

Roku or Chromecast or ???

What's been your experience? If you were going to buy anew which would u buy?

We have both. Roku all the way!

Rebecca Gwilt

Amazon Firestick. Got one and very pleased. Had a Roku, but it was fun and needed an upgrade so I went with the Firestick. A friend had Chromecast and did not like it at all. Returned it for a Firestick.

Phil A. Taylor

They do different things. I like Roku over smart TV because you can download so much more and everything is easier to find. Chromecast works nice with Google home if you have it.

Mitchell Goldstein

They serve different purposes, at least AFAIK.

If you want something to watch Netflix/Hulu/Amazon, either a Fire Stick or Roku will be just fine. I have both with no real complaints.

A Chromecast just mirrors what's on your computer to your television. So you would be firing up Netflix on your computer, then streaming it to the television, which entails some loss in quality. Frankly, I never really understood the appeal of the Chromecast, beyond watching pirated movies and TV.

Evan Marx

As others have pointed out they really serve two different purposes---I would also recommend taking a look at the Amazon Fire (stick or box) as well.

Dave Rakowski

Roku for variety, and regular programming akin to cable. Chrome would open up the internet to your TV.

P. Jayson Thibodaux

Sounds like Firestick and Roku are more similar?

Randy Birch

I think you're better off with the Roku stick. You can still get Amazon on Roku. Roku is rather robust and its offerings and Partnerships. I don't know much about the Amazon Fire stick. But I can imagine that Roku would be more robust. We have two and our house and of course our Amazon Prime members. My wife worked for Amazon for 13 years.

P. Jayson Thibodaux

As a general rule, The Wirecutter is excellent for this sort of thing. They're a tech review site, but instead of reviewing specific products, they review entire categories and give specific recommendations: "this is the thing you should buy". I highly recommend checking them out for all tech buys.

Their review of streaming devices is here:
<http://m.thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-media-streamers/>

They recommend the Roku generally, but have other recommendations for specific needs.

Luis Villa

All of the major streaming services are available on both devices. If you use prime often, Amazon Fire probably gets the edge. Otherwise, get what's on sale.

Evan Marx

But only the Firestick gives you access to Kodi.

Nick A. Ortiz, Florida

I can only speak to Chromecast, but it's definitely been a phenomenal device as far as I've used it.

In addition to other features, it essentially allows your desktop, laptop, tablet or phone to cast directly to the TV. Entertainment wise, you can use tons of apps that everyone in the room with a device can take part in (or in the alternative anyone with a device in the room can take control and change the song or video that's playing, for better or worse). There's even a Chromecast tennis game that turns your phone into a Nintendo Wii-like device.

I've seen the applicability of being able to use a Chromecast for work related things as well, by being able to pull up anything on your computer straight to the TV (documents, images, etc.).

YouTube and Netflix have dedicated apps that launch when you play a video from one of those sites, so I haven't come across the quality loss issue.

All around a great device, but again, I haven't tried the alternatives, so I may be missing something.

Joshua M. Biletsky, California

You dropped a deuce about Kodi. How do you use it? I have never heard of it?

P. Jayson Thibodaux

The Roku will not allow loading of Kodi, while the Amazon Fire will allow sideloading of Kodi. To learn more about Kodi you should check out their website kodi.org.

Carla Peevey

I did a lot of research before I cut the satellite (DirecTV for 13 years). I have the Roku and I love it. I would do the same all over again and in fact have recommended Roku over other options to several friends.

Robert C. Thurston

Can't speak to Chromecast, Firestick, AppleTV or others but I really, really, like Roku.

We cut the cord back in august (actually we kind of frayed it; our DirecTV bill is now \$11.64 per month; from almost \$100; essentially all we get is local stations plus some 'family', mostly religious and shopping stations; we don't get much but we aren't paying much either, we get no over the air reception of any of the network broadcasts, so it's either DirecTV or no local stations).

