

DIGITAL TELEVISION

What is ‘digital switchover’ and what does it mean?

Digital switchover refers to the process, already underway, of the Australian free-to-air television industry changing from an analogue television transmission system to a system of digital transmission.

Since 2001, all of the free-to-air broadcasters have been simulcasting their primary channels in both analogue and digital; meaning viewers can receive the same content whether or not they have switched to digital. Eventually, however, the analogue transmission will be switched off.

The switch-off is being phased throughout Australia, commencing 30 June 2010 and continuing through until 2013. This means that everyone in Australia will have to upgrade their analogue equipment to be able to continue viewing free-to-air television.

For details on the timetable for switchover by region, visit <http://www.digitalready.gov.au>

What’s the difference between Analogue & Digital?

Analogue television is the system of terrestrial television transmission that the majority of Australians have relied upon for the last 5 decades. It is characterised by a 4:3 aspect ratio and is subject to “ghosting” and fuzzy pictures.

Digital TV provides sharper pictures and clearer sound in a widescreen format. Because digital television broadcasts take up less spectrum, more content can be broadcast, which is how new channels are being introduced to Australian free-to-air television.

What do I need to receive digital TV?

To continue receiving free-to-air television after the analogue switch-off, people will have to ensure they have installed digital equipment in the form of either a set-top box connected to their existing analogue television, or a new integrated digital television.

To be able to receive the full suite of channels available, viewers will have to install a High Definition set-top-box or purchase a new integrated HD television.

How do I know if equipment is able to receive digital TV channels?

The government recently launched a new awareness campaign that introduces a clear and easy labelling scheme for all consumer electronics. It identifies whether the product can receive an SD or HD signal and whether or not the equipment will need a set top box to receive digital television.

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The three main labels are:

1. DIGITAL CAPABLE - Only with a Set Top Box
2. DIGITAL READY - Standard Definition
3. DIGITAL READY - High Definition

For more information, go to http://www.digitalready.gov.au/panel_labels.aspx

What's the difference between SD & HD?

The digital signal can be either Standard Definition (SD) or High Definition (HD). This refers to the quality of the digital signal. SD is the primary standard in which digital television broadcasts occur in Australia. It offers superior picture and sound quality compared to analogue and provides pictures in a widescreen (16:9) format. The SD picture resolution is 576 lines x 720 active pixels.

HD is an even better quality of image and sound with up to 1920 active pixels by 1080 lines. When viewed on a HD capable television screen, the viewer can enjoy cinema-quality viewing with Dolby Digital sound (where available with some HD programming). HD equipment also gives viewers access to HD channels and programming, which are not able to be viewed with SD equipment.

What's the difference between an STB & iDTV?

Both a digital STB and an iDTV enable the reception and display of a digital television transmission.

A digital Set Top Box (STB) is used to enable an analogue television to receive and display digital television.

An integrated Digital Television (iDTV) enables high quality picture and sound to be displayed without the need for a set-top-box. In some situations people may have a standard definition integrated digital television and in that instance, they will require an HD set-top-box to also receive and display the High Definition channels.

What is a PVR? (eg. TiVo)

A personal video recorder (PVR) – also referred to as a digital video recorder (DVR) - is a digital device which allows the recording and playback of television content. It often includes features such as an Electronic Program Guide (EPG), the ability to pause and rewind Live TV and the ability to record one thing while playing back another (where a dual tuner is present). TiVo and iQ are branded versions of a PVR.

What is Freeview?

Freeview is the brand name for the collection of digital TV channels from Australia's free-to-view networks. It isn't any one channel or service – rather it is a suite of channels. Freeview represents Australian's right to watch quality television, for free. Freeview educates and encourages Australians to switch to free-to-view digital television by promoting its benefits to consumers.

Freeview is owned by ABC, SBS, Seven, Nine, TEN, Southern Cross, Prime, WIN.

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How do I get Freeview?

To start watching Freeview now, you need a high definition digital television. Or, simply connect your analogue or standard definition television to a high definition set top box or other high definition digital device. If you already have one of these, you're ready to go.

Freeview-endorsed equipment is available in stores now. For more information visit <http://www.freeview.com.au>

What equipment will I need to receive Freeview?

At a minimum, you will need a High Definition (HD) set top box to allow your existing analogue television to receive the Freeview channels. These are available from as little as \$100. Freeview-endorsed set top boxes are available from major electronics retailers. Alternatively, you can purchase an integrated HD digital television. This will ensure you get the full widescreen experience and the very best quality picture and sound. Again, Freeview-endorsed iDTVs are available from major electronics retailers.

For more information on where to purchase Freeview-endorsed equipment visit <http://www.freeview.com.au>