it clear what they wanted: streaming that makes sense. Instead of paying for bundled cable to get all these channels you don't even want, Apple wants to begin offering a pay as you go and individual option. That means you might one day pay only for the channels that you want.

This strategy was first laid out with HBO Now, but Apple was very clear that this is just a preview of what's to come.

While other companies like Amazon Fire TV and Google Chromecast, tout more channels, the channels often are full of content you'd never watch. Apple is focused on quality content. Apple, at least for now, is also the first company that content providers come to. That means if you want channels like ESPN, then it's most likely going to come to Apple TV...and everyone else a few months later.

What's in the Box, What's Missing

Apple has, as of this writing, released three versions of the Apple TV to the public. The first, released right around the same time as the original iPhone, was a somewhat clunky, large device. The 2nd and 3rd generations are identical to each other and about one quarter of the size of the original. Here's a comparison:



The current-generation Apple TV is available at almost every retailer on the planet, with a suggested price of \$69. If you're considering purchasing a used device, please make sure it's the current generation—there is a version that only streams 720p (not 1080p) and it looks *exactly* the same as the current version. I'd also recommend hunting for the best deals—chances are you won't find it cheaper than \$69, but many companies offer incentives like \$10 iTunes gift cards.

So what's inside the tiny box:

- The Apple TV Device
- A Remote (if you have an iPhone or iPad, you can use those as remotes as well—just download the free app from the iTunes app store)
- A Power Cord
- A Quick Start Guide

Notably absent is an HDMI cable. Some stores will try and highlight this fact, and tell you about the fanciest HDMI cable money will buy; they'll try and sell you on the fact that it being gold will actually make everything superior. These so-called superior cables will cost anywhere from \$20 to \$50.

If you want the best deal on an HDMI cable, then Amazon.com sells one for \$7.99; it doesn't have the fancy packaging that shows how awesome it is, but I bet you won't

notice any difference once you plug it in.

The device is also missing an Ethernet cable and Optical cable. Both of these are optional. Because the Apple TV streams content (vs. downloads it) then you'll obviously need Internet. Most people have Wi-Fi in their house, but some don't. If you're one of the houses that don't, then a cheap Ethernet cable would plug into the back of the Apple TV, and go directly into one of the ports on back of your Internet Router; you should have an empty port, but on the rare chance that you don't, you can buy an adaptor for a few bucks.

How do you know if you have Wi-Fi? Your phone company will tell you, but a good indicator would be how you use the Internet. Do you have a laptop? Does the laptop have to plug into anything for Internet? If not, then it's probably connecting to a wireless connection. You'll need to know the password to it when you setup the Apple TV.

The Optical cable is mostly for people with some sort of sound system. If you don't have that, then the device will just use your TV's sound system.

The Apple TV Hardware

So that's what's in the box, but what's in the box? The hardware inside the device, that is.

Apple loves simple. That's pretty clear when you look at the box. There's not even a power button! Hitting the menu powers it on, but how do you power it off if there's no button?! Simple: you don't! The box will time out and turn itself off when not in use. You'll know it's on when you see a tiny LED light turn on in the front of the device.

The back, however, has a few different things to note:



In the diagram above, we've labeled the three items that aren't labeled on the device itself. On the left, you'll find the power receptacle. This is where you'll plug in the lone cable that came in your Apple TV box. Next to that, you'll find the HDMI slot on top (where you'll connect your television to the device), and a MicroUSB port below that.

The MicroUSB port is, according to Apple, only meant for service and support. Trying to plug anything into it (assuming you're not an authorized Apple service technician) will void your warranty. So just leave it alone!

The remote control is also ridiculously simple! Just a up/down, left right controller and three buttons. It's not your grandma's remote, that's for sure!



Here's a run down of what each button does:

- Up/Down/Left/Right – these are the ‘navigation’ buttons, used to move around the various menus and items on the screen. Left and Right are also used for rewinding and fast-forwarding, which we’ll discuss a little later.
- Select – This button, located in the center of the navigation buttons, is used to select items on screen.
- Menu – This button is used to return to the main menu, or move up one menu when you’re in a sub-menu. Think of it as the universal ‘back’ button.
- Play/Pause – As the name suggests, this button will begin or pause playback of your content, whether it’s a video, music, podcast – it’s universal.

As with pretty much any apple product, things aren’t always as they appear on the surface. As we get into more advance topics, you’ll see how holding a button longer will do more things. Here’s two examples:

- Hold Select For Six Seconds – this will put your Apple TV into ‘Standby Mode’. If you don’t, then it will eventually power itself down after several minutes. Standby means it’s not fully off; unless you unplug it, the Apple TV will always be on, but it won’t really be consuming much power, so don’t worry!
- Hold Menu and Down For Six Seconds – it’s rare, but the Apple TV “might” freeze or become unresponsive. If this ever were to happen, then this would reboot the device. It’s kind of like CTRL, ALT, DELETE on a Windows computer. But chances are you’ll never have to do this.

Setup

So you know what Apple TV is; you know what's inside it. Now how do you use it? It's pretty simple to get started, but let me walk you through it.

First things first, however—get everything plugged in! Make sure the HDMI cable is connected and you've figured out if you have wireless or LAN Internet.

Once that's on, turn your TV on and to the input that the HDMI is connected to. Now hit the menu button on the remote. The first screen will look like the one below:



At this point, you should also hear a robotic voice (Siri, for those of you with other Apple devices) explaining what's on your screen. This is a good way to make sure both your video and audio are working.

Language selection is pretty self explanatory, but be careful—selecting the wrong language will be a big headache. It can be reversed, but you'll have to find the language in the language you selected, which can be confusing.

Once you've selected your language, you'll be presented with the Internet connection screen. If you've connected your device via Ethernet, just tap the select button. If not, you'll be presented with a list of available Wi-Fi networks:



Using the up and down buttons on your remote, highlight your Wi-Fi network and then press select. Once you've done that, you'll be prompted to enter your Wi-Fi password:



Just press the up, down, left, and right buttons on your remote until you've highlighted the first letter (or number) of your password, then press select. Do this for each additional character in your password. Once you've finished entering characters, use the right and down buttons to head to the item labeled 'Submit'. Once you've highlighted 'Submit', tap select.

Once you've done that, your Apple TV will begin the process of connecting to the Internet. Your screen will display this:



The connection process should only take a minute or two. If it seems like it's been too long, press the menu button to head back and re-check the Wi-Fi network you're connecting to, and/or re-enter your password.

Once you've connected, you'll be asked whether you want to send Apple info about your device and how you use it. This doesn't slow down the device at all, and you'd never know the information is being sent. If you feel like helping Apple make the device better, then opt in; if not, just say no thanks and move on.



Once you finish, you'll be shown the bread and butter of the Apple TV: the main menu. It looks something like the one below—the movies change regularly, so the top portion always looks a little different.



I know what your thinking—finally, time to get my movie on! But not so fast. First, it's a good idea to update the device to make sure you have the latest software installed. Will it work without it? Sure. But some apps mentioned in this guide might not be there.

If you want to just follow along, that's fine, but take note of it because you'll probably want to update the device every month or so.

To begin the software update process, use your Apple remote to navigate to the 'Settings' icon, which is located all the way to the right on the top row of icons. Once there, press the select button to enter the settings menu.



There's a lot of options, and I'll talk about those in just a little bit. For now, just navigate to the "General" menu and press select. The next menu looks like the one below:

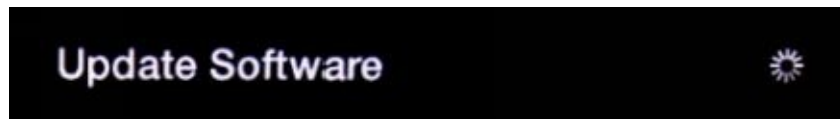


Navigate to the menu item labeled 'Update Software' and then press select. After a few

moments, your Apple TV will display this message:



Make sure the 'Download and Install' menu item is highlighted, and then press select. This isn't the quickest process, so don't start if you *really* want to watch a movie now! Most updates take about ten to thirty minutes. If you don't see the option to update or it's greyed out, then you have the latest version installed and there's nothing you need to do. During that time it will look like this:



Once your update has been downloaded, your Apple TV will automatically begin the update process. This is a two-step process, requiring you to leave your Apple TV alone while it does its thing.



After a few moments, your Apple TV will automatically reboot and apply the update. You'll know this is happening by taking a look at the screen, which will look like this after the reboot:



Once the process has completed, your Apple TV will boot into the home screen, which will now feature a couple of extra icons and some things you can't see, like performance improvements. For the most part, it will look exactly the same with the exception of a new app icon. Changes are often under the hood.

Part Two: The Apple TV Crash Course

The Apple TV Interface

So now that you understand the controls, and you have the device update to the most updated software, you are at last ready to use the device.

Let's jump back to the main menu, and get a little bit more familiar with it.

There are two main parts to the home screen: the header and the icons:



As you can see from the screenshot above, the header is the section Apple uses to promote the latest content. It's here where you'll see new shows and movies available for purchase.

The header also changes depending on what icon you are on. If you move it over to TV, it will be the latest TV shows; music will be the latest music.



If you want to find out more about any of the advertised content, just hover over it and press the select button. The same is true of the icons. Pressing select on TV, movies or music will open a store dedicated to that icon.

The best thing to do is to consider each icon as an application—kind of like the apps on your phone. As of this writing, Apple TV has over 50 so called apps. The first five, which make up the first row, are the only ones that cannot be moved around. They are as follows:

- Movies – This is where you'll go to rent and watch movies; if you own digital

copies of movies (you can get those by redeeming vouchers that come in many blu-rays) this is where those would be as well.

- TV Shows – This is where all the latest TV shows will be available to rent or purchase; from here you can also buy a season pass to a TV show—which means you pay for every show in advance and they become available to watch as the show airs. Usually you can get a discounted price by purchasing shows this way.
- Music – This is where you'll go to play music you've already purchased through iTunes.
- Computers – This is where you'll find content stored on your 'Home Sharing' enabled computers. Home sharing will be talked about in greater linked later, but for now just know that this is how you can connect devices to the Apple TV
- Settings – This is where all of the changeable settings for your Apple TV are located.

Once you're within any of these applications, pressing the menu button will take you one step back. Pressing and holding the menu button for a few seconds will take you back to the home screen.

So that's the interface, but before getting to comfortable, let's leave Apple TV and talk about iTunes.

iTunes and Apple TV: The Perfect Coupling

iTunes? You're probably asking; why do you need iTunes to use Apple TV? The short answer is: you don't. The long answer is there are things you can do with iTunes and Apple TV working together. So iTunes helps get you more bang for your buck.

**If you're already a user of iTunes, and if you've already got an Apple ID, feel free to skip this section, or just skim through it.*

Downloading/Installing iTunes 12

If you own a Mac then you already have iTunes; it comes pre-installed. If you have a Windows computer, then you'll need to download it.