Roku is very, very intuitive and easy to use; my 78 YO technophobe mother can use it and she likes it. Very simple remote, very easy to use. If you have a decent existing TV you can add various ROKU dongles; some of them have 1080, some 4K, some with DVR, at different prices:

<https://image.roku.com/ww/docs/compare-chart-products-en-us.pdf>

But basically, they all work with existing TV's; you just plug them in.

Also, there are Roku enabled TV's; the three main players seem to be Sharp, TCL and Insignia; Insignia is Best Buy's in house brand and seems to me to be simply rebranded TCL. We got two Insignias, one 32 inch in the kitchen and one 48 inch in the living room. So far so good, no complaints. We got 10MBPS internet connection at the house, I was watching superbowl last night on the 48 inch thru Wifi connection and it was fine; no dropping, no pixilating, no problems; if you had told me I was watching over the air or via cable I could not have told the difference.

If you're looking to replace existing TV or simply add another TV, I'd go with Roku enabled; it's one less remote, power cord and cable. And they are available in all sizes and resolutions; 1080, 4K (though you do need heavy duty bandwidth for 4K just like any 4K TV); and they are basically no more expensive than any other TV with similar specs: 32 inch 1080 Sharp will run you \$179, which is fine for kitchen or bedroom TV.

And the Roku enabled TV's will also allow over the air antenna reception; if you've got decent OTA reception, just add an antenna, go in to the menu and have it scan for antenna reception and you're good to go. You have to select antenna when you first turn it on but at that point it's just like regular TV.

The big thing about Roku is the apps. You got your standard internet type channels, Amazon, Netflix, Hulu, Vudu, all those; You can also download and listen to IHeartRadio; I don't know if you like radio but it's pretty nice if you like classical music; locally all our public radio stations (which we got lousy reception of anyway) have gone to all talk/news format; there's probably a dozen or 15 classical music stations on Iheart; including WQXR out of NY, Operavore out of NY, and KMFA out of Austin. All free. Likewise, if you like Jazz, there are all sort of Jazz stations on it. It's free.

You also got access to various 'skinny cable' type bundles; Sling TV has a couple of different packages starting at \$20 a month:

<https://www.sling.com/service>

\$20 a month is pretty basic but you get both CNN and ESPN, if that's important to you; they also have add on packages like their "film" channel (various Epix and TCM) with is \$5 per month and Starz is an additional add on:

<https://www.sling.com/programming/movies>

I do believe that the Orange channel comes with a bit of restriction on how many tv's you can watch simultaneously whereas blue is bit less restricted.

Alternatively, Playstation vue for as little as \$30 a month:

<https://www.playstation.com/en-us/network/vue/channels/>

You also got individual apps; WeatherNation (cut rate weather channel) CBSN which is a 24/7 News channel run by CBS News (it's free and frankly I prefer it over CNN/FoxNews/MSNBC; its straight news and analysis but little of the screaming

commentariat that CNN Fox MSNBC have; thing, generally CBS evening news. Good coverage of breaking US news; they cut to their affiliate in that market; when we had the Ft. Lauderdale airport shooting they cut to their affiliate in Miami; it may not be to everyones taste but it's free, you don't like it don't watch it).

You can also get various premium packages, HBO, Starz, whatever, thru various systems; amazon, Playstations, Sling, at additional cost.

Most of these packages come with free 7 day trials; give it a shot, see how you like it; and even if you sign up, you can always cancel after a month and sign up with another provider.

Most local TV stations also have their own app for local news, which is nice in the morning.

Really, honestly, I'd go with Roku.

Ronald Jones

I am very ignorant as far as a Roku [<https://www.roku.com/index#>] is concerned; so, I went to my local BestBuy store to get an education, and was told that I do NOT need one -- the reason given is that because I have a "Smart" high definition 60" Samsung TV and FiOS service, with HBO included, and a subscription to Netflix, purchasing a Roku will NOT do ANYTHING for me.

Did I get good advice?

