

[www.cnet.com/news/best-live-tv-streaming-for-cord-cutters-youtube-tv-sling-tv-hulu-and-more/](http://www.cnet.com/news/best-live-tv-streaming-for-cord-cutters-youtube-tv-sling-tv-hulu-and-more/)

## Best live TV streaming for cord-cutters: YouTube TV, Sling TV, Hulu and more

*Ty Pendlebury*

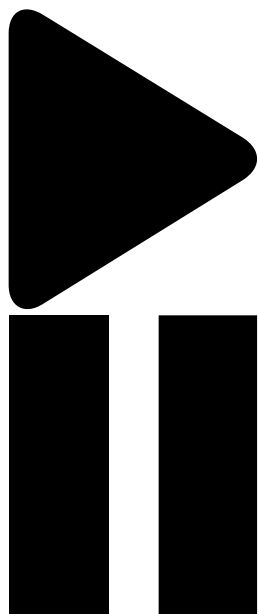
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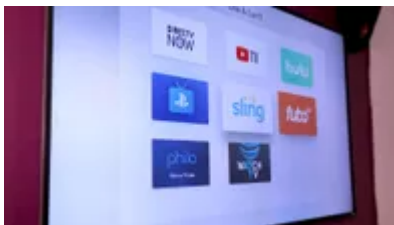
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As the nation hunkers down at home to help fight the spread of the novel [coronavirus](#), it may be a good time to [cut the cable TV cord](#) to save some money. But what if you want to keep live TV at the same time? With live sports on hiatus Americans might be watching less live TV, but on the other hand live news, both national and from your local TV station, is more important than ever. Beyond [hanging an antenna](#), streaming is the cheapest way to get live TV.

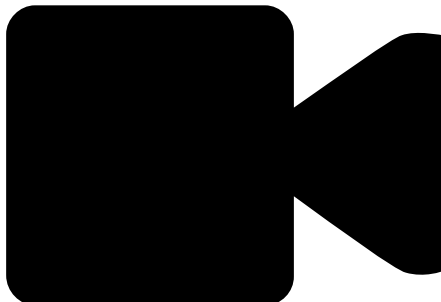
Prices of streaming TV services [start at \\$15 a month](#) (or [free in the case of Sling TV's current promotion](#)) with no extra fees or contracts. In place of a cable box and the monthly fee to rent it, you'll use an app on your smart TV, [Roku](#), [Apple TV](#), [Amazon Fire TV](#) or game console. And you can watch at home or on the go via a tablet, phone, other mobile device or even a web browser.

**Read more:** [Free live TV news to watch now: Stream ABC, CBS, Fox News, CNN and more](#)





Now playing: Watch this: Live TV streaming services for cord cutters: How to choose...



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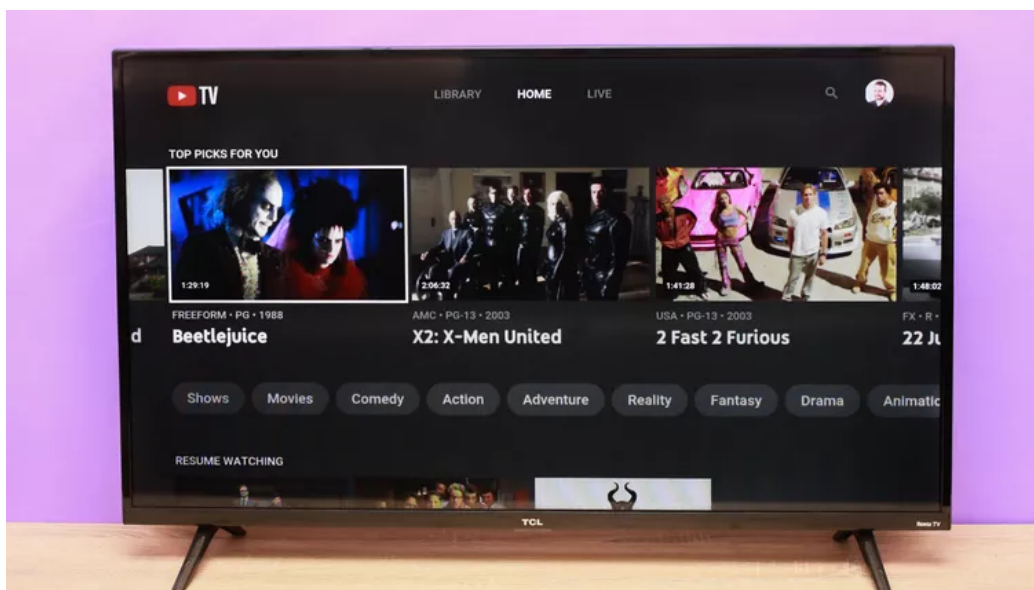
You can watch most, if not all, of your favorite TV channels (including ABC, NBC, ESPN, CNN and Nickelodeon) live over the Internet thanks to streaming services like [YouTube TV](#) and [Sling TV](#). In some instances they cost far less than you're shelling out to the cable company for TV, but these services that don't require a visit from an installer -- which is an important factor to consider during [social distancing](#).