To download it, go here: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/>

iTunes is free to download, but your computer does need to meet the minimum requirements, which are below:

- PC with a 1GHz Intel or AMD processor and 512MB of RAM
- Windows XP Service Pack 3 or later, 32-bit editions of Windows Vista, Windows 7, or Windows 8
- 64-bit editions of Windows Vista, Windows 7, or Windows 8 require the iTunes 64-bit installer
- 400MB of available disk space
- Broadband Internet connection to use the iTunes Store

That's the "minimum" requirement. But that's going to also get you the minimum experience. If you want everything—like HD videos and iTunes Extras, then you'll need to make sure your PC matches the requirements below:

- 2Ghz Core 2 Duo (or faster) processor
- At least 1GB of ram (2GB for 1080p video)
- Intel GMA 3000 (or better) video card
- A 16 bit sound card w/ speaker
- A broadband Internet Connection

That said, you should also know that most of the cheap computers on the market do match

these requirements—so chances are, you do have a computer good enough for iTunes HD and other features.

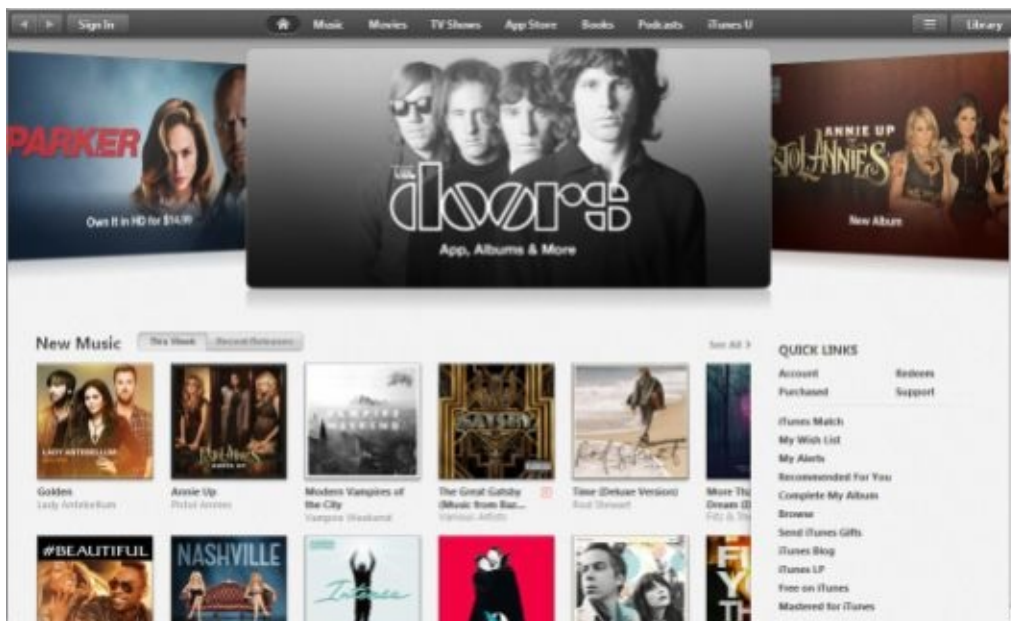
So if you haven't already, download iTunes...

Creating an Apple ID and using the iTunes Store

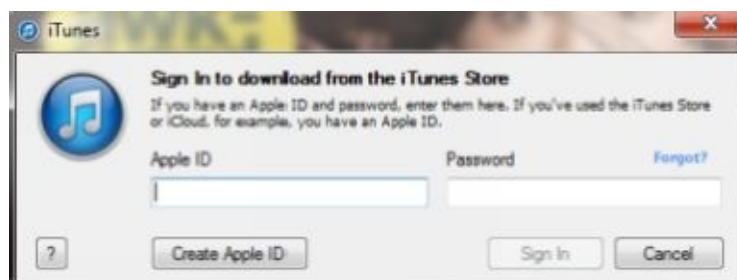
Now that we've installed iTunes, the next step is to get an Apple ID. Why do you need an ID? If you plan to buy anything—or even set up sharing—then you need it. If all you want to do is watch Netflix, then you don't need it, but if all you want to do is watch Netflix, then you are better off with another device!

If you already have an Apple ID (even if you don't have iTunes on a computer, you probably have an ID if you have an iPhone or iPad), then skip this section.

To get started with the iTunes Store, go ahead and click the 'iTunes Store' button on the upper right hand side of the program. Once you do, the interface will look something like this:



In the upper left-hand corner of the screen, you'll now find a button labeled 'Sign In'. Tap it to begin the account creation process. You'll be greeted with a pop-up screen that looks like this:



If you've already got an Apple ID, great. Just sign in and you're done. For those who don't, however, click the button on the bottom left that's labeled 'Create Apple ID'. Once you've done that, you'll be taken back to the main window of the iTunes 12 program, which will now look like this:



**In previous versions of iTunes, all of these various screens that appear within the main window were actually separate things. This new emphasis on ‘unification’ makes things a lot simpler than in previous iterations. Lucky us!*

Click ‘Continue’ to begin the process of creating an Apple ID. Once you’ve done that, you’ll be presented with yet another ‘Terms and Conditions’ page that you’ll have to agree to. Check the box labeled ‘I have read and agree to the terms and conditions’ and click ‘Continue’ again.

Once you’ve done that, you’ll be greeted with a page full of details to fill out, including an email address, a password, and answers to a few ‘security questions’ in case you ever get locked out of your account. This is mostly like anything else you’ve ever signed up for online, with one major exception: the password requirements are a little bit, shall we say, strict. It took us a few tries to land on a password that Apple approved of. In fact, here’s their list of rules for the initial password you create:



In short, Apple *really* cares about the security of your account. Once you’ve created your bulletproof password and entered in the rest of the information, click ‘Continue’ to be taken to the payment method page. Enter your credit card (or PayPal) information and your billing address, and click ‘Create Apple ID’ to finish the process.

Once that’s done, you’ll be automatically logged into your iTunes account. You’ll see your account ID in the left hand corner of the screen:

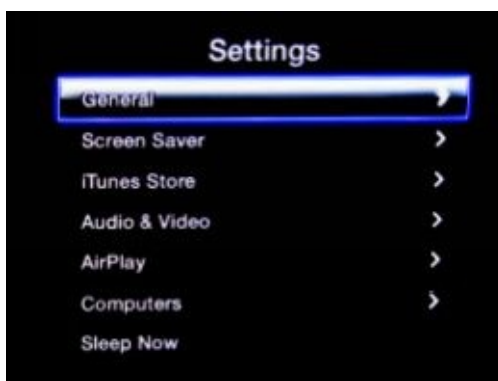


Click here at any time to look at (or edit) your account details, sign out, or redeem iTunes gift cards.

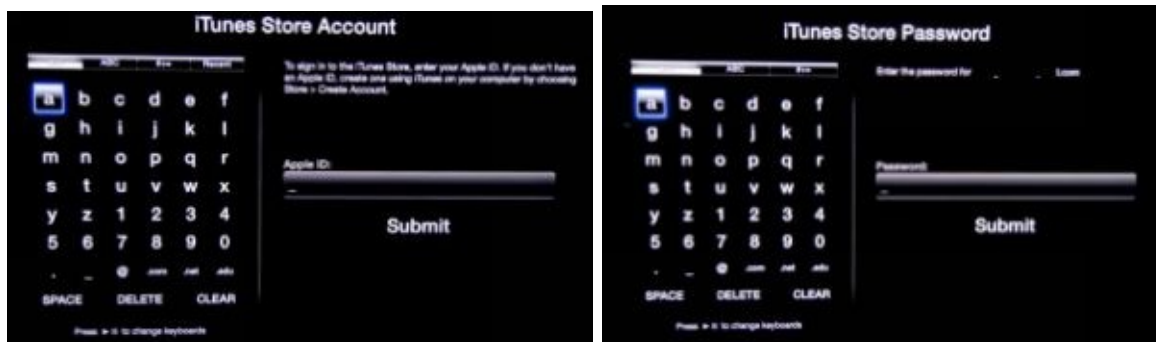
Using Your Apple ID with Apple TV

Now that you have an Apple TV, let's get it added into the Apple TV.

To begin using your Apple ID with Apple TV, go to the settings icon on your home screen and then press select. Once you've done that, you'll be greeted with the same settings menu we discussed earlier. From there, head to the menu item labeled 'iTunes Store' and press select.



From there, you'll be presented with a series of login screens. Enter the email address you used to create your Apple ID on the first screen, then your password on the second:



It's worth noting here that if you have an iPhone or iPad, you can go to the app store and download an app that lets you control your Apple TV from your iPad or iPhone via Bluetooth. Why would you want to do that? One reason is the iPad and iPhone have a keyboard, which makes menus like this much easier to manage. If you'd like to download it, search the app store for Remote—it's the one published by Apple and it's free. It should be the first match.

Once you've added everything, you get to decide if the Apple TV will remember your password when making purchases, or if you'd rather enter it every time. Tread carefully on this one – it's *really* easy to buy things on the Apple TV, so if you have young children, or even full-grown adults and you don't want to be charged for several purchases, then it might be best not to remember the password. But typing in a password is also a bit of a pain, so don't take the extra step unless you need to.

Remember Password?

Would you like Apple TV to remember the password for
[redacted].com to rent or purchase items from the iTunes Store?

Yes

No

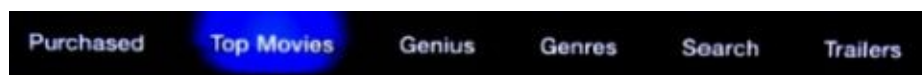
Movies and TV Shows

So we've looked at how to get your account set up. Now let's learn how to spend money! This section will walk you through the Movies / TV shows portion of the device.

