

# What's the best streaming service for you?

## How cable alternatives compare for cord-cutters

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Perhaps you cut the cord from cable or satellite and then came up empty when the Super Bowl was on, trying to find a way to watch the game with your antenna.

Or with the Oscars airing this weekend, you no longer get ABC and the smart TV app won't work for you because you can't provide the cable authentication the app demands.

So is it any wonder then many cord-cutters are signing up for cable streaming services? They get the broadcast and [cable networks](#), just fewer of them, for a lower monthly fee, and can access the programs on TVs, phones, tablets, even the car.

Sunday is National Cutting the Cord Day (a made-up holiday invented by the folks at Sling TV, but that's OK, we'll play along), so perhaps it's time to look at life without a cable box or hard to understand remote.

Initially, cord-cutters connected their laptops to a

TV and went DIY style. But now, with the abundance of cheap tools to bring the Internet to TV—like via Amazon and Roku streaming sticks, which can be had for as little as \$20—online entertainment is mainstream.

Google just reported that its YouTube TV now has 2 million subscribers paying \$50 monthly. Sling TV, the most affordable of the cable streamers, starting at \$30 monthly, has 2.6 million subscribers. Disney, which is the majority owner of Hulu, hasn't broken out the numbers for its Hulu with Live TV streaming alternative, but Cord Cutters News says the number tops 3 million. AT&T, which has practically doubled the rates for the service that used to be called DirecTV Now (now AT&T Now and starting at \$65 monthly) has reported losses in its quarterly results, and now has just over 800,000 subscribers.

Here's how they stack up:

### YouTube TV

Price: \$49.99 for over 70 channels. Up to six accounts can access the programming for the monthly fee. Offer: Free 2-week trial (usually 1 week,) expires Feb. 13.

Includes: This offering from the No. 1 online video network includes the [broadcast networks](#), cable channels from Disney/ABC, NBCUniversal, Fox, AMC and Turner Broadcasting. Missing are Viacom (Nickelodeon, MTV, Comedy Central.) The Discovery networks that had been missing, FYI, like Discovery Channel and Animal Planet, were recently added, as was the PBS network.

Works with: Roku, Apple, and Chromecast, smart TVs from Samsung, LG, Vizio and Sony, as well as the Xbox One and PlayStation 4 video game consoles. Big plus: That corporate spat between

YouTube owner Google and Amazon has been resolved. YouTube TV now works with Fire TV streaming sticks.

Cloud DVR: No storage limits; you can keep the shows for up to nine months.

Pros: The most consumer-friendly terms (up to six screens, no DVR storage limits), best program guide navigation, easiest one-click for adding shows to DVR record list. Terrific app that makes it easy to watch the TV shows from the bedroom, living room, office, park—anywhere. Plus, if YouTube TV doesn't have your show, the main YouTube website probably does have some variation of it. There's enough to keep you busy for days.

Cons: When you record a show on YouTube, it's with the expectation that you can watch it the way a cord-cutter would want to—with the ability to fast forward through commercials. But some shows come in as video-on-demand versions—and no functionality to zip through the ads.. Or, some shows get recorded in an alternate version. "CBS Sunday Morning" doesn't show up on CBS, but instead the Pop Network, which is owned by CBS.

### **Hulu with Live TV**

Price: \$54.99 for 60 channels on two screens, or add \$9.99 monthly for unlimited screens.

Includes: All the broadcast networks and most of the cable outlets. Missing in action: Viacom channels (Nickelodeon, MTV and Comedy Central), PBS and the Hallmark Channel.

Works with: Apple TV, Google Chromecast, Roku, Amazon Fire TV Stick, Fire TV Edition and the Echo Show video speaker, Nintendo Switch, Xbox 360 and One, Samsung smart TVs.

Cloud DVR: Record up to 50 hours, pay \$15 extra monthly for up to 200 hours.

Pros: You get broadcast and [cable channels](#) as well as the Hulu service, which offers originals ("The Handmaid's Tale") network TV series on demand and movies, so there's a lot to watch. Easy-

on-the-eyes interface that makes it simple to find what you're looking for. It does a really good job with suggestions of other shows you'd want to see.

Cons: Too many of the DVR-recorded shows are video-on-demand and don't offer fast-forward tools. These need to be better labeled.

### **AT&T Now**

Price: \$65 for 45+ channels, on up to three accounts. Seven-day free trial.

Includes: The skinny bundle from the folks who brought you the DirecTV satellite service—the most expensive of any of the pay-TV offerings—has a wide network selection. The four broadcast networks and cable outlets are here, along with channels from Disney/ABC, Fox, Discovery, Viacom, NBCUniversal, Turner and more. Missing: PBS.

Works with: Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Google Chromecast, Samsung smart TVs and tablets from Apple and Android.

Cloud DVR: 500 hours, stored for up to 90 days.

Pro: Gives you free HBO and can be bundled with wireless service for discount. Has the missing Viacom channels (MTV, Nickelodeon, BET, Comedy Central) that are nowhere to be found on YouTube TV and Hulu. The DVR usage, which had maxed out at 20 hours, is now a generous 500 hours.

Con: Most expensive service. The menu is confusing and cable-like, and you're dealing with AT&T, which will take you from the sign-up page to wireless offers.

### **Sling TV**

Price: Starts at \$30 monthly for up to three screens. To commemorate National Cutting the Cord Day, Sling is offering its channels for \$5 a month for the first month, or \$20 for both. The deal expires Feb. 11.

Includes: From the folks who brought you the Dish

Network for satellite viewing, Sling has a skinnier color-coded [channel](#) lineup than others. The "Orange" offering has some popular channels, like ESPN, CNN and Comedy Central, but it's missing big ones like CBS, ABC and PBS. The "Blue" offering, also for \$30, has a more sports-oriented lineup. (You can get both Blue and Orange combined for \$45 monthly.) Many favorites may be missing from "Blue" or "Orange" for you. In December, Sling addressed two programming holes and added Fox News and MSNBC to its lineup. To get other channels you may like, you could pay extra. To get TCM, look for the Hollywood Extra package, MTV and TV Land are in the Comedy extra offering. All add \$5 each monthly. Nickelodeon is missing from all of them.

Works with: Apple TV, Roku, Amazon, Chromecast, select LG and Samsung smart TVs and the Xbox One video game console.

Cloud DVR: Dish now offers 10 hours of DVR recording at no charge, or \$5 monthly for 50 hours of recordings.

Pro: The pricing. Sling has the lowest rates. If you want only a handful of channels, this is the best deal you'll get—if you can find your favorite networks.

Con: The pricing. The most confusing of all the offerings. What seems like the best rates may not look so good once you've figured out that you have to tack on extras to get what you need. Additionally, Sling is the only one of the cable alternatives mentioned here that doesn't offer the complete roster of broadcast networks. CBS and ABC are huge omissions. But if you don't care about network TV, you can't beat the pricing.

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