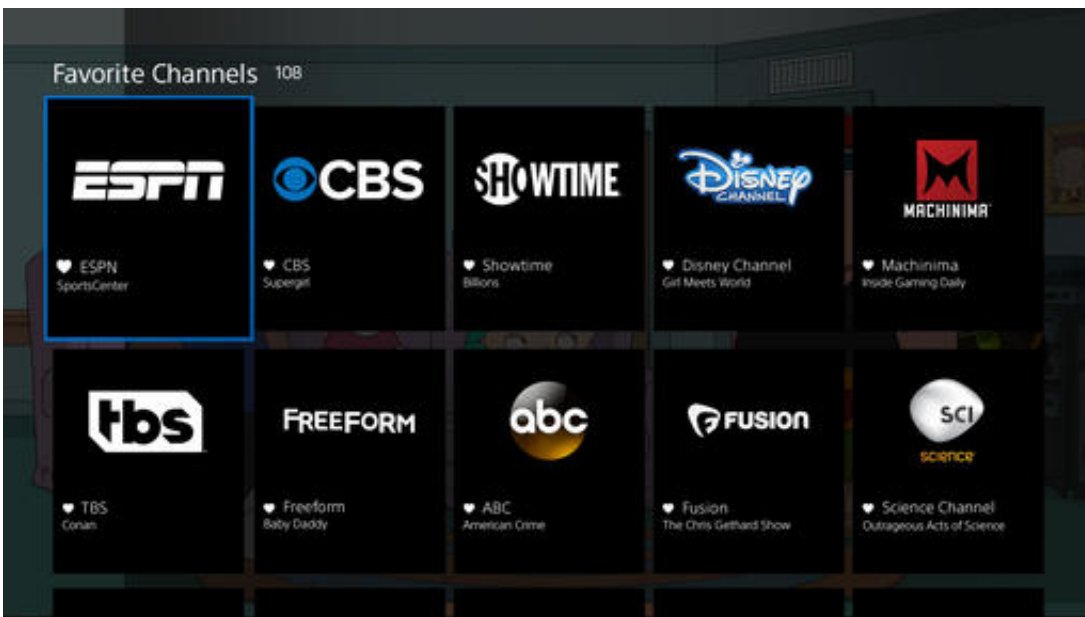


What you get from Dish and Sony online TV channels

May 11 2016, by By Anick Jesdanun



This file image provided by Sony shows a frame grab demonstrating Sony's PlayStation Vue streaming-television service. Online services such as Sling TV and PlayStation Vue are emerging as alternatives to cable TV, while Hulu plans to start its own. Though it might feel satisfying to ditch your cable TV company, there are things you'll miss. (Courtesy of Sony via AP, File)

Dish's Sling TV and Sony's PlayStation Vue both offer ways to watch traditional TV channels over the Internet without a cable box or satellite dish.

Both also offer recent episodes of TV shows on demand. Vue also offers

a digital video recorder that lets you save TV shows that aren't available on demand.

Vue is more robust than Sling as an alternative to cable, but Sling has better prices and works with a greater range of mobile and streaming TV devices. Each service comes in two flavors.

PLAYSTATION VUE—BASIC PACKAGE

For \$40 a month, you get more than 50 cable and over-the-air channels, including ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC and Telemundo. There's no PBS or CW, though. Cable channels include ESPN, AMC and CNN.

There's a big catch, though: Vue offers this package only to people who live in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Philadelphia and San Francisco, as well as their suburbs. That's because Sony has to strike deals with individual local affiliates of the big broadcasters. In these locations, the stations are mostly owned by the networks. Where they're not—such as the ABC station in Miami—you're limited to network shows on demand the next day.

You can pay for additional channels. For \$5 extra, for instance, you get about 10 additional channels, including the regional sports network that covers your hometown team (so long as it's Comcast, Fox or Yes). You can also get premium channels such as Showtime for \$11 extra.

Prices aren't necessarily cheaper than traditional cable TV, but cable tends to hook you with discounted rates and then raise prices once the promotions end.

Vue's DVR lets you pause, rewind and fast-forward, but typically only

after the show's broadcast ends. There's unlimited storage, but shows expire after 28 days. For some shows, recent episodes are available on demand, even if you didn't set the recorder. But the fast-forwarding button is typically disabled, so you can't skip commercials.

Shows are easy to find, as Vue combines live TV, DVR and on-demand shows in one search. Add a show to your list, and episodes are automatically recorded. But you can't remove an episode after watching it without deleting all other episodes for that show.

You need a Sony PlayStation or Amazon Fire TV device to sign up, but after that you can watch some shows with an iPhone or iPad. The service is designed for households and supports simultaneous viewing on multiple devices.



This Sept. 29, 2014, file photo, shows the Amazon Fire TV, a product for streaming popular video services, apps and games in high-definition, in Decatur, Ga. To use Sony's PlayStation Vue, you need a PlayStation or Amazon Fire TV gadget and have to live in one of seven big cities, or their suburbs. Dish's Sling

TV and Sony's PlayStation Vue both offer ways to watch traditional TV channels over the Internet without a cable box or satellite dish. (AP Photo/Ron Harris, File)

PLAYSTATION VUE—NATIONAL PACKAGE

Vue offers just the cable channels live for \$30 a month. Shows from ABC, Fox and NBC are available on-demand the next day, similar to Hulu. But you won't get local shows, such as the news. Otherwise, the service is similar to the basic package. Options for regional sports networks and Showtime are also available.

This limited package is offered only where you can't get the basic package. If you're in New York, for instance, you're stuck with the \$40-a-month plan, even if you don't want over-the-air channels.

SLING TV—BASIC PACKAGE

For \$20 a month, you get 26 [cable channels](#), including ESPN, AMC and CNN. You get more options than Vue for bonus channels, in part because the base package has fewer. Packages of five to 15 extra channels cost \$5 each, grouped by genres such as sports, kids and Spanish TV. HBO costs \$15, and Cinemax \$10.

Sling TV keeps costs down by excluding over-the-air stations from the base package, though you can get ABC and Univision stations in some markets as part of a \$5 broadcast package.

Getting all 95 channels costs \$90—which sounds pretty steep, given that cable TV offers hundreds of channels at that price. The point, of course, is that you probably don't need every [channel](#). You simply choose what you want and pay way less than \$90.

The main drawback: No DVR. If you miss a show live, you have to hope that the channel offers that show for on-demand streaming. Even then, some shows expire after just a week. Others are around longer, but most eventually expire.

The interface feels primitive, although a major revamp Sling plans this year looks promising.

The service is available nationwide and works on a variety of gadgets, including Apple, Android and Amazon mobile devices, Mac and Windows PCs, Roku, Chromecast and Amazon Fire TV. There's no app for Apple TV. The service is limited to one stream at a time, so if you start a show on a second device, it stops on the first.

SLING TV—MULTI-DEVICE PACKAGE

Sling is testing a service that lets you stream on three devices at a time, not just one. But the channel mix is different. This service also costs \$20 a month and offers up to 30 channels. You don't get ESPN or other Disney channels, but you get FX and Fox regional sports networks unavailable in the main package. You also get Fox's over-the-air station in some markets; elsewhere, you get network shows the next day.

You can buy extra packages for \$5 each, though there aren't as many choices as in the basic offering.

Although some channels are available with both services, you need to buy both \$20 packages to get all of them.

It would have been easier to combine the channels into one [package](#) and simply restrict simultaneous streaming for channels that don't allow it. But Sling says it wants to offer flexibility to those who want only one or the other. Packages could change once the multi-device version finishes its beta testing.

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