

Watch TV All You Want, It's (Mostly) Free

If you love to binge watch the latest TV shows and feel tethered to your cable or satellite TV company, you have another option. There are devices that you can buy that give you access to a huge amount of streaming TV shows, movies and other programs with no monthly fee.

The devices have the relatively generic name of TV boxes, and are also sometimes called Android TV boxes to distinguish them from the first iteration, the Apple TV. While the Apple TV mostly gives users access to television content they need to pay for in the iTunes store, Android TV boxes provide this streaming data at no cost.

Users buy a small set-top device that connects to their television and it comes with a remote control. Some TV boxes give you access to some free and some paid content and others say they are “unlocked” with tons of free content uploaded to file sharing websites. Because the content is streamed and not downloaded, it is not a grey area when it comes to being a violation of copyright laws.

Whether or not the TV boxes are unlocked, the devices are like mini computers that contain apps that users can use to search, in some cases buy and stream shows and other content.

Here is a comparison of the top TV boxes for 2018.

Amazon Fire TV

The best-known TV box is Amazon's Fire TV, which gives Amazon Prime users access to free streaming content. Although the Amazon Prime video content is free, users still need to pay the annual Prime membership fee. However, as with other Android TV boxes, you can install Kodi, an entertainment software that gives you access to additional free content. Amazon Fire TV has a fast processor and 2GB of RAM for stability.

Nvidia Shield TV

The Nvidia Shield TV was considered to be the best Android TV box when it came out in 2015. The newer version is smaller and comes with two remotes, one for TV and one for gaming. For avid gamers, this is the top TV box pick. It has a Tegra X1 mobile chip, which enables 4K video and rendering Gamecube and Wii games as long as you have an emulator. Using Android 7 Nougat, you can plug in an external USB 3 drive for additional storage.

GEM Box

Emtech's GEM Box is a compact TV box that is good for those who want TV streaming and the ability to play light Android games on a TV. It comes with Aptoide, an alternative to Google Play and also supports Kodi. You may experience

issues with some Android apps, since not all are compatible with the game style controller.

Xiaomi Mi TV Box

The Mi Box won both the Red Dot and Good Design awards, and is less expensive than Fire TV at around \$75. It supports 4K and HDR video, has a Bluetooth voice remote and supports Google Cast. While it doesn't come with a game controller, it is compatible with other Xiaomi products including its Bluetooth gamepad. Its quad-core processor has 2 GB of DDR3 memory and 8 GB of flash storage. Unlike some of the other TV boxes, it also has an audio chip to support Dolby Digital Plus and DTS multichannel HD audio. The Android 6.0 enables users to download Kodi and use it within minutes.

More and more people are “cutting the cord” to their cable and satellite providers and are able to watch what they want at a much lower price on their TV box.