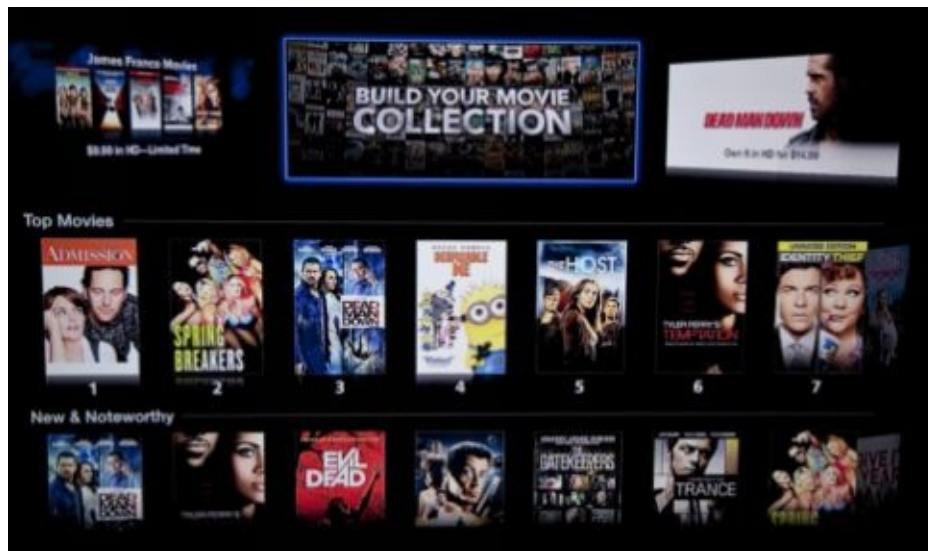
First, let's discuss movies. A couple quick things to note:

- The Apple TV thousands of movies and prices change regularly.
- Most (but not all) of them are available for purchase, at a price anywhere from a few dollars up to about \$19.99.
- Each week, Apple offers great discounts. Newer movies are often \$9.99. Older movies often also drop in price if they have a sequel coming out. Lately, Apple has been offering movies for \$3.99 to \$4.99 on the weekends—usually they feature one or two of these. But these discounts are always changing, so that \$4.99 may not be forever. A website I like to regularly visit is www.Bluray.com; this website has a section for iTunes and it let's you sort by lowest price.
- Most movies are available for rental, but not all; frequently a movie is released a few weeks before the physical copy is available, and they can be purchased but not rented until the street date. Some movies are also available to rent when they are in movie theaters. These movies cost more—sometimes up to \$12.99. You pay a premium for not going to the theater.
- These rentals can be purchased at any time, and your viewing window (which is 24 hours in the US) only begins when you begin playing it. They can also *only* be watched on the device it's purchased; so if you rent it on your phone, it won't show on the Apple TV. Or if you rent it on the TV in the bedroom, you can't watch it on the one in the living room.
- After the 24 hours (if you've started it) or 30 days (if you haven't), the movie will disappear from your library.

Now that we've got the basic details out of the way, let's get started with movies by highlighting the Movies icon and pressing select. Once you've done that, you'll be presented with the iTunes movie store, separated into three parts. The top, which is a horizontal menu:



And the rest of the application, which follows the home screen header-content pattern.



Moving around the screen using the directional buttons will highlight any of the content on display. Go ahead and highlight a movie from any of the rows below the header and press select. In our example, we've highlighted a movie called *The Incredibles*. Once you press select, you'll be presented with that movie's dedicated page, which will look something like this:



As you can see, there's a lot of information here. Up top, you'll find a synopsis, alongside information about the actors, directors, and producers of the film.

Sense this is a Disney movie, let's take an aside to talk about Disney Anywhere. Disney Anywhere lets you buy a movie on Apple TV and watch it Anywhere. That means buying this movie here, let's you also watch it on an Android tablet. You can find out more about how all of this works by visiting DisneyAnywhere.com. It's a great, free, program—check it out!

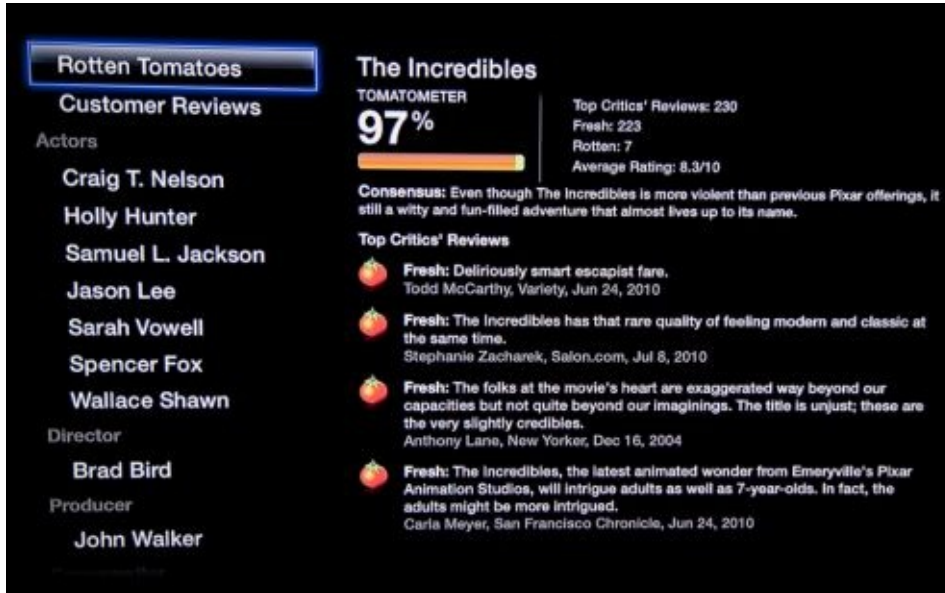
Below that, you'll find all of the various options for this film:

- Preview – pressing select here will bring up a trailer for the film.
- Rent (HD) – pressing select here will rent the film (For \$3.99 and in HD in this case).
- Buy (HD) – pressing select here will purchase the film (For \$17.99 and in HD in this case).
- Wish List – pressing select here will add the film to your Wishlist, accessible from

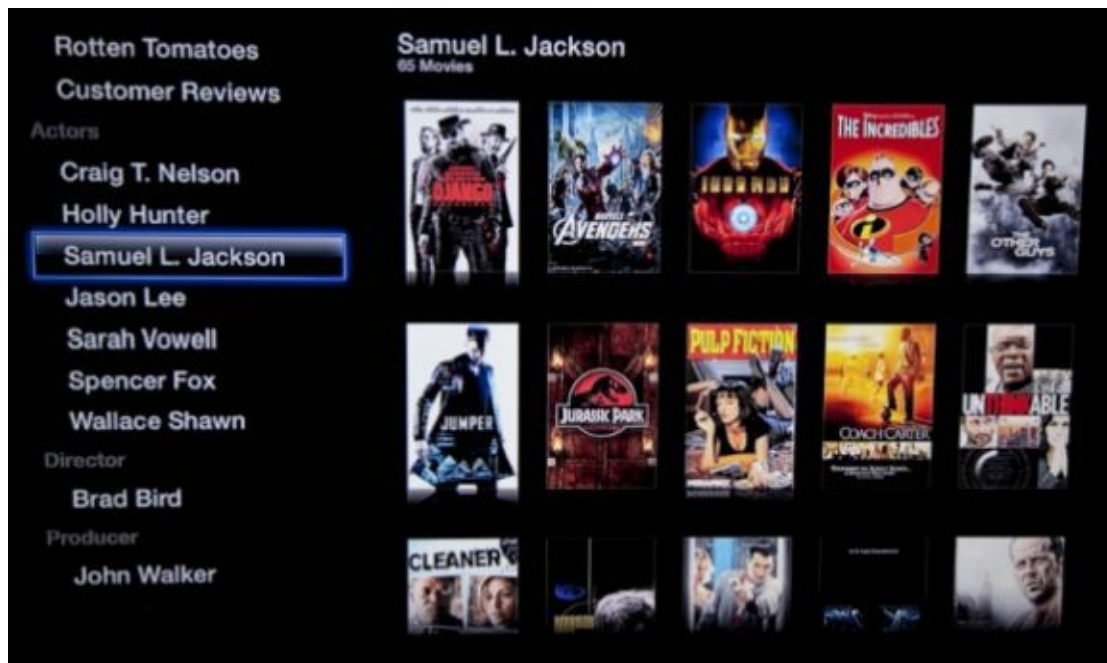
the Movie app's home page.

- More – pressing select here will bring up a more detailed page of information about the film.

The 'More' menu item might escape your notice. Don't let it. It's a fantastic compendium of reviews (both professional and user created), as well as a portal to other movies you might be interested in. For example, here's the 'More' page for the Incredibles:



As you can see, there is a critics' review section (courtesy of Rotten Tomatoes), followed by customer reviews, and then a detailed list of the people responsible for the film. Highlighting and selecting any of those names will bring up a list of other available titles featuring that person. For this example, we selected Samuel L. Jackson:



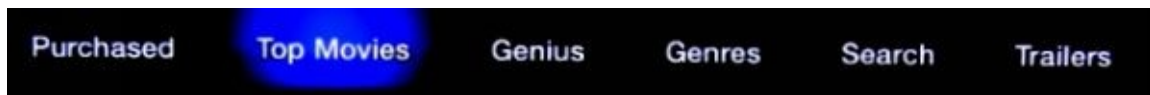
Navigating with your remote, you can now head to any of these other movies to bring up that movie's page, which will function in exactly the same way as *The Incredibles* did in our example. This won't be all the movies he's did—just the ones on iTunes. It's also worth noting that you should turn on parental settings—unless you don't mind little ones seeing R-Rated Samuel Jackson movies after watching their Disney cartoon!

To get back to the movie's page, press the menu button on your remote.

Once you've purchased something, you'll be presented with a confirmation screen. Tap 'OK' to confirm. The download process will automatically begin, leaving you free to continue browsing. Once it's finished downloading, a screen will pop up, notifying you that your item is ready to play. You can either begin playing it immediately, or decide to watch it later. Press play/pause to watch, or menu to save it for later.

Normally playing a movie is really quick. Every now and then it will say a ridiculously long amount of time (I've seen it as high as 16 hours until it can play); usually it's a glitch or a bad Internet connection. You can try two things. One, check your Internet connection (I use SpeedTest.net from my computer to see the speed); if it's slow, then either wait or restart your Internet; the second reason is it's just a glitch (which is rare); restarting your Apple TV will usually fix it. The last thing you can try is to simply wait. Usually if it says a long wait like 16 hours, it will change pretty quickly. But, like I said, waiting more than a few seconds for a movie to load is pretty rare.

If you choose to watch something later, you'll find it in the horizontal menu under 'Purchased':



If you have some idea of what you'd like to watch, the horizontal menu also includes an item labeled 'Search.' Pressing select here will bring up a search window, where you can search by title, actor, director, or even subject.



