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## The 7 Best TV Antennas of 2020

13-16 minutes

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The best TV antennas are a great way for cord-cutters to make sure they don't lose access to local networks. Given that we're in a transition phase where some networks still don't offer live streams online of their content, or hide them behind a pay wall/require a cable subscription sign-in, an antenna can ensure that you never miss the live sports, local news, or other appointment viewing television that's often only available on the major networks.

For a relatively low cost, a lot of modern antennas provide a bevy of fairly advanced features. Many are [ATSC 3.0](#) compliant, meaning they're ready for 4K, and cover both [VHF and UHF](#) spectrums. Some can pick up signals from up to 60 miles away, and even offer filters and insulation to ensure you're getting the clearest possible result. And, with many antennas now being built to live inside the home, aesthetics have improved immensely, so they're no longer the massive eyesores of yesteryear.

### Final Verdict

If you want the best overall antenna, the [ClearStream 2V](#) is an easy, obvious pick, with its excellent range, value, and 4K readiness. If, on the other hand, you want some super cheap and ridiculously simple to set up, the AmazonBasics Ultra-Thin offers surprising quality for the price.

## About Our Trusted Experts

[Quentyn Kennemer](#) is an experienced freelance tech journalist, who founded his own gaming blog and have covered a wide gamut of subjects, products, and devices. He specializes in TVs and television accessories, making him a perfect choice to lead our best home antenna roundup.

## The Ultimate TV Antenna Buying Guide

The bunny ears have mostly been left in the past, but [TV antennas](#) are still alive and well. These days, they're pulling in digital signals rather than analog, and they often come in very different designs—often a flat, super-thin sheet of plastic that you can hide behind your TV or attach to a wall near your window.

Why would you [need an antenna](#) in the era of streaming services and 4K resolution? Well, for people who have cut the cord and ditched a costly cable or satellite bill, a digital antenna provides an affordable way to access local channels without an ongoing bill, and it's an easy way to supplement your streaming subscriptions of choice. Over-the-air television signals are totally free and don't require any sort of membership or plan. And today, the quality can be pretty great, depending on reception: the major networks all stream in HD, and before long, we'll start seeing 4K broadcasts as well.

There's a wide array of antenna options: indoor or outdoor, short-range or long, amplified or not, and they come in a surprising number of designs and styles. Even digital antennas can be fickle with reception, however, and choosing an antenna isn't always as simple as going by specs. Here's what you need to know if you plan on buying a digital antenna.

### Key Considerations

You'll need to keep a few things in mind when selecting a digital antenna for your home, including:

#### Indoor or outdoor

Truth be told, this category and the next two or three are pretty well intertwined—but it's good that you know what everything means before considering your options. Ultimately, you need to choose whether

you want an indoor or outdoor antenna, and there's a pretty major difference between the two.

An indoor antenna is incredibly easy to set up. You simply plug in the cord to the coaxial input on the back of your TV and maybe also plug a cord into a wall outlet (depending on the antenna), find a place to set or mount it, and then run a channel scan on the TV. With an outdoor antenna, you'll have to add the extra step of mounting the antenna to the exterior of your home, which may not be an easy or desirable option for you. They also require a long cord running to your television, so keep that in mind.

The upside is that there's less interference without walls, furniture, and other electronics between the antenna and the source, but it's potentially a lot more work and expense. After all, the cheaper, flimsier indoor antennas aren't meant to be as durable and weather-resistant as those marked for outdoor mounting.

Some outdoor antennas are also advertised as being "attic" antennas, essentially splitting the difference: it can't dodge all potential indoor interference issues, but it's still higher up and shouldn't be quite as challenging to install as an outdoor antenna.

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## Range

How far are you located from a major city? You'll want to keep that in mind as you shop for antennas, as your distance from a broadcast tower will affect the quality of reception that you can pull in. Granted, not all transmitters are located in big cities, but that's typically where signals originate. Antennas Direct has [a handy map](#) that lets you search by zip code and then see how far away various channel sources are.

Most antennas today advertise a range between about 30 and 65 miles, although we've seen them go as high as 80 miles. That's about the cap, however, due to the curvature of the Earth. Reputable antenna makers typically don't promise more than 80 miles maximum, but it's not uncommon to see antennas on Amazon promise distances of up to 150 miles. That's highly unlikely to be accurate. Physical distance also isn't the only variable in play, however, as walls, trees, furniture, and electrical interference can potentially impact your reception quality.

## Amplification

Lower-range antennas are often plug-and-play models with just the coaxial cable attached. However, longer-range options are typically "amplified," which means they require a power source to boost the range. Some amplified antennas have a permanent cable attached with a wall plug at the end, while others have a USB cable that you can plug into a compatible TV or insert into a wall plug attachment.

## Design

Modern antennas come in a wide range of designs. Many indoor antennas take that aforementioned flat-plastic approach, while others have a figure-eight shape or resemble a soundbar. There are some that look just like an internet router, and the bunny-ear design isn't completely gone: there's one particularly compact digital antenna with flip-up, telescoping antennas. Outdoor antennas, meanwhile, are designed to withstand the elements and are typically larger and heavier models with a thick plastic enclosure, metal build, or mounting mast.

There is an aesthetic element to consider when choosing an antenna, and some companies lean into that market with different color and design options or unique materials. However, many people stick their antenna behind the TV or in an otherwise inconspicuous location, assuming that the chosen spot doesn't affect the reception. Most likely, you just want something that works, and most modern antennas aren't stylish or visually appealing.

