

HBO Max debuts without the two most popular streaming platforms, Roku or Amazon

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The latest new streaming service HBO Max bowed with unlimited access

to every episode of "Friends," "The Big Bang Theory" and "Game of Thrones." But if all you've got is a streaming player from Roku or Amazon, you won't be able to watch.

Roku and Amazon are the two largest streaming platforms, by far, with a combined 33% [market share](#), according to Parks Associates, and Max isn't available on either. It is viewable on the two way smaller streaming player competitors, Apple TV (4%) and Google Chromecast (3%).

Max is also available on select recent Samsung and Sony smart TVs, as well as computers, phones and tablets, the Microsoft Xbox One and Sony PlayStation 4 gaming platforms.

AT&T-owned HBO Max has an advertised price of \$14.99 monthly, for access to reruns and movies from the Warner Bros. and HBO libraries, and a handful of originals, including "Love Life," starring Anna Kendrick in a romantic anthology.

But most folks won't be paying that at all if they already subscribe to HBO Now, the HBO streaming service that offers HBO without going through a [cable operator](#).

Max is offered free to Now subscribers and corporate owner AT&T is looking to make it feel as seamless as possible.

On the devices it works with, the HBO Now app will automatically update and say HBO Max instead.

"You shouldn't need to sign in," HBO says in an e-mail to subscribers. "But if you do, sign in using your HBO NOW email and password. You will be prompted with 'Access All of HBO Max' or 'Access HBO Only'—to experience all of HBO Max, select 'Access All of HBO Max.'"

The old HBO NOW will be within the app, including the HBO library and the new stuff from Max. HBO says it will have 10,000+ hours of entertainment available.

Beyond streaming, many HBO cable and satellite subscribers also get Max for free, as customers of AT&T TV, DIRECTV, AT&T U-Verse, Cox Contour, Optimum, Spectrum, Suddenlink and Verizon Fios TV. But not all cable operators will offer Max for free and there's one huge omission: the nation's largest cable operator, Comcast. But the ones who do will offer streaming access to Max, not a separate Max cable channel.

Phil Swann, the author of the TV Answer Man blog, says many of his readers are puzzled by the launch. "They don't have a clue," he says. "They don't understand why HBO Max isn't on Roku or Amazon. It's just a sea of confusion to them."

Example: HBO Max is available for purchase directly from within the streaming services Hulu and YouTube TV. But if you watch those services on an Amazon or Roku player (or Roku branded TCL smart TVs) your monthly \$15 won't be worth much. Max won't be playable.

And if you have subscribed to HBO Now via Roku or Amazon, your app won't update to Max, because HBO and the companies couldn't come to terms.

Asked about the Roku/Amazon absence, "We don't have an update to share," said Chris Willard, vice-president of communications for AT&T's WarnerMedia. "As of now there is no deal in place. If that changes we'll let you know."

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