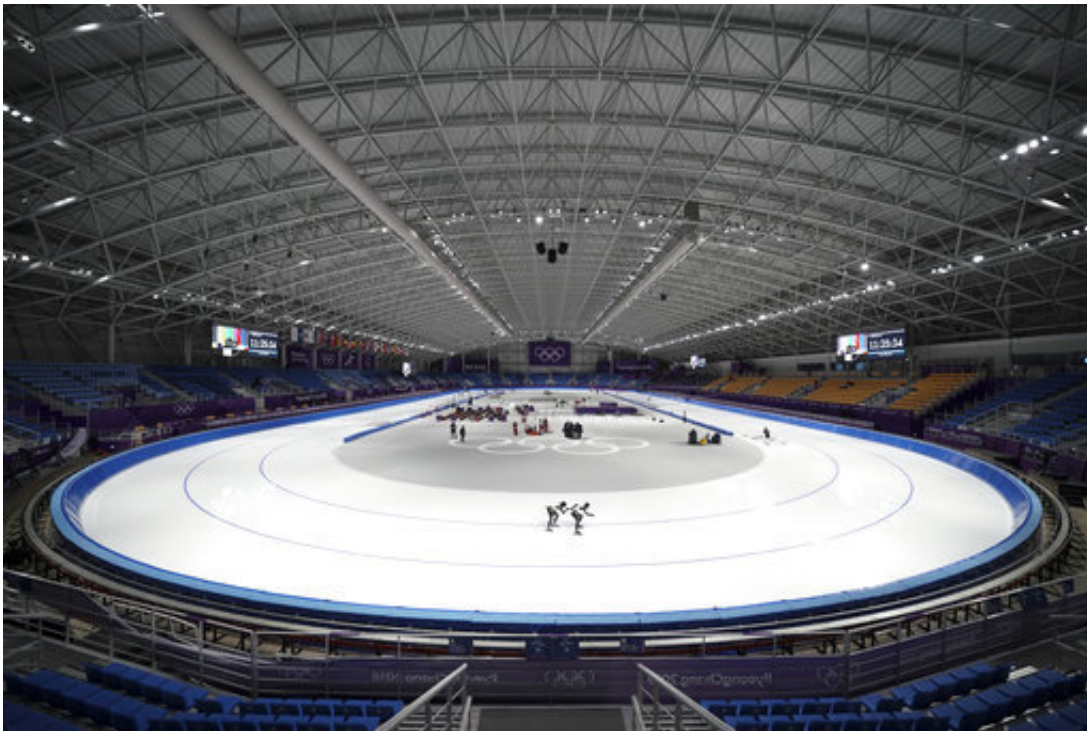


Olympic video and VR: Guide to watching without a TV

February 6 2018, by Anick Jesdanun



In this Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2018, file photo, athletes from Japan practice at the Gangneung Oval during a speed skating training session prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea. As with past Olympics, NBC is requiring proof of a TV subscription to watch. More than 1,800 hours of online coverage begins Wednesday, Feb. 7, in the U.S. with preliminary curling matches. (AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File)

Every Olympic event will be streamed live. But to watch online, you'll

still need to be a paying cable or satellite subscriber.

As with past Olympics, NBC is requiring proof of a subscription. If you've already given up on traditional cable or satellite TV, you can sign up for an online TV service such as PlayStation Vue or YouTube TV. Otherwise, your video will cut out after a half-hour grace period.