Both prices and the services themselves are in a constant flux. AT&T TV Now, for example, quietly dropped HBO from its base package and made its service \$10 cheaper. Change also means that competition is squeezed out -- [Sony shuttered its streaming service PlayStation Vue](#) in January.

## Top live TV streaming services compared

	YouTube TV	Sling TV	Hulu Plus Live TV	AT&T TV Now
<b>Base price</b>	\$50/month for 70-plus channels	\$30/month for 30-plus channels	\$55/month for 60-plus channels	\$55/month for 45-plus channels
<b>Free trial</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC channels</b>	Yes, in many markets	Fox and NBC only in select cities	Yes, in many markets	Yes, in many markets
<b>Simultaneous streams per account</b>	3	1 or 3	2 (\$15 option for unlimited)	2 (\$5 option for 3)
<b>Family member/user profiles</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Cloud DVR</b>	Yes (keep for 9 months)	Yes	Yes	Yes (50 hours, 200 hours for \$10 a month)
<b>Fast-forward through or skip commercials with cloud DVR</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (Yes with \$15 option)

With all of that in mind, here's a guide to the brave [new world of live TV streaming over the internet](#), as well as other cord-cutting options available today, starting with our favorite recommendations for the best TV streaming service.

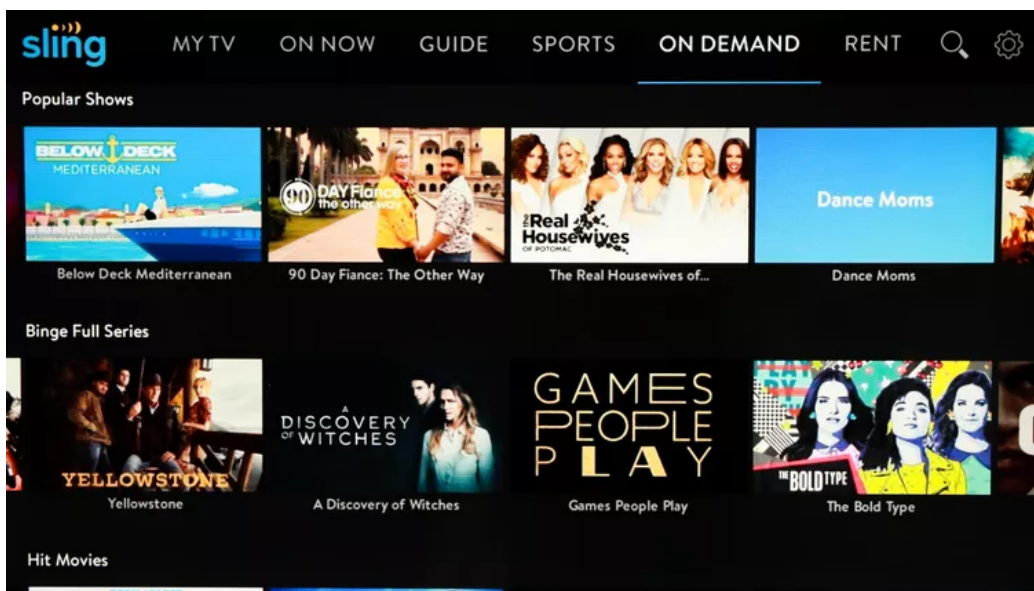


Sarah Tew/CNET

YouTube TV has [more top channels for the base price](#) than any competitor, including all four local channels (ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC; note that CBS is the parent company of CNET) in most areas of the country. It's also the only service with local PBS channels. YouTube TV has the best cloud DVR of the bunch, including unlimited