Paul G. Kostro, New Jersey

We have a Sony Bravia smart TV and when we cut out Directv we wanted to get playstation Vue, which required getting either a Roku or Fire stick. I still can't believe they didn't make Vue an option the Sony TV *sigh*

That and our antenna we get everything. Only station we can't get is Fox and Vue gives us both fox on demand and fox sports go

Erin M. Schmidt, Ohio

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Erin M. Schmidt

Maybe, maybe not , if you've got an existing SmartTV. Roku really is a "smart TV" but it's not the only one. I think it's the easiest to use and also one of the widest distributions; nearly everyone has a roku app. Not everyone offers Samsung apps; apparently Samsung is proprietary operating system; it does not appear as though CBSN has Samsung app: not does it appear as though SlingTV has Samsung app.

And I don't know that a bunch of local stations have Samsung apps, either.

I mean it all depends, what do you want to watch? Samsung appears to have netflix, Hulu, things like that; but not necessarily Sling, or Playstation Vue network. Depends on what you want to watch with it; the big boys, Samsung supports but a lot of the smaller stuff appears not to be supported by them.

See, for instance:

<https://www.cnet.com/forums/discussions/why-no-cbs-all-access-app-on-samsung/>

I mean, the actual basic Roku player itself is cheap enough;
http://www.bestbuy.com/site/roku-express-streaming-media-player-black/5513500.p?skuId=5513500&ref=212&loc=1&ksid=7cd32afb-2583-471b-8161-2c9c0c87359f&ksprof_id=16&ksaffcode=pg118903&ksdevice=c&lsft=ref:212,loc:2&gclid=Cj0KEQIA2uDEBRDxurOO77Cp-

7kBEiQAOUgKVxvfw4ZYQan3ECMfanBkBZUo05Y3GpHeDFIwZVAQHkaAh
L98P8HAQ

\$30 at best buy.

At that price, try it; set it up, play with it, if you are disappointed you're out thirty bucks.

Ronald Jones

I think the salesman is generally correct, you can access most big services through Samsung SmartTV. Roku does come with a lot more, like tons of digital channels that you won't get on SmartTV. But are those channels important to you? I personally don't watch TV at all unless for things like the Superbowl. So I'm fine with SmartTV. My kids would probably love Roku, though, if I bought it.

Eugene Lee, California

Yup, Just bought and set up a Samsung SmartTV. We have three things (channels?) that we stream: Amazon, Netflix, and PBS. The SmartTV streams Amazon and Netflix, but I had to connect our old Roku in order to get PBS.

David Masters

I get everything on the firestick.. from YouTube to all the apps, plus it doesn't even need to open prime or Netflix to start viewing.

You can also play game apps from amazon.

We watched the super bowl on the fire stick, mlb, wwe, cw, nbc to go, and so forth and both my regular TV remote will work the apps or the app on my phone The biggest differences are size and cost. Firestick is smaller and costs a bit less.

Erin Schmidt

well dang I forgot that can mirror Spotify on my firestick or run it directly from there

Erin Schmidt

On the topic of cord cutting, any recommendations for Internet only service? I'm fine with Sling + streaming services, but Fios doesn't make a feasible Internet only option.

Any experiences with EarthLink? I can't say I was impressed when I called, and it sounds like I actually get the service from xfinity?

Evan Marx

If available, Verizon FiOS is really good. I have that as a stand alone Internet service. It is very fast and reliable, especially for the streaming services.

Robert C. Thurston

I have Fios now and it sounds like Internet only would be around \$90? Maybe they are just giving me a higher price when I bring it up to keep me from dropping cable.

Evan Marx

My choices where I live are comcast about 40 - 50 a month or frontier dsl at about 30 or less a month. Frontier is about 5 mb and is way too slow for us to stream, etc.

I suppose I could use satellite, but I hear it stinks. Same with clearwire.

They stopped running fios cable out here with the crash of 2008. Wish it was a choice.