Now, television shows work the same way, with a couple of small exceptions. TV shows are generally available in two different ways:

- As standalone episodes (usually for \$1.99 to \$2.99 each)
- As entire seasons (called Season Pass, anywhere from \$15.99 for broadcast shows to \$59.99 and up for premium content like HBO)

To get started with TV shows, just navigate to the TV Shows app on the home screen and then press select. You'll be greeted with a screen that looks the same as the Movies app does. Browse around for something that interests you, and then press select. You'll be greeted with that television show's page. For this book, I'll select *Breaking Bad*:

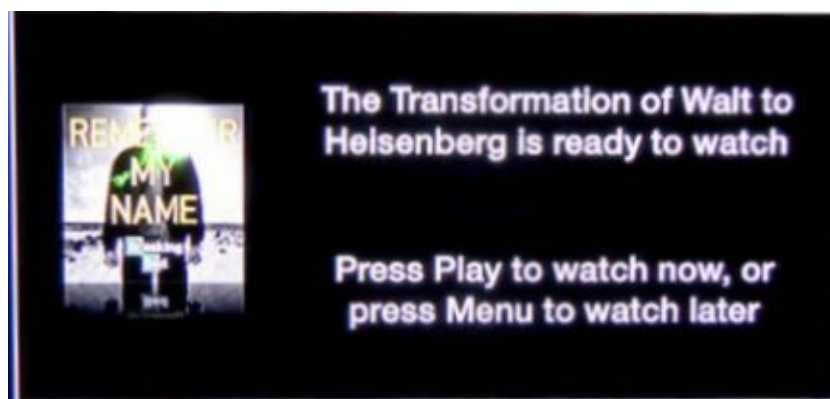


As you can see, the page is similar to the movie pages we just discussed, with a couple of exceptions. For starters, everything is organized by season, so to access non-current episodes, you'll have to navigate to 'Other Seasons'. Also, instead of the wish list for movies, we're presented with the 'Add Show to Favorites' menu item. While they're named differently, they do the exact same thing.

Once you've purchased a television show (or a season pass), you'll be presented with a confirmation screen:



Press 'OK' to confirm or "Cancel" to back out of the purchase. Once you've confirmed, the item will automatically begin downloading, just like with movies. Once it's finished, you'll be presented with the same screen telling you that your item is ready to watch:



Just like with the Movies app, selecting 'Search' along the top will allow you to search for shows using any combination of keywords.

Now, once you've downloaded a movie or television show, selecting it either in the dialog box that comes up or from within the 'purchased' menu item will begin playing it. From there, the controls are straightforward.

Press up on the remote to bring up the playback bar:



This will give you an overview of the currently playing item. Over on the left, you'll see how much time the item has been playing, while on the right you'll see how much time is left. Press play/pause on your remote to stop playback. Press and hold the right or left buttons on your remote to fast-forward or rewind, respectively. To exit playback, just press the menu button.

Part Three: Making the Most of the Tiny Beast

Music, Podcasts, and Radio

So now you know how to use the device and buy content. Now let's get the most out of it. The best part of this section is some (not all) the apps mentioned are free to use.

First things first...let's talk about audio. I know you probably bought the Apple TV for movies and TV, but there's a lot of great stuff you can listen to. If you've never heard the podcast Serial, for example, then you've been missing out. And it's free! Serial is a murder mystery so good you'll forget you are listening and not watching it.

Music

Music for a long time was one of the few stores missing on Apple TV; you could listen to what you had already bought on iTunes, but you couldn't actually buy it from the TV itself. This changed about a year ago.

If you want a lot of music, then I suggest checking out iTunes Match (see: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/itunes-match/>). You probably have a lot of MP3s on your computer—and if we're being honest, some of them were probably shared with you by a friend or obtained in a way that's a little...questionable. For \$24.99 a year, Apple will go through your computer and *everything* that's music will be added to a music cloud—even if you never actually bought it. Once it's in the cloud, you can stream it from your Apple TV or any other Apple device.

Podcasts

Instead of spending pages on buying music, which is the exact same method for purchasing other content, I'm going to talk about what you might not know. First... Podcasts.

Podcasts can be anything from news programs to comedy shows, and everything in between. Because anyone can start a Podcast, there are literally thousands to choose from. Some good...some not. But what's really cool about Podcasts is the sheer scope of topics covered—there's really something for everyone here. Entire shows are devote to niches like Disney history or horrible movies.

Podcasts aren't like regular radio shows. They don't come on at a set time (though some do); some podcast are weekly, others are daily and still others come on for a few weeks then drop away without any explanation.

The best part about Podcast is they're free.

If you've never delved into the world of podcasts, you're in for a treat. iTunes practically invented the market for podcasts, and it shows. So let's take a look at how to get them to work on Apple TV.

To get started with podcasts, head to the Podcast app on your home screen and press select to open the Podcast Store. There's a lot to choose from.



Feel free to browse the store in the same way you have previously for TV shows and movies. It functions in the same way. You can also search for anything you want by using the search bar—so if you know a comedian has a podcast, search for his name.

I know I said this section is on audio, and that's mostly true, but it's worth noting that some Podcast are actually video. Churches are probably the most common video podcast you'll see, but there are plenty of others. If the podcast has video their will be a little TV icon next to it.

Let's open a podcast and see what it looks like. I'll do one call The Nerdist.



As you can see, it's set up a lot like an album page in the Music app. Highlight and select any episode to be brought to that episode's page.



Highlight 'Play' and press select to play the item. Once you've done that, the podcast will begin playing, and the controls are exactly the same as they are for items in the Music app.



Radio

Something else that's free is "Radio"; like podcasts, this is not radio as you may know it. It's Internet radio, and that operates a little differently.

If you are familiar with apps like Pandora, then it should be anything new to you; basically it works by selecting a band or style of music that you like; and then it streams music that fits what you have selected.

To get started with Radio, head to the Radio app icon and press Select on your remote.

Once you've done that, you'll be greeted with something resembling this:



Press Select on any category to expand it. For our example, we expanded the '70s Retro' category. We were immediately given dozens of options for various retro radio stations

around the world:



Highlight any station you like and press Select. Once you've done that, the station will immediately begin playing, displaying something like this on the screen:

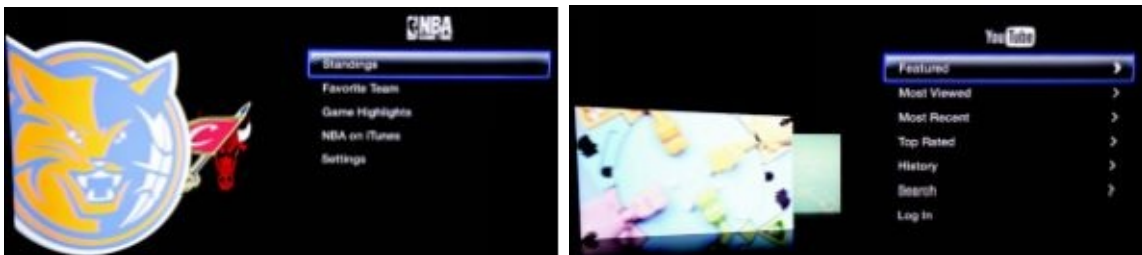


Unlike the Music and Podcast apps, you can't fast-forward or rewind the radio stream. You can pause it by pressing play/pause, but only for a brief period of time. To exit, press Menu on your remote.

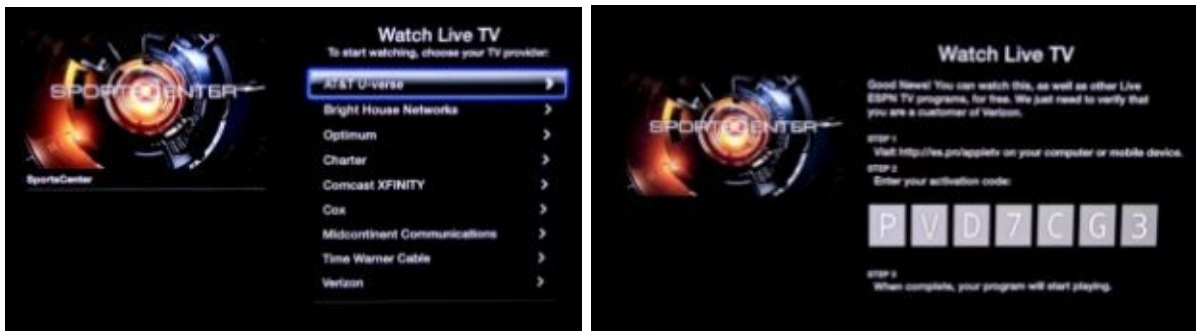
Other Apple TV Apps

Aside from the Movies, TV Shows, and various music-related apps we've discussed so far, there are literally dozens of other apps to try out. Some of them you'll find useful, while others you might never use. If you've used Fire TV, Chromecast, or Roku, the apps might feel a bit...less; Apple selects the apps that will appear, so unlike other devices, the apps here tend to be a little better quality.

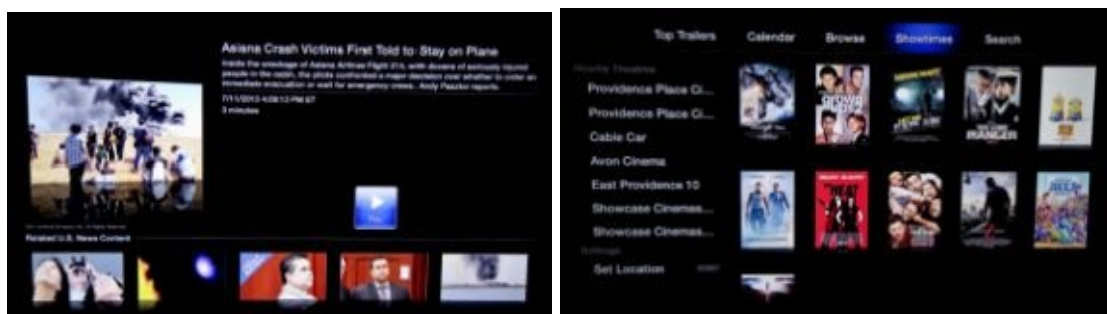
While we don't have space in this guide to go in-depth with each of them, let's take a second to categorize and explain what's there.



- *Sports Score Apps* - MLB.TV, NBA, and NHL are portals to the current scores and game schedules for these three sports. Obviously, they'll only function when the particular sport is in-season. The navigation is similar to every other app – highlight the info you want and press select.
- *Time Sensitive Apps* –Apple frequently adds channels for a limited time; during their conference where they announce new products, for example, there is a channel to watch it. They also have added a musical festival in the past (usually September); these are full concerts, presented for free, from top artist.
- *Internet Video Apps* - Vimeo and YouTube are much like their Internet counterparts – a searchable catalog of user-generated videos. Flickr fits in this category, despite it being exclusively used for pictures.
- *Popular Subscription-Based Apps* – Hulu Plus, Netflix, HBO GO, and ESPN are popular portals for all kinds of all-you-can-eat programming. Netflix and Hulu require a monthly subscription (\$7.99 as of this writing), while ESPN and HBO GO are included with some cable subscriptions. See if yours is one of them by opening the app and looking for your provider in the list. Once you've done that, you'll head to a website and enter a code to grant yourself access. Most cable companies now allow you to stream content, but there are a few that still do not. If you aren't one of them, it helps to express your frustration with your provider.
- *TV Subscriptions* – In March 2015, Apple announced it's first TV channel subscription with HBO; called HBO Now, this exclusive partnership is considered a game changer by many; why is it so big? Because it let's you watch HBO without cable. Up until HBO Now, you could stream a lot of popular channels like ESPN and ABC, but you needed to have a cable subscription. HBO Now (\$14.99 as of this writing) changes all this. It's likely the first of many partnerships. If current rumors are correct, look for something even bigger in the Fall of 2015.



