

Kick Cable to the Curb

Nobody likes writing that big check to the cable or Satellite company every month, especially to pay for a lot of channels you never watch. The answer for many people is to become a “cord cutter” and cancel your cable. Currently about 15% (or 4.9 million) American households have chosen to tell the cable company to take a hike. So the question becomes, can you get rid of cable (I will use the term cable but that includes any method to bring TV into your home other than an antenna) and still watch what you want. The short answer? It depends.

Any replacement for your cable company will require that you be able to stream internet to your TV. This will require a **high** speed Internet connection (broadband) and either a Smart TV with built in networking capabilities, an add on streaming box such as Roku, Apple TV etc., or a computer that can project to your TV or has an HDMI connector

Depending on what you want to watch it may or may not be possible to get rid of your current TV provider. The first question to answer is what do you want to watch? Do you primarily:

- Watch programs from the National Networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox).
- Watch local stations for news and local events.
- Watch cable channels (AMC, TNT, TCM etc.).
- Watch sports (NFL, MLB, NBA, and College etc.).

Most people watch some combination of the above.

If you just watch prime time network shows you can replace your cable fairly easily. Most network prime time shows are available over the internet directly from the network or from another source such as Hulu or Netflix. The downside is that most of them are delayed anywhere from a day to a week. The good news is that they haven't been able to sell as much ad time on the streaming shows so you usually only get about 2 minutes of ads per ½ hour show versus the 8 minute average for live TV.

If you want local channels it gets more difficult. Local channels are still available *Over the Air*, that is, they have a broadcast tower that sends out a signal that can be picked up by an antenna. However, most of our local channels are in San Francisco and we are just a little too far away to get a clear signal for all channels (See chart below). However a high quality antenna such as HD Stacker (\$149) and pre-amp may work depending on your location.

As a general rule local channels do not have the ability to stream all of their content but several of them do make all or part of their local programming available. Channels 2, 4, 5, 7 and 11 all make their newscasts available for viewing. They have additional content as well such as full episodes of some shows and clips from other shows. Most of the networks and local channels offer an app for Apple and Android devices as well as apps for Windows 8 and 10. These can be used to watch the programming on the device or mirrored to a TV.

Standard cable channels make many, but not all of their programs available for streaming. The only way to know for sure is to go to the channels' website and see if your favorites are available. Premium cable channels (HBO, Starz etc.) make their content available for purchase but in many cases they require you to already have a cable package that includes their channel.

Sports is where it gets particularly sticky. Some sports are on national networks (CBS, ABC etc.), some are on cable channels (TNT, ESPN, MLBN, Fox Sports) and some are on proprietary channels such as Comcast Sports Net or Pac 12 Channel. Getting access to all of these outlets is complicated and less than satisfactory. All of the major leagues have their own packages that, for a seasonal fee, allow you to view all out of market games. That means you can watch your favorite team when they are on the road but not when they are at home. Some networks only allow you to stream games if you have a cable channel subscription to the channel and others just aren't available at all. It is likely as cord cutting increases that more outlets will make their content available on a streaming basis.

For example, to watch football you can get Game Pass, the NFL's on-demand video subscription service. If you're willing to pay \$100 and don't mind watching games after they've aired, you can replay any of the season's 256 match-ups on your mobile device.

What do I need to Cord Cut?

You will need a high speed broadband connection. Ideally you will communicate with your TV wirelessly so your modem must have Wi-Fi built in or you will need to add a wireless router. If you have a Smart TV it should already have the ability to stream from some providers. Most recent Smart TVs have a wireless capability or the ability to add a wireless receiver through a USB port. If they are lacking wireless they may still support a wired connection with an RJ45 (Ethernet) port. If you have an older TV you will need a set top box (a silly carry over term since no modern TV has anywhere that you could rest a box on) or other access method. There are a variety of boxes available with different features. You will need to know what sources you want to use to decide on the best box for you.