P. Jayson Thibodaux

Ask for a quote with basic cable plus internet. A lot of times that is less than internet only. I find I have to switch back and forth between internet only and basic cable

with internet every 6 months, and occasionally threaten to switch to DSL. It is annoying - I've had cable modem for about 20 years.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

Satellite has a latency that can be problematic if you need constant connection.

Mitchell P. Goldstein

You could also get a ps3 or ps4 for PlayStation Vue, though I suppose that makes more sense if you are a gamer. My smart TV is so old (a Samsung that is five years old) HBO is no longer available on it, but works great through the ps4.

Lesley Hoenig, Michigan

Dumb question: Can you record the shows that you stream, or is it unnecessary because you can watch them at any time? Even sports?

Timothy A. Gutknecht, Illinois

Depends on the service. Technically, stuff you 'stream' you can watch any time because you are streaming. But some services, i.e., SlingTV have online hard drives, you can record a program and then watch it later.

And, one thing that is really nice; some of the 'standard' cable channels allow you to stream as well. We had DirecTV and got Turner Classic Movies; you got what was on the schedule for that time and date. We dropped DirecTV and signed up for the 'film extra' package thru Sling; I went in to the schedule for Turner and realized, hey, we could stream a bunch of movies on top of the scheduled ones; it looks like you can stream any movies they ran for the past 10 days or 2 weeks or so.

Ronald Jones

On PlayStation vue, there is a "clouddvr", however not all shows and channels are supported. I've researched it but not used it so I don't know which shows /channels would be an issue. I've been thinking of doing a free trial and if everything I watch can be dvr'd then I will be finally cutting the cord. It is quite a bit cheaper than what I pay for cable.

Lesley Hoenig

I can record on PlayStation Vue. It has an automatic dvr for the selected shows for the last month. It also has on demand options that vary via network and show. Some I can only get a few episodes, some entire seasons.

Erin Schmidt

As others have said, you can record shows on PSVue---they'll remain in your vault for 28 days. Plus there are no space limitations, which is how I'm DVRing all of TCM for the month of February. ;) Direct TV and Sling say DVR functionality is "forthcoming."

My only issue is that the PSVue interface on Roku sucks. The forums are filled with people complaining about that and Roku says it will be fixed "soon" (then again they've been saying that since November). On Amazon Fire PSVue uses the traditional grid format which I think most of us are used to from cable TV.

Channel comparison for all three (from CNET November 2016):

<https://www.cnet.com/news/directv-now-vs-sling-tv-vs-playstation-vue-channels-compared/>

Hope this helps!

Dave Rakowski

If you are in the Apple ecosystem I'd go with an Apple TV unless you must have Amazon prime or 4K content. In that case I'd go with a Amazon fire tv or fire stick. The Roku, Chromecast, and fire TV all have 4K enabled devices.

Chromecast acts in the same way as the others but it also has the mirror mode others have mentioned.

I have had all of the Apple TVs, a fire stick, Fire tv, an early generation Roku, and a Roku stick. The sticks are underpowered versions of the regular boxes. I returned or sold my Rokus because the interface was slower than all of the other boxes that I have had. The latest models may be much better as these things tend to get with hardware improvements. Kodi is cool on the fire tv if you're into that.

I enjoy my experience with the Apple TV so I don't turn on the fire tv much anymore.

I don't think the smart TVs are a substitute for one of the boxes or dongles (except for the Roku enabled TVs) because the TV manufacturers don't have as many people making apps for them (true, the big ones are there) and they don't regularly update their firmware to support updated apps so sometimes your HBO or Netflix app will stop working when the streaming service makes a change that requires a software/firmware update. They may be getting better at this though.

Michael Wright

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FWIW, I had an early generation of the Roku, a Roku 2 (bear in mind they reuse names for their hardware; not all Roku 2's are of the same generation) which I had bought as a lark; it worked but it was very slow. Current Roku, at least those integrated into TV's (i.e, Roku enabled TV's) are much faster, though not "instantaneous" they do have to connect and load but it doesn't take long at all.

Ronald Jones