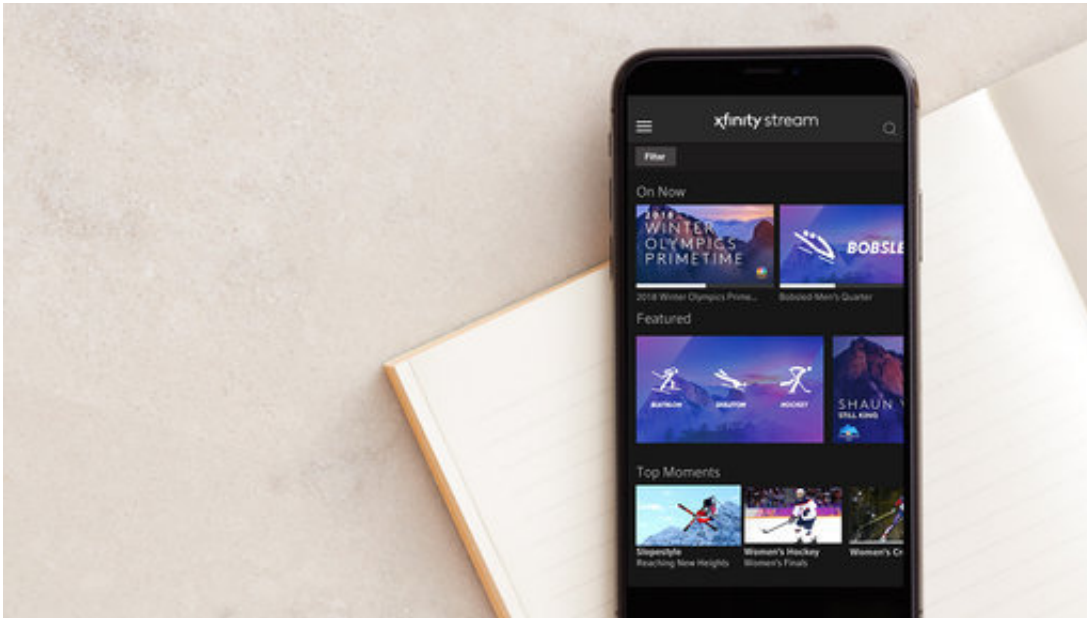
The subscription requirement also applies to coverage on virtual-reality headsets.

More than 1,800 hours of online coverage begins Wednesday evening in the U.S. with preliminary curling matches. Friday's opening ceremony will be shown live online starting at 6 a.m. ET, and on NBC's prime-time broadcast on a delayed basis at 8 p.m. NBC also plans live streaming of the closing ceremony on Feb. 25.

Here's a guide to watching the Olympics online.

TRADITIONAL COVERAGE

NBC's over-the-air network will cover popular sports such as figure skating and skiing, some of it live. For those who can't get to a TV, NBC will stream the broadcast at NBCOlympics.com and the NBC Sports app. But there you'll need your paid-TV credentials to sign in—even though you can watch the network over the air for free.



This 2018 image provided by Comcast Corp. shows Xfinity Stream mobile app with Olympics coverage for Comcast customers. NBC owner Comcast will include online coverage on its TV set-top boxes and TV coverage on its mobile apps to offer viewers one-stop shop to the Olympics. Comcast and other cable providers will also offer the opening ceremony and other events in sharper, "4K" resolution, though with a day's delay. (Comcast Corp. via AP)

The sports network NBCSN will be the main overflow channel, carrying events such as biathlon, bobsled and luge. Coverage on CNBC and USA Network will be limited to curling and ice hockey. The Olympic Channel will have medal ceremonies, news and highlights, but not event coverage. All four of these cable channels will also be streamed online.

Much of the online coverage will come from the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Broadcasting Services. That means the spotlight will be on all athletes, not just Americans. In addition to live events, you can get streams of some training and practice runs. NBC also plans digital-only shows, including a daily two-hour wrap-up starting at noon ET (2 a.m. the next morning in Pyeongchang).

Some cable companies plan special features. NBC owner Comcast will include online coverage on its TV set-top boxes and TV coverage on its mobile apps to offer viewers one-stop access to the Olympics. Comcast and other cable providers will also offer the opening ceremony and other events in sharper "4K" resolution, though with a day's delay.

VIRTUAL REALITY

Intel is working with the Olympic Broadcasting Services to produce virtual-reality coverage of 30 events. Eighteen events, or 55 hours, will be live.

During the Rio Olympics in 2016, VR coverage typically wasn't live and required Samsung's Gear VR headsets with a Samsung phone. This time, VR is available on Google Daydream and Microsoft Mixed Reality headsets as well. Those without a headset can still watch on web browsers or Apple and Android mobile devices. In the U.S., you'll need the NBC Sports VR app.

VR isn't meant to replace television. While Intel's VR productions of baseball and other sports had their own announcers, the Olympic coverage will rely on regular television coverage embedded in the VR experience. And most of the VR video will be in 180 degrees—you'll see the action in front of you and a little bit to the sides, but not what's behind you. Videos in 360 degrees will be limited to non-competition features such as a demo run down the bobsled.



This 2018 image provided by Comcast Corp. shows the Olympics interface on an X1 TV set-top box for Comcast customers. NBC owner Comcast will include online coverage on its TV set-top boxes and TV coverage on its mobile apps to offer viewers one-stop shop to the Olympics. Comcast and other cable providers will also offer the opening ceremony and other events in sharper, "4K" resolution, though with a day's delay. (Comcast Corp. via AP)

But VR will offer more leaderboards and stats than television, along with the ability to choose camera positions. For downhill skiing, for instance, you might prefer watching from a particular location on the mountain, the way a spectator would, rather than have the camera shift the skier goes down. For figure skating, one camera will be near the judges so you can get their vantage point. There will be no cameras on the rink or on any athletes, however.