storage and a generous nine months to watch recordings (most are 30 days). The interface is no-nonsense, if a little drab, and yet it offers most of the features a cable service can give you. And unlike Sling and others, it's dead simple: One package, one price, done.

With its best-in-class channel selection and cloud DVR, YouTube TV is our favorite option for cord-cutters who want the perks of cable without the hassle. Like all premium-priced (\$50-ish) services, however, its relatively high monthly fee makes it more difficult to save money over a traditional cable subscription.

**Top channels not available:** A&E, Comedy Central, History, Lifetime, NFL Network, Nickelodeon. [Read our YouTube TV review.](#)



Sarah Tew/CNET

Sling TV costs more than [AT&T Watch TV](#) (\$15) and [Philo](#) (\$20) but has better channels, more options and a comparatively better interface, so it's worth the extra money in our opinion. And it's still dirt-cheap compared to the other streaming services, let alone cable.

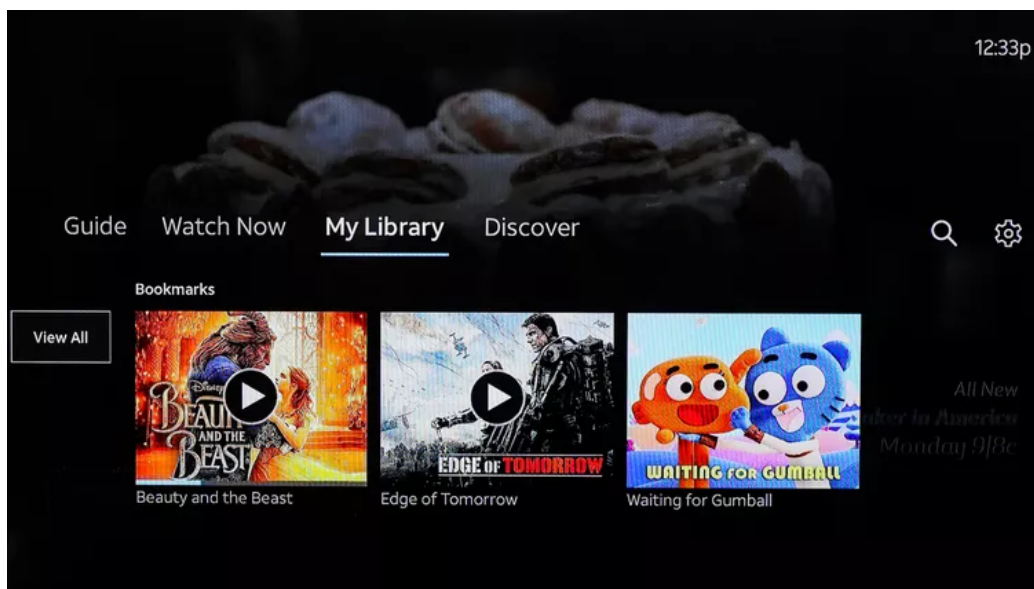
Sling is cheaper than premium services like YouTube TV and Hulu Plus Live TV because it has very few local stations. Confusingly, it also has two \$30-per-month channel packages, Sling Orange and Sling

Blue. While some channels are available on both Sling Orange and Sling Blue, the two differ significantly with other channel offerings: Orange is basically the ESPN/Disney package, while Blue is the Fox/NBC package.

Sling's home screen isn't much to look at, but it offers all of the options you need without clutter. The only real letdown, apart from the general lack of locals, is its arcane live pause. The service's options are myriad, so check out [Sling TV: Everything you need to know](#) for all the details.

