

New Ultra HD TVs arrive in stores with 5-figure prices

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High-definition TVs have officially graduated to Ultra HD.

The first Ultra high-definition [flat panel displays](#) in the U.S. go on sale this week in Los Angeles. The 84-inch LED TV from [LG Electronics](#) delivers four times the resolution of current HD TVs and has an ultra-high [price tag](#) of \$19,999 to match its impressive images. Sony has its own 84-inch set priced at \$24,999 due in late November or early December.

"As television gets bigger and bigger, we need more lines of resolution and pixels to maintain the picture quality," said Jay Vandebree, head of LG's U.S. home entertainment business.

There's enough manufacturer interest in Ultra HD that industry trade group the [Consumer Electronics Association](#) last week adopted guidelines for the higher-resolution sets. They must have at least 8 million pixels - four times that of current HD TVs. The more pixels, the sharper the picture display.

The Ultra HD label not only lets shoppers know that a new flavor of HD is available, but also helps ease confusion, said Shawn DuBravac, CEA's chief economist and director of research. "You want to make sure consumers understand where the technology fits in," he said.

There still might be some consumer confusion. Despite the CEA's move, Sony will continue to use the previous high-def designation of "4K,"

which refers to the nearly 4,000 horizontal resolution lines, with its upcoming sets, calling their sets "4K UHD."

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of Ultra HD is that currently there's little content available to take advantage of the higher resolution. Similar situations greeted the first HD TVs and color sets.

But most displays, including LG's and Sony's, will convert Blu-ray disc movies to the higher resolution of the larger sets. "What they own today will look great" on the new set, Vandembree said.

New Ultra HD sets will also display 3-D content that looks better than that on current sets. And some new video cameras shoot Ultra HD resolution video, too.

But Al Griffin, technical editor at Sound and Vision magazine, doubts the sets will have much initial appeal to most shoppers. "It's expensive," he said, and consumers "are probably not going to sit close enough to the screen to really benefit from that extra resolution even if they did have" programs to watch.

Hollywood is looking into providing Ultra HD content "whether it shows up in a Blu-ray disc or whether it is downloaded, streamed" or transmitted through pay-TV providers, DuBravac said.

The new LG displays will be sold at high-end electronics retailers and will hit most major markets in time for the holiday shopping season.

The first U.S. retailer to show and sell the sets to consumers, Video & Audio Center in Lawndale, Calif., will price the Ultra HD displays at \$16,999.99 starting at a special Ultra HD debut event Thursday.

Griffin said of Ultra HD: "It makes sense for it to exist at this point as a

format, as something you can (eventually) get on cable TV or on Blu-ray, because screens are trending larger."

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