

Dropping Cable

Folks: question from a technological troglodyte. I am tired of paying \$170 a month for TV Cable (Verizon FIOS Bundle). There is a lot of chatter about streaming services. If I drop cable, then I lose WiFi, so how am I gaining anything?

I would assume Wifi-only is less expensive than Wifi plus cable. You have to compare your current service with what you want TV-wise, i.e. Netflix, Hulu, whatever.

Ryan Phillips, South Carolina

Your cable company should be able to provide you with high speed internet without also providing cable tv.

I had a package through my cable company that gave me internet, cable TV and a phone. I dropped the cable TV and phone but kept the high-speed internet, which costs about \$75 per month (my previous bill with the package was almost \$200). I added Netflix (\$8) and Hulu Plus (\$8) (I already had Amazon Prime Video), and then Sling TV (\$20) for sports during college basketball season, and I get 99% of what I used to watch for less than half the price.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

Well, you have internet, right? Your internet provider uses a "box" that usually has both ethernet and wifi. You can hook up a streaming box either way. You probably need to get an antenna for local channels/news, weather, etc. I got one from Amazon about 3-4 years ago. You need to find out (before purchasing one) what you need for your area. Some antennas get both VHF and UHF and some are only UHF. Use tvfool or antennaweb to see what you need. I put my antenna in the attic hanging it from the rafters by twine. It works pretty good. For streaming I'm using a FireTV. I don't miss cable or the bill at all.

Carla Peevey, Texas

Kevin, how do you like the Sling service? You sound like me with respect to college basketball.

Ryan Phillips

You don't need cable TV services to have a cable modem. Really, you don't. I've done it in 4 states. However, I've found that often it is cheaper to get the most basic cable TV plan plus internet bundled rather than internet only, which they really are jacking the price up on (but is still way, way under \$170/month - goodness!) From time to time, I also pick up HBO (like for Game of Thrones season) for only a few dollars more per month, and use that time to catch up on a lot of premium channel TV.

(For example, I enjoy the show Outlander on Starz, but otherwise don't get Starz, but was able to view the Season 3 premiere last night when I got power and cable back on after the hurricane due to their free week offer.) I'm currently paying \$50/month for basic cable, plus cable modem, plus (temporarily) HBO. I also subscribe to Amazon Prime (largely for other reasons), Netflix, and Hulu Plus, though I personally don't watch much on HuluPlus these days.

I live between markets (~100 miles from major cities in each direction) so don't get any appreciable digital antenna coverage. (Yes, we've tried several antennae.) You should, however, in Richmond.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

It's pretty decent. It has a number of sports packages that will let you get the various ESPN channels as well as the ACC and SEC networks, and they have been trying to entice me back with the promise of an a-la-carte style selection of channels (haven't had the chance to investigate). One problem for me (that they likely don't have any control over) is that we have a local station that gets a lot of the non-ESPN ACC games, especially UVA and Virginia Tech, and so quite a few games were blacked out last year because they were on broadcast TV--and broadcast on a channel I have a hard time pulling in with my HD antenna.

Kevin W. Grierson

Kevin -

Cool. While I want to watch all the college football I can, the SEC and ACC are what I really care about (Clemson and Tennessee). We have season tickets to Clemson, so it's really more about the Vols now than anything else.

Ryan Phillips

Internet \$70 a month

Playstation Vue \$45 a month

Netflix \$10 a month

Prime \$100 a year

I saved about \$50 a month switching to Vue from Directv. Sling is even cheaper but didn't have all the channels we wanted.

Oh, and BTW I get all the sports with Vue. Since we get access to foxsportsgo, I get cbs, abc, nbc on antenna, get fs one, ESPN ,sec, big10.

Only extra I have to pay for is my single team out of market MLB package

Erin Schmidt, Ohio

Look at pricing for FIOS only, FIOS with a basic cable, and whatever you have now. Check pricing if you use alternatives for TV portion. Make determination according to how it works for your use.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

I had the same service, with about the same monthly bill.

Here's what I did:

I called Verizon and told them I wanted to drop everything but Internet (I decided to use MagicJack for phone - about \$40/year).

Turns out Verizon wants TV subscribers! *Badly*! Probably has something to do with their stock valuation.

So, they said if I got Internet, it'd be about \$85/month, BUT if I kept basic cable, it'd be \$83/mo. I talked them into throwing in HD, set top boxes, and multi-room DVR at NO extra cost. My bill went from approx \$170/mo to \$83/mo.

I bought a ROKU box for \$100, subscribed to Hulu and Netflix (about \$20/mo) and enabled Amazon on my existing Prime account.

Good deal for me.

Russ Carmichael, Pennsylvania

I haven't had cable TV for years. Still have to shell out \$80 a month for internet, which strikes me as too high, but hey, it's a local monopoly.

I then have Netflix, Amazon Prime, and I bum off my parent's HBOGo account, although you can subscribe to HBONow, I believe it is, without knowing anyone with cable.

I also have a set of rabbit ears in the attic that I wired into my coax network so that I get all my local network channels.

To really amuse some of you, I have discovered, in talking with my friends in their 20s, that while basically none of them have cable, easily half of them have no clue what a TV antenna is. People have come to my house, seen ABC or CBS on TV, asked why I had cable only to be told that for \$5 they can watch network TV free for the rest of their life. There is genuine awe at this new knowledge. Crazy to think there's an age range where people commonly grew up with cable in their house and no antenna, and then just assumed network TV was cable-only like any cable channel when they all went and cut the cord in their own households upon moving out.

Chris Cantrall

Over the course of 5 years my FIOS bill went from \$89.99 a month to to \$199.99 a month, with no change or improvement to the services I was receiving.

