

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Analogue

Analogue is the way our television is transmitted and recorded now. It is called analogue because the electrical signal voltages 'represent' the picture and sound signals rather than being coded into a series of '1's and '0's, which is the way digital TV works.

Analogue signal

The broadcast signal which delivers just five TV channels* to your set via the aerial.

*Not including other services and regional variations.

Audio description

Audio description is an additional narration that fits between dialogue in TV programmes and describes what is happening on-screen for those who have difficulty seeing. For example, it covers action sequences, body language, facial expression, costume and scenery.

Bandwidth

Television material is transmitted at certain frequencies, but in fact spreads a little either side of the frequency. The amount it can spread is called the bandwidth. With digital, the greater the bandwidth, the faster the material can travel. This means that data such as the EPG (Electronic Programme Guide) or Teletext can appear on your screen faster, or picture and sound can be of a higher quality because the bandwidth can contain more information.

Communal system

Where a signal is distributed through a building (e.g. a block of flats) using a wiring system, sharing the same signal source (known as IRS or MATV).

Coverage

The areas that can receive digital television - you can check whether you are in digital TV coverage using a postcode database.

CRT

(Cathode Ray Tube) The standard type of large-bodied television set, not a flat panel design.

DAB

Digital Audio Broadcasting – the DAB service is radio's equivalent of digital TV. It gives interference-free reception and has room for extra stations as well as all the usual ones.

It is available over most of the country. You can receive DAB on personal, portable, tabletop or car radios. Digital radio stations are also received by digital TV set-top boxes and iDTVs (Integrated Digital Television). Digital switchover does not affect radio services.

Digital signal

Television images are sent as compressed data which is then unscrambled by a digital box. The signal is sent by cable, satellite or through the air to your aerial.

Digital box

Needed for watching digital TV - it unscrambles digital signals and turns them back into sound and pictures.

Digital switchover

The process of switching over the UK's current analogue television broadcasting system to digital, as well as ensuring that people have adapted or upgraded their televisions and recording equipment to receive digital TV.

DSO

Abbreviation for digital switchover by the broadcasters – from analogue to digital.

DTT or DTTV

Digital terrestrial television transmitted through an aerial. In the UK this includes the Freeview service (which includes the traditional terrestrial channels, BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4 and Five) and for an additional monthly subscription, Top Up TV.

DTV

Abbreviation for digital television.

DVB

Digital Video Broadcasting – a European standard for digital television technology. Also DVB-S for satellite and DVB-T for terrestrial.

DVD

Digital Versatile Disc – though they may all look the same, DVD discs come in many forms (hence the word versatile). The most popular (usually simply referred to as DVDs) are discs containing pre-recorded films, concerts or music videos. Other formats include DVD +/-R, DVD +/-RW and DVD-RAMs, which can be used at home to record TV programmes or computer files.

Freeview

The main UK digital terrestrial television service that is transmitted through an aerial. No subscription is required. See also Top Up TV.

FTA

(Free-to-air) - a programme or service that you don't need a subscription to get.

HDTV

High Definition Television is a new technology that will enable viewers to get higher definition television pictures. HDTV has four times as many pixels (dots on the screen) as standard TV broadcasts, meaning a clearer picture and stunning detail on large-screen TVs. An HD-ready TV is not necessarily a digital TV. Make sure that it carries the digital 'tick' logo, or get a digital box, to ensure that you are set for digital.

iDTV

Integrated Digital Television - a TV with a built-in digital receiver which lets you receive Freeview channels through your aerial with no need for an additional digital box. It can refer to either a conventional CRT TV or one of the new flat panel TVs.

Interactive

Ways of interacting with a TV broadcast to get more information - a bit like an extension to the traditional Teletext service. For instance, you can select and watch a particular tennis match from a multi-screen selection, find out more information about a TV programme, cast a vote, or take part in a quiz.

Integrated Reception System - A shared reception system, common to flats and hotels, that enables delivery of television, radio, and internet services around the same distribution system, from a single wall plug.

LCD

Liquid Crystal Display - This is a particular type of flat panel television that is becoming popular as a replacement for conventional CRT TVs. They tend to be used most often for screen sizes up to 32" and can be suitable for displaying HDTV. See also Plasma.

MATV

Master Antenna TV - A communal aerial system that uses a master aerial to receive the signal before it is distributed.

Pay-per-view

An additional one-off payment for particular films and sporting events on satellite or cable/broadband television.

PDR

Personal Digital Recorder.

Pixels

One of the thousands of tiny dots that make up the picture on a TV.

PVR

Personal Video Recorder. A smart digital receiver that records programmes to a hard drive (like a computer saves information) instead of on a video tape or disc. Programmes you want to record can be selected directly from the on-screen EPG.

Platform

A way of delivering or receiving digital television. Typical platforms are terrestrial, cable, satellite and the internet.

Red button

The red button on your remote control for selecting Teletext and other interactive television services.

Rooftop aerial

A television aerial on the roof of your house.

Scart lead

A good way of connecting one TV product to another. It connects the picture and stereo sound in one 21-pin plug. Usually used to connect a television with a video or a digital box.

Set-top aerial

An aerial on top of your TV.

Spectrum

The electromagnetic spectrum is the set of radio frequencies used to transmit television, radio and other forms of electronic communication.

STB

Set-top box.

Switchover

Digital switchover.

Terrestrial TV

TV transmissions – analogue or digital - that are broadcast over the air directly to your TV aerial.

Top Up TV

You pay this company for extra channels and programmes on digital terrestrial television. For this to work, your digital TV equipment must have a slot or hole to take the Top Up TV viewing card.

VCR

Video cassette recorder – the machine you have probably been recording and playing tape copies of programmes with for years. It can be used to record analogue or digital TV but records the video signal in fairly low analogue quality.

VOD

Video on demand – for a fee, films and programmes you want to watch are delivered when you want to watch them. You can choose from a large library of films or programmes. Homechoice (currently in the London area and Stevenage) offers this service via broadband. A similar system, sometimes referred to as NVOD (near video on demand) is the 'Box Office' service offered by Sky where you can choose from a small number of films, though you may have to wait up to an hour for your film to start.