**Top channels not available on Sling Blue:** ABC, CBS, Animal Planet, Disney Channel, ESPN, Nickelodeon. Fox and NBC are [only available in select major cities](#).

**Top channels not available on Sling Orange:** ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Animal Planet, Bravo, CNBC, Discovery Channel, Bravo, Fox News, Fox Sports 1, FX, MSNBC, USA Network. [Read our Sling TV review](#).



Sarah Tew/CNET

Why is Watch TV so cheap? It lacks locals, much like Sling TV, doesn't have any dedicated sports channels and, with the exception of CNN, is missing news channels, too. And many of the shows on the channels it does have can be watched on-demand with a Hulu subscription for less.

On the other hand, it's solid for the price. Its lineup includes 30 channels, some of which -- like AMC, HGTV, and BBC America -- are no longer available on the more expensive AT&T TV Now. The interface is fun and easy to navigate. It's available on most other major streaming platforms, except for Roku, and some AT&T wireless plan customers get it for free.

**Top channels not available:** ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Bravo, CNBC, Disney Channel, ESPN, Fox News, Fox Sports 1, FX, MLB Network, MSNBC, NFL Network, Travel Channel, USA Network. [Read our AT&T Watch TV review](#).



Sarah Tew/CNET

With the least cable-like interface of its competitors, Hulu's greatest asset is the integration of live TV with its significant catalog of on-demand content for one price. Unfortunately, you'll have to pay another \$10 a month to get the ability to skip commercials on Hulu's cloud DVR (the base cloud DVR, which is included, doesn't permit skipping ads). Its channel count is solid, however, and with Hulu's catalog included (Handmaid's Tale, anyone?) it's a top competitor, but its higher price means it's not the best deal.

**Top channels not available:** AMC, BBC America, Comedy Central, MLB Network, MTV, NBA TV, NFL Network, NFL Red Zone, Nickelodeon. [Read our Hulu Plus Live TV review.](#)

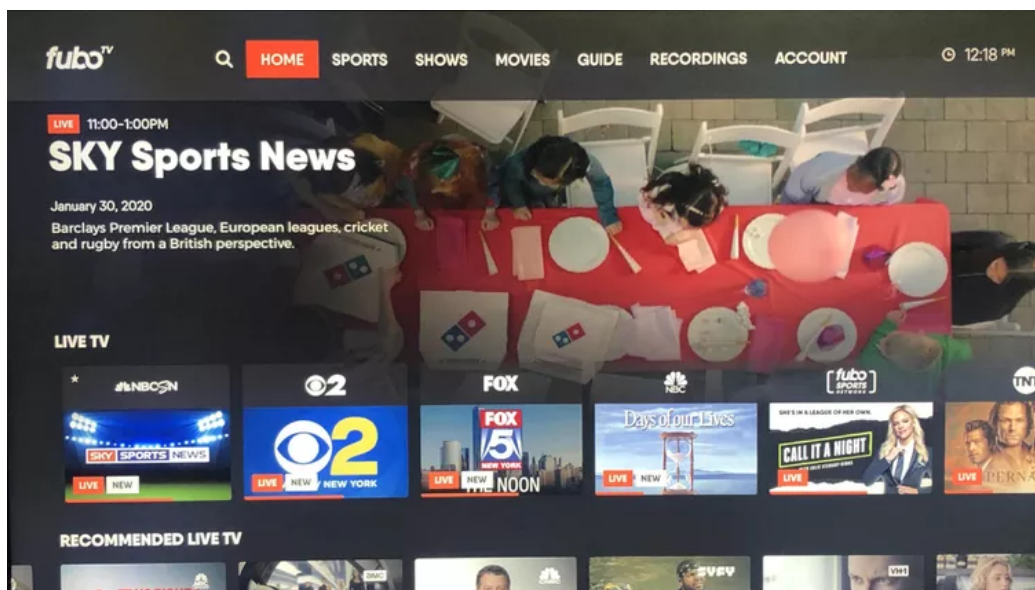


Sarah Tew/CNET

Until very recently AT&T TV Now bundled HBO into its \$65 base package, but now it's an optional \$10 extra. With or without it, the service is still missing more top channels than any competitor (although you can pay extra to get most of those channels if you want). Its DVR is also a step behind those of our top choices. The traditional-style interface is good, however, as it includes the flipper-friendly ability to swipe left and right to change channels.