Last year I dropped all Verizon services except internet, for which I now pay them \$59.99 a month (and DON'T pay anyone \$10/month to rent a modem/router. Buy your own: <http://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-wi-fi-router/>) . Added both Playstation Vue (\$40/month) and DirectTV Now (\$35/month). Prefer DIRECTTV Now service but as of today they do not offer DVR functionality (supposedly its

coming by the end of the year with a 100 hour limit), while PSVue offers unlimited DVR (but only keeps your content for 28 days). Once the dust settles I'll choose one or the other.

But my favorite part of both these services is the ability to watch TV anywhere if necessary....laptop, phone, tablet, office, school, co-working space, my in-laws, etc.

Love talking about this stuff...any questions let me know!

Dave Rakowski, Pennsylvania

I'm sure it varies with where you live. Here in Silicon Valley, I am able to get ABC/CBS/NBC and Public Broadcasting for free using a digital over the air antenna that cost \$20.

When my initial "deal" with the cable company for internet service expired, it was cheaper to combine basic cable with internet access than it was to get internet access only.

Paul Hogan, California

I would love to cut the cord (I'm well over \$200 per month for DirecTV and Comcast internet), but I don't know how I would watch local sports.

I'm in the Pittsburgh market, and the Pirates and Penguins are broadcast mostly on ROOT Sports, which is only available with certain DirecTV or cable packages. If I got the NHL and MLB online services, they would not include those local games. I am told that I can spoof my IP address to make it look like I am in another location, but not sure of the ease or legitimacy of that approach.

Marshall D. Chriswell, Pennsylvania

Check to see if either ROOT or your local teams having streaming services themselves. I cut the cord more than a year ago and I couldn't be happier. I pay \$10/month for Netflix and get everything else I need from my HDTV antenna. I do miss some things, but I don't really "miss" them. I had DirecTV for 13 years at \$200+ per month. I REALLY don't miss that bill. Go for it!

Robert C. Thurston, New Jersey

You can check Sling and Vue, we get the sports channel that shows all the CLE games (Sportstime Ohio I think) as part of the package.

Erin M. Schmidt

So, I'm ignorant about this. Does dropping cable and using other things require a special kind of TV and what kind?

Fern Summer, New York

Although there are TVs that can pick up your Wi-Fi network, there are plenty of devices that you can plug into your tv just like your cable box--a Roku, an Apple TV, and Amazon firestick, Xbox, PlayStation, etc. They all have apps that will let you watch streaming services--no "smart tv" required.

Sling TV will actually send you a free Roku if you prepay for two months of service (\$40).

Kevin W. Grierson

My smart TV (Sony Brava) has all the apps we are talking about save 1...PlayStation Vue (because Sony doesn't think they should put their own stuff on their own TVs)

So, we bought an Amazon firestick because it has the Vue app and run it.

Which is good since our basement remodel made us pull the hard plug for the TV hehe

Erin M. Schmidt

I want to drop cable. However, every time I research my options, I do not like the result. I want my local channels, my sports channels, and about 15 other favorites. I do not want to deal with 6 different providers and services. Right now, I get everything I want. I don't want to sit down and find I can't watch something I looked forward to.

Jim Winiarski

Then you don't want to drop cable.

I hear that DirecTV now may have a local channel option (some on Vue do, some don't).

Since I don't watch a lot of network TV directly and watch mostly via on demand or DVR, having access to that versus the local channel better meets my needs

Erin M. Schmidt

I have Roku streaming device on my Samsung Smart TV and Vizio TV. I found out about Roku about 4 years ago and never went back. I wish I never paid the 20 years of cable subscription. That is a freakin, lots of money!!!

Whether Time Warner, Cox or AT&T DirecTV, no wonder it was hard to save money. Now, I even cancelled Sling TV most recently to save money and besides, I don't have time to watch all football games. I get great reception on my digital antenna so I get the basic channels CBS, ABC, FOX, and NBC. Plus, as Amazon Prime subscriber, great selection of movies and TV shows that you can stream. I do miss MNF on ESPN, but small sacrifices got to be made.

John Kang, Nevada

Take a look at the TiVo Roamio OTA. It combines all your streaming services and over the air channels into one searchable set of listings--and has a DVR option to boot in case you want to record something for later viewing that you can't stream on demand.

If you have an antenna and pick your sports channels on Sling, I think you'll find there's very little--if anything--you can't get without cable.

<https://www.tivo.com/shop/ota-detail>

Kevin W. Grierson

Kevin:

This is awesome!!!! I thought that cable and satellite were the only options for the DVR recording option, but you proved me wrong. Now, I don't have to stay up at night to watch Dateline and 48 hours! Plus, skipping commercials as well is great!! This is on my wish list right now!! Thank you for sharing this information!!!

John Kang

My husband loves the "Shorts HD" channel, which features short movies all day/night long. (We have DirecTV satellite). Is there anything like this available on the web? I would like to pull the plug on the expensive satellite service, but I'd like to be able to point him toward a replacement for his "Shorts" to make it a bit more palatable.

We also watch a lot of History, Smithsonian, and the Food/Cooking networks, as well as SyFy and Comedy Central. Can we get these online?

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

Not sure on Shorts but with Vue I get a log in to the history app, get food network, Comedy Central, SyFy, and all the discovery channels (not sure on Smithsonian)

Erin M. Schmidt

Cynthia,

Most Everything is available. I've never heard of Shorts but probably the films or shows they have listed are available somewhere. I may look at a few of the films on their schedule and report back to you. I'm always looking for something new.

Carla Peevey