Roku starting at 49.99 depending on model and capabilities

Apple TV \$149 to \$199 depending on memory

Chromebox \$150 to \$500 depending on manufacturer

Game consoles

Xbox \$350 to \$450 depending on model

Sony Play Station \$300 to \$400 depending on model

If you have a nearby laptop, tablet or computer you can use it as the source for your content and simply display it on your TV using something like a Chromecast device or a Miracast style device.

Most recent laptops, tablets and phones support "mirroring" the screen's display to another device using Miracast. Miracast is a technology that allows you to stream from a device to a TV screen. Depending on the TV it will be natively supported or you will need a device attached to your TV. Chromecast is a technology/software combo that allows you to display anything which you can view in the Chrome browser.

Microsoft Wireless Display Adapter \$50

Belkin Miracast Adapter \$60

Chromecast Adapter \$35

Will I actually save money?

Maybe. Depending on what services you use your monthly cost can be anywhere from almost nothing to hundreds of dollars per month subject to what you want to watch. Here are some sources and their fees. Those with monthly fees usually offer a discount for a year subscription.

Amazon Prime \$100/yr. <https://www.amazon.com>

Netflix \$9.99/mo. to \$11.99/mo. depending on features <https://www.Netflix.com>

Hulu \$7.99/mo. \$9.99/mo. no commercials <https://www.hulu.com>

Acorn TV \$5.99/ mo. Best of British shows. <https://www.Acorn.com>

CBS All Access \$5.99/mo. with commercials \$9.99/mo. without commercials

<https://www.cbs.com/all-access>

MLB TV \$24.99/mo. Or \$109.99/season <http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/subscriptions/>

NFL game pass \$99.99/season to watch games beginning 1 day after live

<https://www.nfl.com/gamepass>

NBA League Pass \$69-99/season (last season's price) for out of market games

<http://www.nba.com/leaguepass>

HBO Now \$14.99 no TV provider needed Also available through other suppliers such as Sling and Sony Vue <https://order.hbonow.com/>

Sony Vue \$40/mo. for 60+ channels to \$55/mo. for 100+ channels.

Sling TV \$20/ mo. for 25+ channels. \$25/ mo. 40+ channels \$40/mo. for all channels. Includes ESPN. Additional bundles available at \$5-\$10/mo. featuring Kids, Sports, Lifestyle, Hollywood and more. <https://www.sling.com/>

Additionally you can get single episodes of programs from many sources, usually for about \$1.99 per episode or \$19.99 for a season. Sources include:

iTunes

Amazon Instant Video

Google Play

You Tube

Vudu

Flixster

Apple iTunes

Sony Vue

So, is it possible to cut the cord? If you are prepared to do a little extra work to find the shows you want to watch and are willing to put up with the limitations that not having a cable provider comes with the answer is yes.

The website CanIStream.It is a good resource for finding the movies or shows you want to watch. (Note it is .it not .com)

Windows 8 and 10 Apps. These can make it easier to watch certain channels on your computer. Some of these have no requirement for a cable subscription, some offer more with a cable subscription and others require a cable subscription to get anything. Here is a list of some of the apps available.

A&E
 Watch ESPN
 Crackle
 Watch Disney
 Fox News
 NBC News
 CBS News
 MSN News
 History
















AMC
 The CW
 NBC Sports
 Discovery
 Animal Planet
 Syfy
 Bravo
 TNT
 TBS

Lifetime
 CBS Sports
 CBS
 CBS local
 Nick
 PBS

Over the Air TV Station Coverage per FTC

This is for the Windsor area. Signal strength can be affected by things such as hills and trees.

Signal Legends

 Strong	 Moderate	 Weak	 No Signal
Callsign	Network	Virtual Channel	Band
 KRCB	PBS	22-1	UHF
 KGO	ABC	7-1	Hi-V
 KQED	PBS	9-1	UHF
 KPIX	CBS	5-1	UHF
 KRON	MYTV	4-1	UHF
 KTVU	FOX	2-1	UHF
 KBCW	CW	44-1	UHF
 KCSM	PBS	60-1	UHF
 KOFY	IND	20-1	UHF
 KNTV	NBC	11-1	Hi-V
 KKPX	ION	65-1	UHF