**Top channels not available in base package:** A&E, AMC, Animal Planet, Discovery Channel, HGTV, History, Lifetime, MLB Network, NFL Network, Travel Channel. [Read our AT&T TV Now review.](#)





Ty Pendlebury/CNET

There's much to like about FuboTV -- it offers a wide selection of channels second only to YouTube TV - and its sports focus makes it especially attractive to soccer fans in particular. Given that there aren't any sports matches anywhere in the world right now limits its appeal, as you'd expect. Also, it's not suited for watching on a TV as none of the platforms work as well as the mobile version, and the lack of ABC and ESPN is disappointing.

**Top channels not available in base package:** ABC, Disney Channel, Disney Junior, Disney XD, ESPN, ESPN 2. [Read our FuboTV review.](#)

## How to shop for cord-cutting live TV services

Each of the services above offers a different mix of **channels**, so your first step should be choosing one that carries your "can't miss" cable channels and shows. And some of the most important channels are locals, namely ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC. Not every service offers all of them in every area.

The services can be broken down into two main groups: Budget, with prices starting at \$15 but without local channels. And premium, with prices from \$50 and up and include locals and often other extras like a superior **cloud DVR**. Yes, most of the services (barring AT&T Watch TV) allow you to record and play back shows, just like a traditional cable or satellite DVR, but they often come with restrictions.

Then there's the multistream issue. If you want to watch more than one program at the same time -- for example, on your living room TV and on a bedroom TV, or the main TV and a tablet or other devices -- you'll want to make sure the service you're watching has enough **simultaneous streams**. Some of the least expensive services only allow one stream at a time, and if you try to watch a second, it's blocked.

Keep in mind that, especially if you do have more than one person watching at once on supported devices, you need to make sure you have **fast, reliable broadband internet**. A 100Mbps download service will cost around \$50 to \$60 a month, and that's where the savings of cutting cable can get swallowed up.

Here's a live TV streaming shopping list to consider:

- Does the service offer your "must-have" channels? [See CNET's comparison of the top 100 channels here.](#)
- Does it offer local channels in your area? [See CNET's comparison of local channel access here](#) (last updated August 2018).
- How good is the cloud DVR?
- Does the interface make it easy to browse for shows?
- Are there enough simultaneous streams for you and your family?
- Is your internet connection up to snuff? [See CNET's guide to improving streaming quality here.](#)



Hulu Plus Live TV

Sarah Tew/CNET

## What streaming TV services won't give you

Streaming TV services are great, but there are some things they can't do compared to a traditional cable box.

First, it's worth looking at the channels that you can't get with any of these services. For example, only one of the services offers PBS -- [YouTube TV](#) -- and this is because as the broadcaster reportedly [hadn't acquired the streaming rights to all of the shows](#) that it airs.

In another time, the lack of live sports on these channels would be an issue. For when things get back to normal, however, most services carry ESPN and local channels for NFL football, but if you follow a professional baseball or basketball team, chances are you'll need their specific channel -- called an RSN, or regional sports network -- to watch regular season games. RSN coverage varies widely for each service.

Every live TV service's video streaming is a few seconds to a minute or more behind the "live" stream you'll get from your local cable or satellite provider. That means you could get a preview of scores or big plays from Twitter, phone alerts or phone calls from friends slightly before you see the action on screen.

While [AT&T TV Now](#) offers [HBO](#) as part of its base subscription, most other services either sell it as an add-on or require you to sign up separately for [HBO Now](#). In addition, NFL Red Zone and NHL Network are either not available or only as part of a package.

If you're used to 5.1-channel surround offered by cable or even OTA, then you'll probably be disappointed that all of the services only include stereo sound on live broadcasts. AT&T TV Now does include 5.1 audio on some on-demand material, though.

(Note that CNET is owned by ViacomCBS, which is a compensated programming provider on all cable, satellite and online TV services that offer CBS channels, which include Showtime, Pop, CBS Sports and The CW, among others. CBS also owns and operates its own online service, [CBS All Access](#), which is mentioned below.)

