

Dish's online TV debuts, targets cord-cutters, cord-nevers

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This undated file image provided by SlingTV shows a view of the network miniguide on the Sling TV app. Sling TV, Dish Network's online television package, debuted Monday, Feb. 9, 2015, with additions to its previously announced lineup. (AP Photo/Sling TV, File)

Dish Network's online television service, Sling TV, debuted Monday as a way to entice people who have dropped their cable or satellite TV service or never had one.

It's cheaper than a traditional pay-TV package, but it comes with fewer channels. Anyone with an Internet connection in the U.S. can sign up.

Unlike the online apps available through Comcast, Time Warner Cable and other pay-TV providers, Sling TV doesn't require a satellite service with Dish or any other subscription.

In launching the service Monday, Sling TV announced several additions to its previously announced lineup.

In the coming weeks, the \$20-a-month basic package will get AMC so subscribers will be able to watch such programs as "Mad Men," "The Walking Dead" and the "Breaking Bad" spinoff "Better Call Saul." The package is also adding the Latino-focused El Rey and Galavision channels from Univision. The 11 other channels that include ESPN, CNN and the Disney Channel.

Sling TV also announced a \$5-a-month add-on package for sports fans. It adds the SEC Network, Universal Sports and secondary ESPN channels such as ESPN Bases Loaded and ESPN Goal Line. The main package comes with ESPN and ESPN2 along with access to an on-demand WatchESPN app.

It's the first service to offer major cable channels over the Internet, without the need for a cable or satellite subscription, although Sony is expected to debut PlayStation Vue by the end of March. In addition, individual channels such as HBO and Nickelodeon are preparing Internet-only offerings.

Dish, which is based in Englewood, Colorado, said it isn't worried people will drop satellite TV for the cheaper online offering. In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Dish Network Corp. CEO Joe Clayton said the target includes people "the pay TV industry in total is missing today."

Here's a closer look at Sling TV:

— **THE BASICS:** The \$20-a-month basic package comes with at least 14 channels, once AMC starts. These are primarily channels from Disney, Scripps, Time Warner Inc.'s Turner and Univision. Add-on packages for sports, news and kids are each available for \$5 a month. Sling TV has a deal with AMC Networks covering BBC America, IFC, Sundance TV and other channels, but it's not yet known what will be offered under which package.

— **LIMITATIONS:** Viewing is limited to one device at a time, so family members who want to watch TV simultaneously will need multiple subscriptions. The service also lacks recording, pausing or rewinding capabilities, though some channels offer past content on demand. Some programs will be blocked—namely NFL games on mobile devices, which Verizon has the rights for.

— **THE DEVICES:** Apps are now available for iOS, Android, Mac, PC and Roku. Support for Amazon Fire TV devices is expected in the next few days. Other devices will be added in the coming months.

— **NO COMMITMENT:** Customers pay for only a month at a time, so it's possible to subscribe just during the months their favorite shows are on. For the rest of the year, there's plenty to watch on Netflix, Hulu and other streaming services.

— **THE CHOICE:** Go with a traditional package or Sling TV? Dish's satellite offering has more channels, but it averages \$85 a month. But Sling TV has notable gaps, including all over-the-air channels and most cable channels from NBCUniversal.

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