Design matters when it comes to reception, however. Flat antennas are usually omnidirectional, which means it can pull in a signal just as well from any direction. That's ideal for mounting, but interference can still rear its ugly head: you may still find better reception near a window or with the antenna on the wall facing the direction of the broadcast source. Other antennas are directional and must be pointed in a certain way to get the best signal.

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## Price

While there isn't always a direct relationship between price and signal quality with antennas, there is typically a relationship between price and range, which means strength of signal. If you live really close to a big city, you might do just fine with a cheap, entry-level antenna that isn't amplified—like Amazon's stellar AmazonBasics model, which sells for just \$21.

If you're further out or have interference issues, then you'll probably need to spend more on a longer-range, amplified indoor antenna, or potentially even an outdoor antenna. If unsure about range, you're probably best off investing in an antenna with a larger mileage estimate. A longer-range indoor antenna may cost you between \$25 and \$55 or more, while powerful outdoor antennas can cost upwards of \$100 or more.

## UHF and VHF

UHF and VHF are the frequency bands used for broadcast television, and they're akin to AM and FM on the radio. Certain channels are only located on VHF, but most of the major channels now broadcast on UHF. Many antennas are designed to pick up both frequencies, and it will be specified on the box. Some may only pick up UHF signals, which covers the larger majority of channels available in the U.S. and Canada, but check the box or website for an antenna if you're unsure.

VHF channels span 2-13, while UHF channels are between 14-51. However, that's the real channel number, which may not be the one that shows up on your TV. Confused? Head over to this [tool at TV Fool](#) to enter your address and zip code and pull up a listing of available channels. For example, the NBC channel in Chicago shows up as channel 5 on your TV, but the real broadcast channel is 29. You don't need to know this information when using the antenna, but it may be handy for figuring out whether you need a UHF/VHF antenna or just a UHF one.

## Ready for 4K?

As of this writing, no antenna in North America is going to pull a 4K signal from a broadcast tower: at best, you'll get a 720p or 1080i high-definition signal. However, many of today's antennas claim to be [4K ready](#). The manufacturers aren't lying—they're just future-proofed.

The Advanced Television Systems Committee has been working on its ATSC 3.0 standard for some time now, and it's expected to roll out later in 2020 under "NEXTGEN TV" branding. Essentially, it'll allow compatible antennas to receive 4K Ultra HD signals from those broadcast towers that are pumping them out, letting 4K-compatible televisions receive live channels that can make the most of those high-end sets. You should get something that's ready for the 4K transition, even if you don't have a 4K TV right this moment.

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## Brands/Manufacturers

There are plenty of antennas available for cheap online, but chances are pretty good that you've never heard of the companies that make them. Luckily, there are several reputable antenna makers. Here are a few examples:

**Antennas Direct:** Antennas Direct has emerged as one of the top manufacturers of late thanks to an inventive figure-eight design that the company suggests can boost signal quality. Their indoor antennas are on the higher end of the price scale, but are well-reviewed and advertise long-range capabilities. The company also makes outdoor antennas with a similar core design but built to withstand the elements.

**Amazon:** Now here's a name you surely know. As of this writing, Amazon only makes a single antenna: the AmazonBasics Indoor Flat TV Antenna, which isn't amplified and advertises a range of 35 miles. If you're close to a broadcast source, then it might be all you need—and the \$21 price tag is lower than most from well-known brands. However, it's not ATSC 3.0-compliant for future 4K signals.

**Winegard:** Winegard's FlatWave Amped antenna is [our favorite](#) as of this writing, delivering strong reception, dual-band and future 4K compatibility, and a generous 50-mile range. The company also makes a number of other antennas, including smaller, cheaper, lower-range models as well as outdoor models.

**Mohu:** Mohu has one of the broadest selections of antenna designs, including models that are thin and flat, curved, or designed like a soundbar. There are also antennas billed as "designer" in appearance,

and even models made from recycled materials. Ultimately, it's your call whether you care about design and want to potentially spend more for something unique. Mohu was recently acquired by Antennas Direct, however, so it's unclear whether the brand will continue to release new products in the future or just sell through its existing stock.

**Terk:** The Terk Trinity indoor antenna has the unique hook of looking very much like an internet router, complete with little antennas that point upwards. Interestingly, Terk also has a model called the Trinity Xtend, which pairs that kind of design with Wi-Fi extender functionality to help spread your wireless internet signal further around your house. It's pricier, but that two-in-one approach might save you some excess plastic elsewhere in the home.

**1byone:** We're fans of the 1byone Digital Amplified indoor antenna, which offers a 50-mile range but isn't terribly expensive. This brand has a number of other antenna options available, including various outdoor antennas and cheaper, non-amplified indoor antennas.

## Conclusion

If you're not keen on paying for a cable or satellite subscription today or you just want an easy way to access local channels, a digital antenna is an affordable way to bring that to your home. There are a variety of different options to choose from, whether indoor or outdoor, along with widely varying designs and styles.

Range is typically the biggest consideration, as you'll need an antenna that can pick up your nearest broadcast signals while overcoming any interference or physical obstacles in the way. When setting up your indoor antenna, be sure to try multiple locations around your TV: even omnidirectional antennas will work better in some positions than others. And be sure to re-scan for channels after each repositioning, as you may find some new ones in the process.