

# Put together your favorite TV streaming package for less than \$30 a month

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It's never been more tempting for TV viewers to cut the cord and dive into "the stream." But with the recent launch of Disney+ and Apple TV+, the waters can appear murky. And they're about to get even

muddier.

HBO Max, which will premiere in May, will offer the entire library of "Friends" and "The Big Bang Theory," as well as new shows, including "The Flight Attendant" starring "Big Bang" actress Kaley Cuoco. Those who have been ignoring CBS All Access may finally take notice in January when it sets off on new "Star Trek" voyages with Adm. Jean-Luc Picard.

Also coming next year: Peacock, a showcase for NBC's most beloved sitcoms not called "Friends" or "Seinfeld," and Quibi, which is developing a new version of "The Fugitive" with Kiefer Sutherland on the run and a series in which Chrissy Teigen tries to prove she's just as formidable in the courtroom as Judge Judy.

Signing up for every single service might mean refinancing your mortgage. With that in mind, we've got suggestions on how to navigate this new world on a budget of under \$30 a month.

Stop whining. Many cable subscribers are coughing up five times that amount—and it's just a tad more than date night at your local movie theater. Watching in your living room means sacrificing the epic nature of a big screen and buttery popcorn from the concession stand. But these plans will do wonders for your wallet—not to mention your cholesterol level.

The subscription costs we used are standard; you may be able to negotiate better deals or take advantage of special offerings, like the free year of Apple+ for those buying a new iPhone. Also, some of these services may not be available on the platforms you use, so look before you leap.

If you think carefully about the best plan for you, there's nothing but

smooth sailing ahead.

## **The Sports Nut**

The best bet for die-hard Timberwolves, Wild and Twins fans is Sling TV's Blue package, which includes Fox Sports North. For \$15 more, you can add the Orange package, which includes the ESPN channels. Even if you choose not to pay the extra fee, you'll get KMSP, which broadcasts most of the Vikings games, as well as the NFL Network and NBC Sports.

ESPN+ is a nice, affordable pickup. It doesn't include a lot of the flagship's core programming, like "SportsCenter" and "Monday Night Football," but exclusive shows like Kobe Bryant's "Detail" and "Draft Academy" may provide the edge you need to score in your fantasy league.

Sling TV Blue: \$25

ESPN+: \$4.99

## **The Haggard Parent**

Disney+ is offering a package deal that will properly serve everyone in the household. In addition to the new streaming service, which offers everything from delightful shorts featuring the "Toy Story 4" breakout star Forky to a live-action adaptation of "Lady and the Tramp," you get ESPN+ and Hulu, home for thought-provoking adult fare like "Four Weddings and a Funeral," Mindy Kaling's super-cute take on the 1994 rom-com. Hulu's backlog also includes network favorites like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," "Parks and Recreation" and "The Simpsons."

If you're looking for shows to watch together, Disney+ already includes "The Mandalorian," TV's first live-action spinoff of "Star Wars," with plenty of programs in the works for otherwise unemployed Marvel superheroes.

Apple+ is also determined to have multigenerational appeal. "The Morning Show," a satirical report on TV news, is strictly for grown-ups with stars Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon swearing up a storm, while "Dickinson" is designed to get teens to think poet Emily Dickinson was cooler than a Kardashian. School kids who have already heard enough from Horton will enjoy "The Elephant Queen," one of the few nature documentaries these days that doesn't feature animals ripping into flesh.

Amazon Prime gets plenty of attention for grown-up fare like recent Emmy winner "Fleabag" and Billy Bob Thornton's quirkier-than-ever "Goliath," but it's just as impressive when it comes to serving toddlers. Original series like "Tumble Leaf" and "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" are reliable babysitters, as are classic episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."

Disney's triple-bundle package: \$12.99

Amazon Prime Video: \$8.99

Apple+: 4.99

## **The Hipster**

Anyone wanting to stay current around the water cooler is required to subscribe to Netflix, at least as long as "Black Mirror," "Stranger Things" and "BoJack Horseman" are in production. It's still also your best bet for taking a deep dive into foreign films, like New Zealand's "The Breaker

Upperers," produced by the red-hot Taika Waititi, the kind of stuff guaranteed to earn you indie cred on the cocktail party circuit.

You may have to live without access to some of cable's buzziest shows, most notably FX's "Atlanta," but HBO's catalog is available independently, which means you can stay current on "Westworld" and "Watchmen."

You can really stand out in the cool crowd by adding one of the services that specialize in flowing against the mainstream. I'd love to suggest Crunchyroll, your home for everything anime, but at \$7.99, it would go beyond our allocated budget.

Instead, consider Sundance Now, a smartly curated collection of film festival favorites and the best from the Sundance Channel, including Stephen Frears' "State of the Union," which could have just as easily been titled, "Scenes From a Broken Marriage." You also get exclusive programming like "No One Saw a Thing," a docuseries about how a small town covered up the murder of a local bully.

Netflix: \$8.99

HBO Now: \$14.99

Sundance Now: \$4.99

## **The Older, But Wiser Viewer**

If you're looking for smart TV that doesn't rely on gratuitous sex and violence, Netflix has plenty to offer, most notably "The Crown" and "Grace and Frankie," as well as docuseries like "Planet Earth."

But don't stop there. Anglophiles have plenty of proper options, the best

of which is Acorn TV, home of bloodless detective series like "My Life Is Murder" with Lucy Lawless, and lovey-dovey comedies such as "The Good Karma Hospital," in which a kiss is just as sexy as a romp in the sack.

Hallmark Movies Now is your pass to all those corny but cute flicks for the cost of a couple of greeting cards. Also for your consideration: BroadwayHD, which has a limited but high-caliber collection of stage shows, like "42nd Street" and "Oklahoma!" You pay about the same amount as a day fare on the New York City subway.

Netflix: \$8.99

Acorn TV \$5.99

BroadwayHD: \$8.99

Hallmark Movies Now: \$5.99

## **The News Addict**

Here's where the situation gets a little expensive. There's no super-affordable way to gain access to all the news channels. The Hulu package with live TV is probably the best option for that, but that will run you close to \$40 a month.

If you want to stay within the constraints of our imaginary budget, you're best off going with Sling TV Blue, with access to the local news on KARE and KMSP, as well as CNN. Fox News and MSNBC, however, aren't included.

Want to also hear from conservative voices? Add the Fox Nation app, which offers in-depth commentary from some of the network's top

personalities, but you'll go slightly over the allowance. Look for special deals that will help you shave off that extra change.

Sling TV Blue: \$25

Fox Nation: \$5.99

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