## Other options

### Philo

Price: Starts at \$20 a month

Another cheap service with no sports or local channels, Philo offers bread-and-butter cable channels like AMC, Comedy Channel, Nickelodeon and BBC America. Unlike Watch AT&T, it includes a cloud

DVR, but it lacks a big-name 24-hour news channel like CNN.

Read the [Philo review](#)

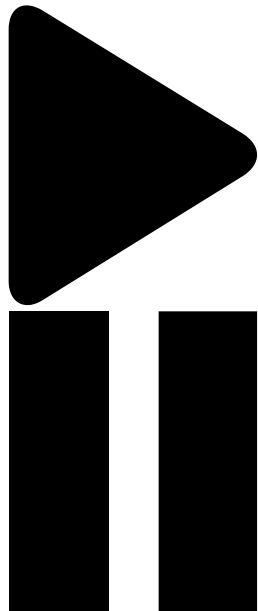
### [CBS All Access](#)

Price: Starts at \$5.99 a month

CBS All Access stands out from all of the other services as it offers [live \(in some cities\)](#) and on-demand from just one channel. In addition to broadcast video-on-demand, it offers exclusive online content such as [Star Trek: Discovery](#). The on-demand stuff has ads, but you can get an ad-free option for \$10 a month.

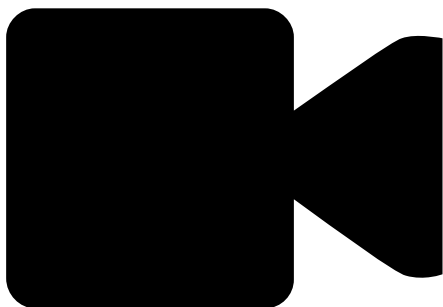
### [Peacock](#)

Peacock is NBC's answer to CBS All Access, but at the moment it has two main problems -- it's only available to Comcast users, and its catalog is largely replicated by another popular streaming service, [basic Hulu](#).



Now playing: Watch this: [How to cut the cord for \\$10: installing an indoor antenna](#)





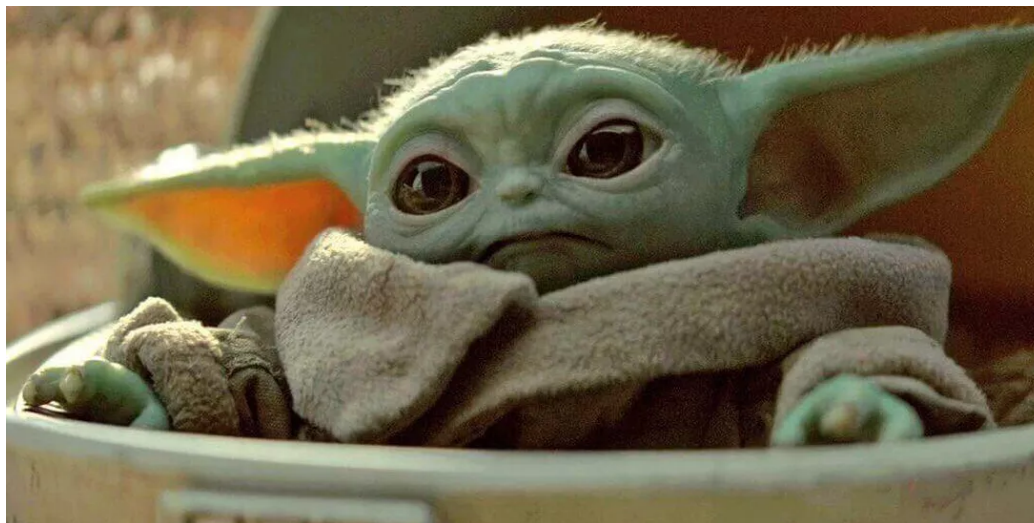
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## Don't care about live TV? More cord-cutter staples

Plenty of heavy hitters have entered the on-demand fray recently, including [Apple](#) with [Apple TV Plus](#) and [Disney](#) with [Disney Plus](#), both of which debuted in late 2019. In 2020 streamers have even more choices including NBC/Comcast's [Peacock](#), AT&T's [HBO Max](#) and mobile-only upstart [Quibi](#). All of these services lack live TV -- focusing instead on [back catalogs and new originals](#) -- but they can still eat into your entertainment budget.