- *Not-so-Popular Subscription Apps* – items like Crunchyroll (anime videos) and Quello (concerts and music documentaries) are not quite as commonly used as the others, but are invaluable for people who are into that sort of thing.
- *News Apps* – Sky News and Wall Street Journal both offer a compelling on-demand news service. They’re also both free! To use them, just open the app, navigate around and press Select to view a story. As always, press Menu to exit.
- *Apple Apps* – In addition to the Apple-branded apps we’ve already discussed, there are a couple other Apple apps on offer here. Photo Stream offers access to the pictures you’ve shared in your iTunes library, while Computers is your connection to Home Sharing, which we’ll discuss in a moment. Trailers is a video-portal to – you guessed it – trailers for upcoming movies. In addition to that, you can find out when and where upcoming (and current) movies will be playing in your area.



Because you’ll probably spend more time using apps like Netflix than apps like Sky News, it’s helpful to have the apps arranged in a way where the most popular apps are near the top. To rearrange any of the apps (except the top row), just hold down on the select button over the app you want to move. After several seconds it will change appearance and you can move it around.

For a comparison of how Apple TV channels and hardware compare to other devices, see Part four.

Apple TV Settings

You probably are starting to see that Apple TV is really simple to use. Remember: Apple builds their devices in a way that's pretty disaster proof—that means you won't ruin anything by hitting the wrong button. So take time to explore.

Before leaving you, there's a few more things to cover; notably, the settings menu. Chances are you won't spend much time here, but you still want to know how to change a few things.

To get started with the settings menu, navigate to the Settings app on the home screen and press Select. Once you've done that, you'll be presented with the settings menu we briefly visited earlier:



As you can see, there are 7 different items within this menu. Some of these 7 items also contain their own sub-menus (and even sub-sub-menus in some cases!). Let's take a moment to break down these 7, and then we'll discuss the most important things you'll find within them.

- General – this is where you'll find the vast majority of the changeable settings. Things like network settings, software updates, time and date – everything that doesn't have a place somewhere else will be located here.
- Screen Saver – After a period of inactivity, your Apple TV can display several different things as a screen-saving device. Check here for the options, including what to show, and after how long the screen saver should start. By default, it shows photos of different scenery.
- iTunes Store – this section contains all of the changeable things about your iTunes account and the way it works with your Apple TV. Things like your current location (different countries have different items available, in tons of different languages), and the resolution of the video content you purchase; if you have slower Internet, then you might want to try lowering the resolution. You can also sign out of your

account entirely, which is useful if you have a friend over who has their own collection of iTunes-purchased materials. Just sign in (temporarily) with their ID and watch their stuff seamlessly.

- Audio and Video – this area contains settings for closed captions and languages, as well as various audio output options.
- Airplay – this section contains all of the options for Apple’s ‘Airplay’ service, which we’ll discuss a little later. You can turn the function off or on from here, and set a password for it if you like. You can also add airplay devices—if, for instance, you have a speaker that is Airplay compatible.
- Computers – this section contains the options for ‘Home Sharing’, another Apple service that we’ll discuss in a moment.
- Sleep Now – Just in case it’s not immediately obvious from this item’s name, selecting this will put your Apple TV to sleep, which is the suspended animation state your Apple TV remains in when not in use. You can exit sleep by pressing any button on your remote.



Now within the ‘General’ category, there are really only a few things to concern yourself with, but let’s go over everything anyway, just to be on the safe side.

- About – this is where you’ll find all the information about your Apple TV that you might want to know: the model number, software version, IP Address, and Wi-Fi signal strength are all located here. Nothing here is changeable; it’s just information.
- Name – In houses with more than one Apple TV, it can get confusing, especially when you’re using the Home Sharing functionality. To help rectify this, you can change what your Apple TV is called. Choose from a list (Living Room, Bedroom, etc.) or create your own custom name. Remember that everyone else on the network will see the name you choose, so it’s probably not a good idea to name it ‘I Hate My Brother’ or ‘Mr. Pelican Pants’. This is very helpful with Airplay. If you have three Apple TVs, it will just name it Apple TV 1, Apple TV 2, Apple TV 3 by default—so if you are trying to airplay, then it gets confusing knowing which one to pick.

- Network – This is where all the Internet-connecting stuff we did at the beginning of this guide resides. If you create a new Wi-Fi network (or experience slow performance) head here. You can change the network you're connected to and/or perform a network test from here.
- Parental Controls – like most modern home electronics, the Apple TV has some robust child-proofing measures. Head here to eliminate or restrict access to your Apple TV on an app by app or item by item basis.
- Remotes – if you want to set up a new remote with the Apple TV, head here. If you happen to have lost your remote, you can navigate the Apple TV using the free 'Remote' app on your iPhone or iPad.
- Update Software – as we discussed at the beginning of this guide, head here to check for updates to your Apple TV's software. If an update is found, just follow the steps on the screen to apply it to your device.
- Time Zone – If you ever need to alter the time zone info you entered when setting up the device, head here.
- Sleep After – head here to change how long it takes for your device to enter sleep mode.
- Send Data To Apple – as we discussed earlier in this guide, this is completely optional. You can change your mind about what you may or may not want to send (anonymously) to Apple from here.
- Language – If you've finally become fluent in Japanese, head here to change the language. Remember, this applies to every single menu and screen on your device, so be careful!
- Accessibility – despite the device being video-based, Apple has included a text-to-speech functionality in the device. Enable it here to hear Siri (from the iPhone!) describe all of the various screens in her soothing voice.
- Legal – This is a bunch of user-agreement babble, only placed here because it's required by law. If you're ever suffering from insomnia, try pulling it up and reading it – it'll cure you in an instant.
- Reset – if you're experiencing problems with the device, or if you're planning on selling it or giving it away, head here to erase any trace of you from the Apple TV. You can also add a Bluetooth keyboard under Bluetooth if you want to type things even faster.
- Restart – sometimes the Apple TV might become a little sluggish. Performing a restart will usually fix this. It's also helpful restart if you plug the device in to a new television and the picture isn't set up properly.

Sharing Is Caring

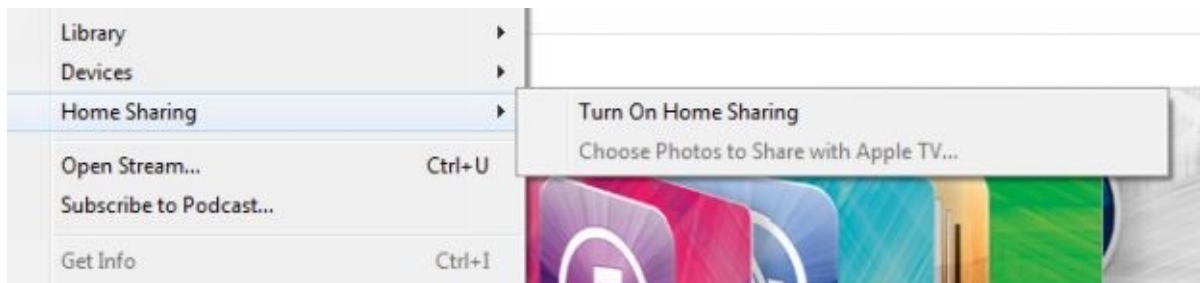
I've saved one of the best features for last: home sharing and airplay mirroring.

First up, an explanation. Home Sharing and Airplay Mirroring are related, but they are not the same thing. They both involve a connection between your Apple TV and other devices – they have that in common. They're also both easy to set up. That's where the similarities end. Here's a quick explanation:

- Home Sharing – using this feature allows you to share the stuff in your iTunes library (music, movies, TV shows, and pictures) to your Apple TV, including all the things you haven't purchased from iTunes.
- Airplay Mirroring – using this feature allows you to use your Apple TV as a giant display for your other Apple devices (like the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad), allowing you to use iOS apps on your television.

**Both of these functions require your Apple TV to be on the same network (wired or wireless) as the other devices you're working with. So if you have an iPhone and you can't figure out why it's not working, double check that you are logged into the right network.*

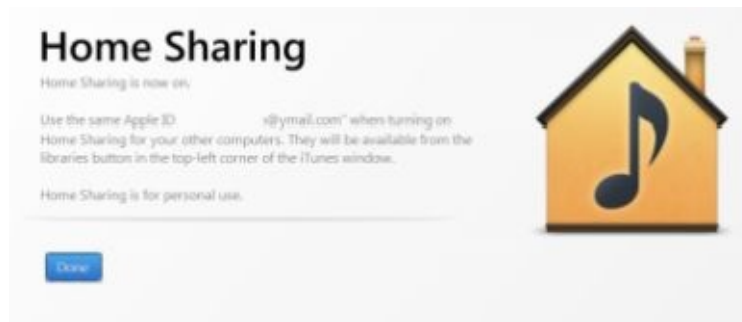
To set up Home Sharing, head to your computer and open iTunes. Once you've done that, click on the 'File' menu item. Once there, you'll see this about halfway down the menu:



Click on 'Turn on Home Sharing'. Once you've done that, you'll be taken to a sign-in screen that looks like this:



Enter your Apple ID and click 'Turn on Home Sharing'. Once you've done that, you'll be greeted with this:



Click 'Done' to exit the screen. At this point, if you're interested, you can now choose photos on your computer to share with Apple TV by heading to the same file menu we just went to. Once you do that, you'll be greeted with this screen:

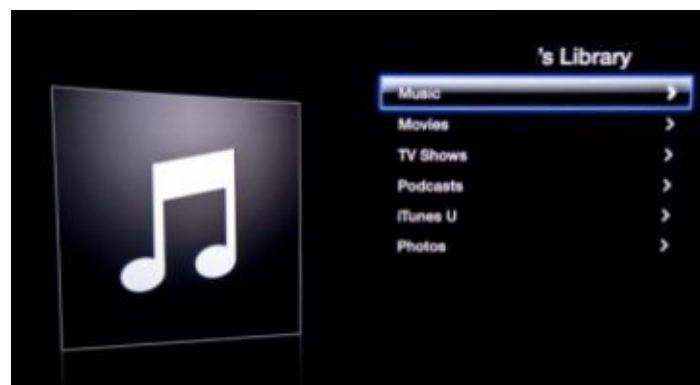


Choose what you'd like to share (if anything) and then click 'Done'.

