

Three things to know about HBO's new streaming service

March 12 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



In this March 9, 2015 file photo, Richard Plepler, CEO of HBO, talks about HBO Now for Apple TV during an Apple event in San Francisco. For the first time, Americans will be able to subscribe to HBO without a cable or satellite TV subscription. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

In less than a month, people in the U.S. [will be able to subscribe](#) to HBO without a cable or satellite TV subscription. The stand-alone HBO Now streaming service unveiled this week will debut in time for the April 12 season premiere of "Game of Thrones."

HBO and ESPN have long been cited as a chief reason people keep their pay-TV bundles, amid a growing practice of "cord cutting." But last month, Dish started making ESPN available as part of a \$20-a-month online television package called Sling TV. Now, HBO will offer its movies and shows over the Internet for \$15 a month.

Thus far, people who want to watch HBO but don't have a cable or satellite contract have had to borrow friends' or parents' passwords to access HBO's streaming service, HBO Go. Now, they can subscribe and clear their conscience. But HBO says it doesn't believe the online-only offering will accelerate cord cutting. Rather, HBO is targeting the 80 million U.S. homes that don't already have HBO. That includes some 10 million broadband-only homes—not just cord cutters, but the younger "cord nevers" who have never subscribed to traditional TV.

Here are some things to know before you rush out to cancel your service:

A BARGAIN?

HBO is bucking the trend by charging \$15 a month. Netflix, Hulu Plus and other major online video services cost less than \$10 each. As part of pay-TV packages, HBO starts at \$10 through Comcast and Time Warner Cable. Many providers include HBO for free as part of promotions for pricier packages.

So consider this: If you want both HBO and ESPN, you're paying \$35 a month without a cable package. Figure that the price of your Internet access will go up by \$20 when it's unshackled from a TV bundle. You'll have to gauge this against how much you pay now for Internet access and your cable or satellite package that includes hundreds of channels.

NOW VS GO

HBO Now isn't the same as regular HBO. The pay-TV version gives you about 20 traditional channels, including ones in Spanish, and entitles you to the HBO Go streaming app. HBO Now won't have the traditional channels, but you can watch new episodes of shows in real time, just as you can on HBO Go.

Both Now and Go will have a similar library of movies and shows available through their apps. That includes past and current seasons of HBO shows, along with hundreds of movies, including those from Universal, Fox, Warner Bros. and Summit. (Time Warner Inc. owns both HBO and Warner Bros.)

Differences will mostly be on the back end: Apple Inc.—not the pay-TV provider—is handling HBO Now billing, at least initially. Major League Baseball, which has a robust streaming network to deliver its games online, will handle the technical aspects. MLB's involvement means the user interface on Now will differ from Go, which HBO handles in-house.

HBO also owns the Cinemax channel, but that's not part of either offering.

SIGNING UP

The service is available in the U.S. only. Apple has a three-month exclusivity deal with HBO. During that time, people can sign up only through an Apple TV streaming device or HBO Now's app on iPhones

and iPads. Macs aren't eligible. Apple will pull credit card information directly from its iTunes service, so customers won't have to fill out screens of forms. After subscribing, customers are free to watch on Android and Windows devices through a Web browser.

HBO plans to expand to other devices after the three months are up.

HBO is offering the first month free, and there's no minimum commitment. So after "Games of Thrones" is over for the season, fans can cancel until the next season. HBO is counting on people staying after discovering other shows available through the app.

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Three things to know about HBO's new streaming service (2015, March 12) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-03-hbo-streaming.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.