IF YOU LACK CABLE OR SATELLITE TV

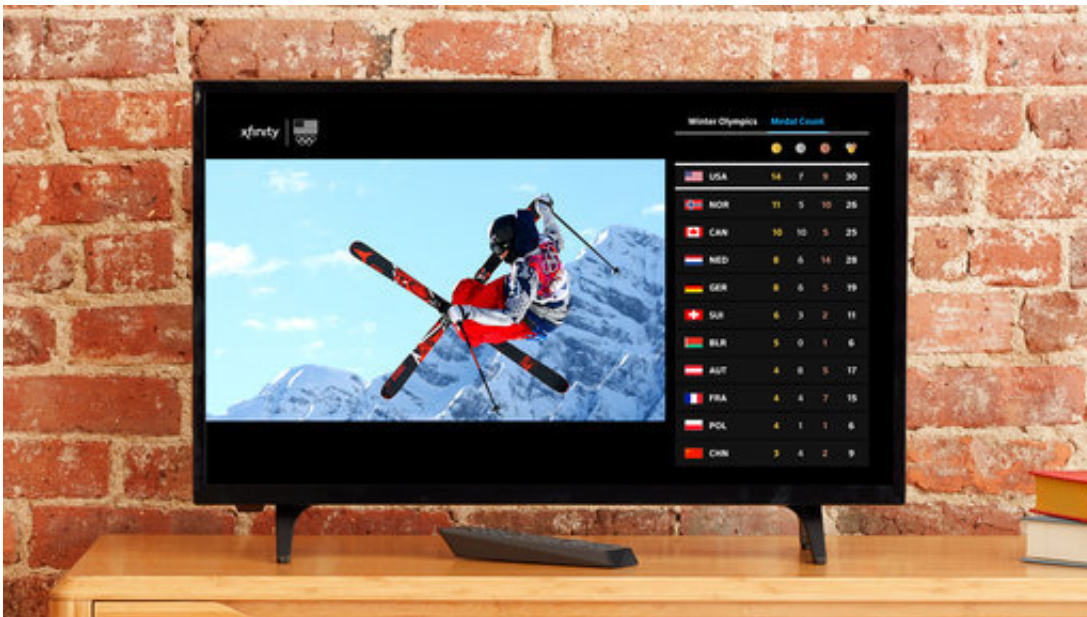
For the most part, access to an online TV service—one that streams many of the channels you'd get from a cable subscription—will also let you use the NBC apps for streaming and VR.

Google's YouTube TV has the lowest price for all five Olympic TV channels, at \$35 a month. Google says the service is available in more than 80 U.S. markets, covering more than 80 percent of households, though the NBC station isn't available everywhere.

In excluded markets, you could check out a rival. What works best will depend on your needs:

— DirecTV Now also has a \$35-a-month offering. But the Olympic Channel is part of a higher tier, at \$60 a month, and DirecTV Now generally won't let you record programs for viewing later (a DVR feature is still being tested among some subscribers).

— Hulu with Live TV is \$40 a month for all five channels and DVR.



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— PlayStation Vue, Sling TV and FuboTV are all \$45 for comparable packages. But you can bring Sling TV's bill down to \$30 for just the two main Olympic channels and DVR. PlayStation is \$40 without the Olympic Channel.

Free trials are available, and you can cancel after the Olympics. Most services let you enter your ZIP code to check whether the NBC station is available. Streaming might be restricted where the station isn't available.

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BEYOND VIDEO

The NBC Sports app and the NBCOlympics website offer highlights, interviews and features on athletes without needing a subscription. You'll also have full access to scores, schedules and guides to understanding obscure events.

Samsung, an Olympic sponsor, developed the official Apple and Android app for the games, called PyeongChang 2018. It has schedules, news and 3-D and drone views of the venues.

The games' official website, pyeongchang2018.com, also has live video of the Olympic torch relay.

Traditional media organizations will also cover the event, even though extensive video from the official venues are restricted to the rights-holding broadcasters. The Associated Press, for instance, has a Winter Games hub with traditional text, photo and video [coverage](#) alongside graphics breaking down complicated moves in figure skating and snowboarding and daily illustrations from sketch artist Dan Archer. The AP will also have 360-degree video and drone views of the venues.

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