Now that Home Sharing is set up on your computer, head to the Apple TV to complete the process. On the home screen, find the app labeled 'Computers' and select it. From there, you'll be shown this screen:



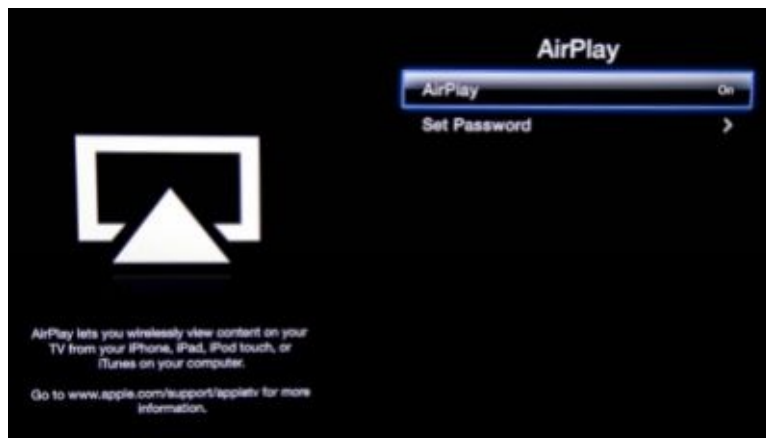
Press the select button again to turn on Home Sharing on the Apple TV. Once you've done that, you'll be greeted by a list of computers on the Home Sharing network. Select the one you'd like to use, and browse through the menu for your content, selecting anything you'd like to play:



Setting up Airplay Mirroring is just as easy. Remember, you'll need to have a relatively

recent iOS device (iPhone 3GS or above, iPod Touch 4th Gen or above, iPad, or iPad Mini) for this to work.

Head to the Settings menu on your Apple TV, and then Select AirPlay. Once you've done that, you'll be greeted with this:



Press select to turn it on (if it isn't already – it was enabled by default on our Apple TV). Set a password if you like, as anyone with an iOS device on your home network can take over your screen at the push of a button. If you have untrustworthy friends, you might want to think about using a password.

Now, head to the multitasking menu on your iOS device (by double tapping the home button) and then swipe right to left twice at the bottom of the screen to bring up the AirPlay function. Once you've done that, you'll see an icon that looks like a little television. Tap it, and you'll be presented with this:



Tap the 'Mirroring' button and select 'Apple TV' or whatever you've named your device. Once you've done that, whatever is on your iOS device will show up on your screen automatically. To exit this function, head back to the same menu on your iOS device and tap the 'On' button until it reads 'Off'.

If you are just watching videos off your device, then you don't need to mirror from your device—just Airplay it without and it will pick up the signal. Also, remember that Airplay is at the developers digression. Some developers block airplay for licensing reasons.

When this happens, you'll see a message alerting you of the fact. Unfortunately, Apple has zero control over this.

Part 5: Cutting the Cable Cord

Introduction

Most of this book is about the Apple TV, but I want to leave you with one final section on cutting out cable—because, let's face it, if you have bought an Apple TV that's probably something you are very strongly considering.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Cable is expensive, but it is convenient." But is it really? Times have changed. Today, alternative methods are often more convenient.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Cable is simple. I don't want to learn another new technology." Most so-called "new technology" is easier to use than cable. A cable remote has over 3 dozen buttons—I bet you don't even know what all of them do. An Apple TV remote? It has two buttons! What sounds easier to you? Learning dozens of buttons or learning two?

Unlike the rest of this book, this is not exclusively Apple. The section is on all digital media devices. So if you haven't decided on Apple TV yet and are just reading this book to decide if it's for you, then I'll mention the pros and cons of other devices as well.

I'll be honest and say I'm an Apple guy; my house is all Apple products. The reason is Apple works with Apple. What I mean by that, is all their products work great together. You can have an iPhone and a Windows PC, but if you really want the best bang for your buck, then having a Mac and an iPhone is a better option.

But I realize not everyone is me, so I've tried all of the others and broke down who each one is good for.

This guide will show you all the alternatives as well as how to know what the best fit is for your lifestyle.

A Return to Bunny

When you think about antenna television, you probably think about standing in front of an old TV set moving bunny ears around trying to angle it just the right way for perfect reception. And by perfect reception, I mean there's static and fuzz, but you can make out what the person on the screen is saying.

Several years ago, over the air signals moved to digital signals; when picked up by the antenna, you will get picture quality that is just as sharp as cable. So for basic channels, you are paying the cable company a fee for something you can literally get for free.

What do you need to do this? If you still happen to have a non-HDTV, then you would need a converter box; that will cost you about \$40 dollars; another \$100 and you might as well get a new TV.

If you have an HDTV—these are the flat rectangular TVs—then you won't need any kind of converter box. You just need an antenna. If you use Amazon, you can purchase the “AmazonBasics Ultra-Thin Indoor HDTV Antenna” for \$25; if you pop into RadioShack, Walmart, Target, Best Buy, or anywhere else with electronics, you can buy one for about the same—possibly a little cheaper. I've seen them as low as \$10. If you live in a remote area or an area with a lot of signal interference, then a more expensive one will probably be a better fit.

Best of all, HDTV are pretty slick and modern looking. They are normally square like the picture below. The days of bunny ears are pretty much gone.



Indoor Antenna

This is definitely the cheapest way of cutting the cord, but what about recording TV shows? That's definitely a plus of cable. You can purchase a DVR for less than \$200; unfortunately, this requires a monthly plan, so if you are looking to cut the bill, and not add a new one, then this is not the best option. You'll want to read some of the other alternatives further in the book if this is something important to you.

So what are the cons? The biggest is what you are missing. If you only want local channels (ABC, CBS, NBC, etc.), then it's perfect. If you want ESPN, Disney, etc., then you will need to look further at alternatives.

Cost:

\$10-\$25 for an antenna

\$200 if you want a DVR (plus subscription fees—usually less than \$15 a month)

Pros:

Price

Cons:

Channels are limited to local networks. Reception varies depending on the area you live. Recording shows is extra.

Digital Media Players

If you want the most channels possible and don't mind paying a little bit (not cable prices), then this section will talk about "Digital Media Players."

A Digital Media Player is basically a stripped down computer. Its main function is playing movies and TV shows—although some play games and do other things. This section will break down the cost of each, as well as the pros and cons of each.

Roku

Roku was one of the original media devices; the first device came out in 2008; while some manufacturers are playing catch up, they have pretty much nailed their user interface, creating something that is easy to use—and affordable.



Roku Interface

Roku is currently selling two devices: one that's \$100 and one that's \$50 (many stores discount them frequently, so look for sale prices). There are also older models that are always on sale, so if you want the best, then make sure you are being sold the current model. Some stores just say it's a Roku, but don't say which model, to mislead you into purchasing the lesser model. If you happen to have an older TV, the original Roku 1 has composite inputs that are compatible with older TVs (by older, I mean non-HDTVs).

Both models are compatible with iOS and Android—meaning if you have a smartphone or some tablets, then you can control the device with a native app. You also have the ability to send photos and pictures from your phone to the device.

What's the difference? It's all about preference. The \$100 player (the Roku 3 Streaming Media Player) has an Ethernet connection, USB and Micro SD (for adding things like music and pictures), a remote control with a headphone jack (so you can listen to TV with no sound coming from the TV), a fast processor, and motion control for games.



Roku 3

The \$50 player (the Roku Streaming Stick) is basically a barebones HDMI stick. That means the device itself plus into the back of your TV in the HDMI slot. A lot of promo images make you believe that's all you need. Don't be fooled! Unless you have a newer TV with HDMI power, then you will also need a power adaptor (which is included). So if you buy it thinking no dangling cords, then you might be **misled**.



Roku Streaming Stick

So what should you get? If all you want to do is watch movies, the cheaper stick is all you need. If you want to play games, listen through a headphone, or simply want the best, then go for the more expensive model.

The Roku promises 1500⁺ channels. That's impressive, right? Your cable might not even have that many! But this is a bit of upsale. For starters, not all these channels are free. On top of that, many of these channels are not free. There's no service out there that will let you cut the cable cord for nothing—but that doesn't mean you won't be saving a fortune by switching over to one of these devices.

In the next section, I will be looking at the different apps on each of these devices. This section is only about the hardware and who it is good for.

Pros

Cheap and sleek, there's plenty of content here to keep you busy for months. Many of the channels on Roku are in different languages, which is a plus if you are not a native English speaker.

Cons

Roku relies on other content providers to get content. There's no Roku channel with free content, like you will see on some of the other units. Roku also doesn't have the same muscle as larger companies like Apple and Amazon—which means there's a good chance they won't have the same staying power. What does that mean? It means, a year from now, they could sell their company and leave you with a box that no longer gets updated.

Who's it good for?

People who want the most amount of channels. It has a higher learning curve than some of the other devices.

Apple TV

Apple TV ambitiously burst onto the scene a year ahead of Roku in 2007 with a \$299 device for storing videos, music, and photos. It's come a *long* way since then—both in price and function.

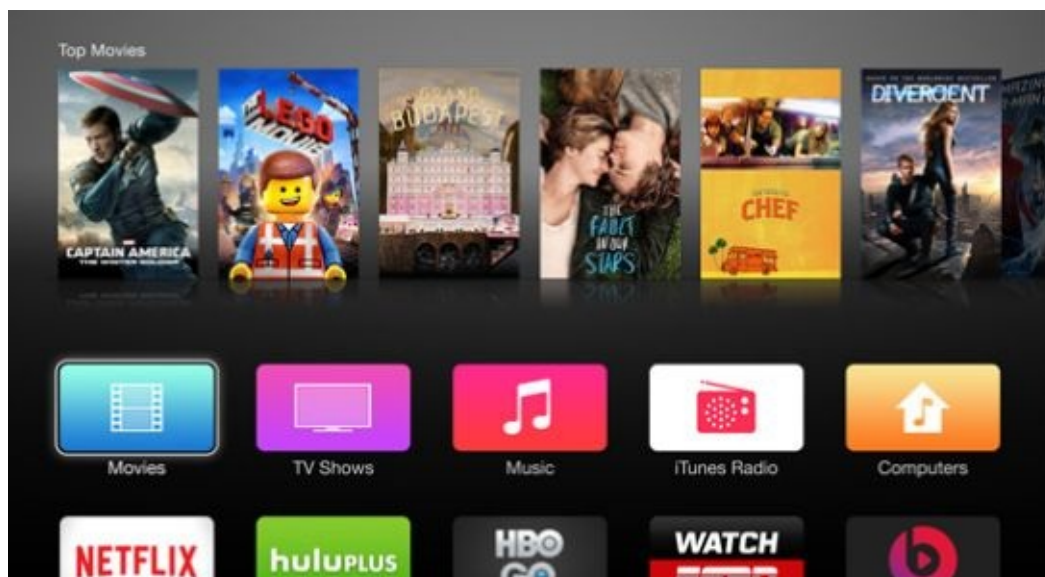
The original device had users storing all content on its hard drive; with later devices, all content would be streamed wirelessly—no storage needed. The Apple TV is not more than a third of the price at \$69.