**Netflix:** One of the first streaming TV services and it's so popular that it's become a catch-all term in the same way as "Magic Marker" or "Coke" in the South. And then, of course, there's the ever-popular "Netflix and chill." High-definition plans start at \$13 a month, and the service covers thousands of TV shows and movies, including original content like [Daredevil](#) and [Orange Is the New Black](#).

**Amazon Prime Video:** The "other" major streaming service, which is included as part of a \$99 annual Prime Membership or \$9 a month. The interface isn't as user-friendly as Netflix, but the service also offers shows not on its rival, including original content like [The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel](#). Amazon Prime also has [the ability to add premium channels](#) (HBO and Showtime and more), making it a potential one-stop shop.



Nicknamed Baby Yoda -- this might be the cutest Star Wars character from The Mandalorian on Disney Plus.

Video screenshot by Bonnie Burton/CNET

**Disney Plus:** One of the biggest streaming services to launch in some time, Disney has gathered a mix of movies, TV shows and exclusive content, including the Star Wars-universe-set [Mandalorian](#), for \$7 a month. [Read our Disney Plus review here.](#)

**Vudu/Movies Anywhere:** A digital library (or locker) that incorporates legacy [UltraViolet content](#) and streaming movies and TV that are only available for purchase, like new releases.

It's also worth investigating free, ad-supported services such as [Roku Channel](#), [IMDB Freedive](#), TuBi TV, Pluto and Sony Crackle, which offer a wealth of content. Read [CNET's roundup of free TV services here.](#)



Sarah Tew/CNET

## Is an indoor or outdoor antenna a viable option?

If you have a TV in your house -- that is, a screen that incorporates a tuner -- you're part-way to cutting the cord already. An [affordable indoor antenna hooked up to your TV](#) will let you watch free TV over the air from any channel you receive in your local broadcast area. Antennas cost as little as \$10. [See our comparison of indoor antennas here.](#)

You can also add a DVR such as the [Amazon Fire TV Recast](#) or [TiVo Bolt OTA](#) if you want. Then you can record those live TV antenna channels, play them back and skip commercials, just like on a standard cable TV DVR. Here's [CNET's roundup of the best OTA DVRs for cord-cutters.](#)

A solid, lower-cost alternative to live TV streaming services is the combination of an antenna for live local channels and an on-demand service such as Netflix or [Hulu](#) (which is [now only \\$5.99 a month](#)). That way you'll still be able to watch live programming and also have a choice of on-demand content.



Amazon's Fire TV Recast DVR is a cord-cutting antenna user's friend.

Sarah Tew/CNET

## Conclusion: Try it yourself

Streaming live TV services are still in flux. Since launch, every service has increased its prices by at least \$5 a month, channel selections and cities with local channel access are changing all the time, and reports persist about some services losing money, or even closing in the case of PlayStation Vue. While streaming is undoubtedly the future, it will be some time before both prices and the services offered settle in.

That said, if you want a cable-like experience both at home and for on-the-go devices, without the dead weight that a cable subscription brings, then a streaming service is worth a look. There's no contract to sign, and if you don't like the service you're on, you can easily switch. So whether you're looking for a basic package such as Sling TV or want to pay more for a deluxe experience from the likes of YouTube TV, there should be a streaming TV service to suit you.

## More streaming coverage at CNET

- [Best DVR for cord cutters who use an OTA antenna](#)
- [Best TV antennas for cord-cutters, starting at just \\$10](#)
- [20 Google Chromecast tips and tricks](#)
- [Best universal remotes of 2020](#)
- [Best 75-inch TVs for 2020](#)
- [Best streaming device of 2020: Roku, Apple TV, Fire Stick, Chromecast and more](#)
- [YouTube TV vs. Sling TV: Which live TV streaming service is best for you?](#)