Apple TV

Unlike some Apple products, like the Apple Watch, Apple TV does *not* require any other Apple products. You need a free iTunes account to purchase content, but everything can be managed from the device itself.

Apple products have always been billed as devices that “just work.” That is certainly true with Apple TV. I’ve tried all the devices in this book, and Apple TV is the most slick and bug free. Apps and movies open quickly, and **its** interface is easy for anyone to use.



Apple TV Interface

While Apple TV does not require any other Apple devices, Apple users are the ones who will get the most out of this device. Your Apple iPhone or iPad can double as a remote control. And if you have a Mac, iPhone, or iPad, you can “mirror” it on the TV screen; what does “mirror” mean? It means whatever your phone/tablet/computer screen looks like is exactly what your TV screen would look like.

Apple TV has not been updated in several years; it’s due. So if you want the latest and greatest, it might be worth it to wait a few months. Current rumors suggest a new TV will launch soon and include Siri integration.

Pros

Apple continues to be the company people look to for cutting edge; it’s no surprise that the first company to get HBO as a stand-alone subscription package was Apple TV; as more companies look to attract cord cutters, they will most likely roll out first on the Apple TV, then everyone else. Just as app companies typically build for iPhone/iPad *then* Android, TV content providers will likely come to Apple first. It includes a network adaptor if you prefer to stream content using a LAN connection instead of Wi-Fi.

Cons

Apple arguably has the best software, but Roku offers more channels; Apple channels, however, are more of the channels you would actually want to watch. Unfortunately, many of them require cable subscriptions to use; this will likely change in coming months. There are no composite inputs (only HDMI), so if you have a non-HDMI older TV, then this is not for you.

Who’s it good for?

While Apple TV is best for Apple users who know their products, anyone can use it. If you want the best quality for the price, it’s a good option. If you prefer quantity to quality, then there are other options.

Google Chromecast

Google first came into the media market with Android TV; it took them several years to develop an actual box to go with the platform. At the start they were letting developers create devices using their software.

In 2013, Google announced an affordable media device called Chromecast (\$35). The device is frequently discounted and bundled; I’ve seen them as cheap as \$15, so if this is the device for you, look for deals.



Google Chromecast

Like the Roku and Fire stick, Chromecast is a HDMI device; it's limited in features, but for the price, you can't complain.

Pros

It's cheap! It's pretty developer friendly, which means it will continue to grow in number of apps. It also supports many games, but to play them you'd either need a smartphone or tablet or a Bluetooth device.

Cons

No physical remote. It's all controlled by your smartphone or tablet. Don't have one? This device isn't for you.

Who's it good for?

The app is pretty easy to use, and the installation instructions are clear—still this probably isn't the best device for people who want no learning curve. If you like more control over the content displayed and don't mind using your phone or tablet with the device, then this is a great deal.

Amazon

Amazon had long been rumored to be working on a media device, and in 2014, they finally announced it: The Fire TV. It was \$99 and featured everything you'd expect from a streaming media device—but it also had a bit more: free movies and TV shows for Amazon Prime customers.



Fire TV

In November of the same year, they released a \$39.99 Fire TV stick—which is basically the Fire TV stripped down. It plugs directly into your HDMI input, and requires a power adaptor if your TV doesn't power HDMI devices.



Fire TV Stick

What's the difference? There are a lot of differences under the hood—mostly with regard to memory and processing speed. Are they noticeable? Not to most people. The more expensive unit does include a LAN connection if you don't want to use a Wi-Fi connection, and also has USB input and digital sound input. The biggest difference to most people will be the remote. On the surface they look pretty much the same. But the Fire TV remote includes a mic, so you can tell the device what you want to see. Hold the mic button, say “Watch Netflix” and the Netflix app opens. It's cool and slightly gimmicky than anything else—probably not worth the extra \$50 if you aren't concerned also with memory.



Fire TV Interface

Pros

The HDMI stick is one of the cheapest on the market. Prime selection is growing every month, and includes “some” HBO shows at no extra cost. Amazon Original shows are also growing in number, and are winning awards for quality. Amazon also sells a wireless game controller (\$39.99); ideally, this would be used to play games downloaded from the Amazon app store, but games are still a bit limited, and, for the most part, not great looking.

Cons

Amazon boasts their specs as being as good—if not better—than anything else on the market. And they are. But don't be fooled. The software loaded on the device is still new (though getting better). While Amazon's own selection of content

works well, some third party apps are a bit sluggish. The Flixster app, which I use to view Ultraviolet content, took, in some cases, over a minute to load.

Who's it good for?

Like the Apple TV, Amazon is a perfect fit for people who love the company's brand. Just like Apple would encourage you to use it with the company's own devices, Amazon wants you to use it as a companion to Fire Tablets and Fire Phones. You don't have to, of course, but there are a few more features if you do. Amazon does have an Android / iPhone app you can use as a remote. If you already pay for Amazon Prime, then TV isn't a bad deal. Prime TV doesn't have as much content as Netflix, but it's getting there. If you don't have any intention of using Prime for anything but TV, then this probably isn't the best deal for you.

But Wait! There's More...

It's fair to note that, while these are the main media players, there are other options: gaming consoles (PS4, Wii U, Xbox 360, etc.) have built-in media apps like Netflix and Hulu; so do most newer Blu-ray units. Many TVs are even billed as "Smart TVs" and have the ability to stream media content.

Why get a separate media device? Two reasons:

- These features are great *if* you have it built-in—but it's more costly to buy a new TV than media device if you don't.
- Media devices are update more frequently; so you are more likely to find new content and better apps on them.

What Is It Like Using Digital Media Devices?

Using any of these devices is not what you are used to with cable. There is no menu guide with a list of shows playing. With all the devices, you essentially get a menu with a series of apps, and within each app is where you find the actual content.

Different doesn't mean bad. While everything looks different, it really takes no time at all to get used to any of the platforms. Everything is much more graphical than what you see on cable menus.

In the case of Apple TV, apps have already been selected and arranged; you can hide some and rearrange the others, but you can't just go out and download more apps like you can on the iPhone/iPad. What you see is what you get.

With the other devices, a few apps are pre-installed, but you have to go search for the others. It's not hard, but if you are the kind of person that wants everything done for them, Apple is a safer choice. With the other devices, it's a bit of a free for all—there are wonderful apps, and...not so wonderful apps. With Apple TV, the apps are pre-selected and, while you may not want to view all the apps, they are all of higher standards.

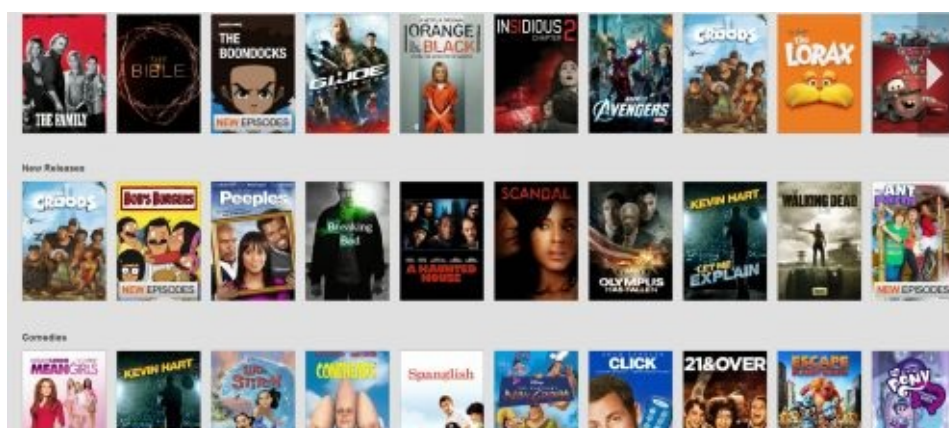
Android has the most potential for apps, because they have the largest marketplace of apps and developers often go to them first to try out their app before going to other platforms.

Software and Apps

So now you know what's out there. This next section will talk about the apps—and what devices they are supported on. There are literally thousands of apps; this section will only talk about the larger ones.

Netflix

Netflix (\$7.99) a month is the best content provider out there. No one comes close in terms of content or quality. For the monthly, no commitment, subscription, you get thousands of TV shows and movies. You also get Netflix originals; Netflix has partnered with Marvel to bring original comic book shows later in 2015, and next year they will start airing original movies from people like Adam Sandler and Pee-wee Herman. Current shows like *Orange Is the New Black* and *House of Cards* frequently are award, and last year they answered the prayers of many fans when they did a new season of the cult TV show *Arrested Development*. Many of their TV shows are from cable networks—they come about a year after airing.



Price:

\$7.99 per month

Supported Devices

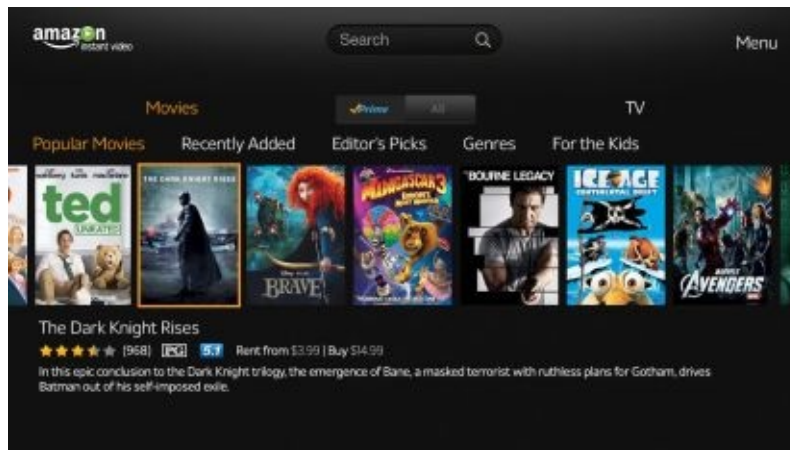
All devices

More Information:

www.netflix.com

Amazon Instant Video

Amazon's Instant Video is Amazon's answer to Netflix. While they are expanding content and offering some shows from HBO, it is not there yet. If you have Prime subscription, you already have it even if you don't use it.



Price:

\$99 per year

Supported Devices

Fire TV and Roku natively; Apple TV and Chromecast through mirroring/remote play

More Information:

www.amazon.com/instantvideo

Hulu Plus

If you don't mind waiting for TV shows, Netflix has you covered; if you want it sooner, then there's Hulu Plus. On top of having TV shows when or close to when they air, Hulu has TV shows not currently on Netflix. Hulu also has original content—though not often on par with the production value of Netflix and Amazon Prime. There is also movie selection, though, again, it isn't the best selection. Hulu is primarily known for its selection of TV shows.



Price:

\$7.99 per month

Supported Devices

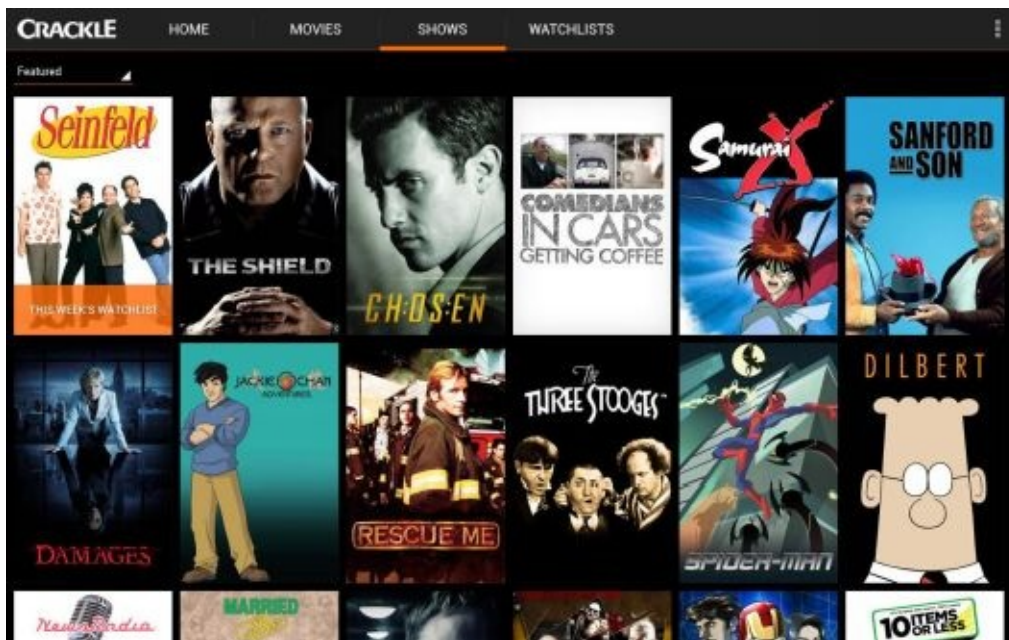
All Devices

More Information:

www.hulu.com

Crackle

Do you like free? Then there's Crackle! Crackle has a growing selection of movies and TV shows (like *Seinfeld*). Being free, you'd expect content to not be great, but there's a surprising amount of excellent content here. And it's getting larger.



Price:

Free (supported with ads)

Supported Devices

All Devices

More Information:

www.crackle.com

HBO Go & HBO Now

You may have heard about HBO Now in the news; it was announced at the same Apple Conference as the Apple Watch. Why is it a major announcement? HBO Go would always let you stream all your HBO shows and movies, as long as you subscribed through a cable provider and your cable provider allowed it. With HBO Now you can subscribe without

cable. While it will only be on Apple TV at launch, you can expect it on other platforms in the future.



Price:

HBO Go is free if you subscribe to HBO with your cable subscription; HBO Now is \$14.99 per month (first month free).

Supported Devices

HBO Go is supported on all media devices; HBO Now is supported on Apple TV at launch.

More Information:

www.hbo.com

Sling TV

Similar to Hulu, Sling TV offers TV shows for a subscription price. Shows can be watched live, and there are several networks not available anywhere else. Some of networks include: AMC, HGTV, TNT, TBS, Food Network, Cartoon Network, CNN, and ESPN. There are currently about 20 in the package.



Price:

\$20 per month (7 day free trial subscription)

Supported Devices

Roku and Fire TV

More Information:

www.sling.com

YouTube

The video service that, in some ways, started it all; YouTube may be done for short videos—and cats...lots and lots of cats—but it has been branching out into longer paid videos as well.



Price:

Free

Supported Devices

All devices but Fire TV; Fire TV *does* have a YouTube app, but it's not official.

More Information:

www.youtube.com

Watch ESPN

This combines all the ESPN networks into one place for live TV and highlights / replays. Perfect for the sports junky! Apple TV has the largest selection of sports channels (including: NBA Game Time, MLB TV, NFL Now, NHL Game Center, WWE Network, UFC TV)



Price:

Free with cable subscription where supported; does not currently offer a stand-alone service for users without cable subscriptions.

Supported Devices

All devices

More Information:

<http://espn.go.com/watchespn/apps#>

Showtime Anytime, Encore Play, Starz Play

Showtime Anytime, Encore Play and Starz Play are similar to HBO Go; unfortunately, there is no monthly package for non-cable users. It features all the content that you see on your TV, but with the convenience of watching it anytime—even if you didn't record it. All your favorite cable original shows are there as well.

Price:

Free with cable subscription where supported; does not currently offer a stand-alone service for users without cable subscriptions.

Supported Devices

All devices for Showtime, Chromecast for Encore and Starz

More Information:

www.showtimeanytime.com

A&E, History, PBS, PBS Kids, Disney, Disney Junior, Disney XD, Nick, Comedy Central, Lifetime, FYI, Watch ABC, Fox Now, Smithsonian

Most major networks have apps for viewing TV on the devices, but most also currently require a subscription.

Price:

Free with cable subscription where supported; does not currently offer a stand-alone service for users without cable subscriptions.

Supported Devices

Disney, Comedy Central, Lifetime, and FYI are currently supported only on Apple TV and Chromecast. All other channels are supported everywhere.

Vudu & Flixster

Have you bought a Blu-ray or DVD disc that has a coupon for a digital download, and wondered why you would want that? This is why! Both Vudu and Flixster let you add digital copies to your device; no disk space is required; no disk is required. Just add the code and you are done.



Flixster partners with Rotten Tomatoes for movie reviews

Cost:

It's free to add a movie if you have the ultraviolet code; you can also purchase movies from each service.

Supported Devices

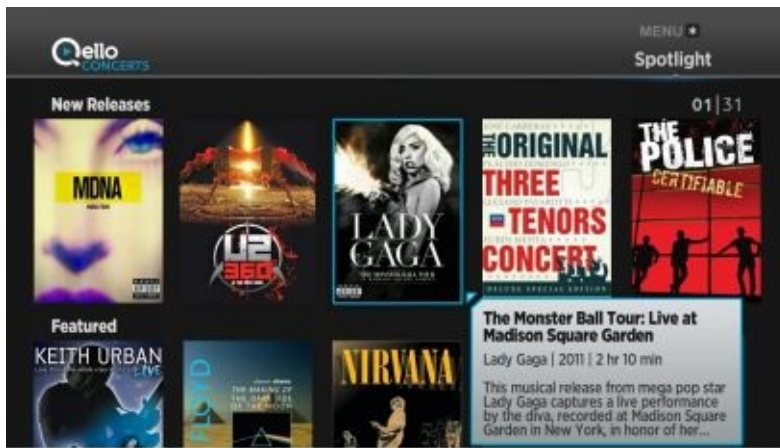
Vudu (supported on Roku and Chromecast); Flixster (supported on all devices but Apple TV); Vudu can be mirrored on Apple TV

More information:

www.vudu.com; www.flixster.com

Qello Concerts

If you like going to concerts, then this is a great app; there are hundreds of them, from classic rock like Queen and The Doors to modern pop like Sara Bareilles and Lady Gaga.



Cost:

Subscribing monthly is \$4.99; yearly is \$44.99; 7 day free trial available.

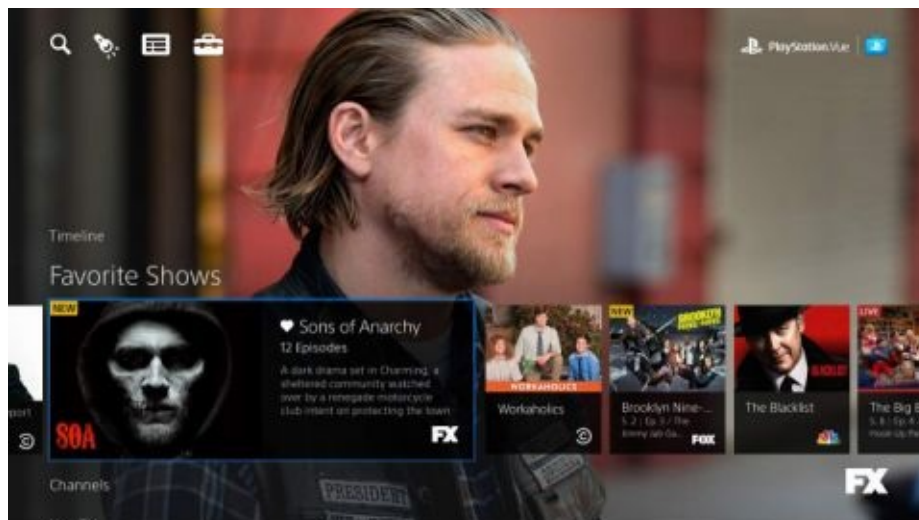
Supported Devices

All devices but Roku

More information: www.qello.com

Sony Vue

In March, Sony Entertainment did its best to turn the heads of cord cutters with the announcement of Sony Vue—a streaming content provider that shows TV shows in both real-time and on demand. While many of the big networks are there, notably absent are ABC and Disney. Vue has by far the largest selection of content—up to 80 channels at launch for certain regions. The plan comes with a few catches, however: one, the price (more on that below), and two, the regions it's available in—currently the only regions you can access Vue is: New York, Chicago and Philadelphia.



Price:

For \$50 a month, you get 53 channels (CBS, Fox, NBC, Bravo, CNN, Comedy Central, Food Network, MTV, Nick, and TNT are some of the bigger ones); for \$60 you can also get local sports networks; and for \$70 you get smaller stations like FXM, Logo and Sprout.

Supported Devices

PS4 and PS3 at launch; iPad at launch is said to be in works.

More Information:

www.sonyentertainmentnetwork.com

Buying Content

You may be at the point where cutting the cord makes sense—but you may also be thinking: everything is there—but one show! If that's the case, then each of the devices also have the option to buy content separately. So let's say all you want is *Mad Men*; is that one show worth the cable bill? You can buy that one show for usually \$19.99 to \$29.99 for the entire season—and you get to keep it forever.

It used to be cutting the cord meant sacrifice. You'd save money, but you'd be without some of your favorite shows. That's not the case anymore. Many apps are even letting you watch content at the same time as the show on regular TV.

Cutting the cord doesn't mean sacrifice. Cutting the cord just makes sense!

Conclusion

So that's Apple TV. Pretty cool, right? Hopefully you now feel both comfortable using it and you have an understanding of why it's so easy. It doesn't have all the content of other Apple products, but it gets better with every update—and there have been a lot of them lately.

With iPhone and iPad, Apple has consistently released a new one every year that they try and convince you is the latest and greatest; with Apple TV the updates are over the air—which is great for your wallet!

Have fun with your new toy and enjoy hours of entertainment!