

## High Definition Digital TV - The Basics

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**H**igh-Definition TV isn't coming — it's here! Now you enjoy crystal-clear pictures from a whole new world of television programs and products. But, what is it and what do you need to enjoy this incredible experience?

- HD-compatible TV
- HDTV Tuner — usually referred to as a Set Top Box
- Outdoor Digital or UHF/VHF Antenna
- HDTV broadcasts from free-to-air television stations

Firstly, in order to see the incredible detail and rich colours of HDTV\* programs, you will need an HD-compatible TV. Models capable of displaying HDTV have now been around for several years. The majority of the "HDTV" TVs already in homes are

"HDTV-ready" models and this will continue for some time. So, whether you choose or have already purchased a DLP or LcOS big-screen model, a flat-panel plasma or LCD design or even (very rare these days) a traditional tube-type TV, they all need something else to reproduce HDTV — an HDTV tuner or Set Top Box.

In order to receive HDTV broadcasts, a HD-compatible TV must be connected to some type of separate HDTV tuner or what we typically call a digital Set Top Box to receive HDTV reception. The HDTV models cost significantly more than their SDTV cousins and come as with most things in a wide choice and host of various features. Likewise, they are not all equal in performance! Cheaper ones are prone to drop-out even if you have a good antenna. Some sophisticated models have Hard Disc Recorders in-built so that you can even

record HD programs for later play-back or archiving. Note some TVs come supplied with an in-built DVB-T tuner. These are usually only capable of receiving Standard Definition Digital Signals and not High Definition Signals, so check before you buy.



***This Toshiba J35 High Definition STB allows you to record and watch simultaneously***

You may not realise it, but free-to-air local HDTV broadcasts are now available on a regular basis in all the capital cities and many regional areas. These programs are identified at the beginning of each broadcast with a special HD logo. All of them are in 16:9 widescreen format.

It may come as a surprise, deep into the digital age, but the next link in the HDTV chain is an antenna. Depending on your home's proximity to your local stations and your area's geography, you may need anything from a basic older analogue antenna to a new roof-mounted digital antenna.

It needs to be in good condition and connected to the TV with preferably RG-6 Quad Shield cable. Digital, although not as fickle as analogue still needs a certain minimum level of signal. Unlike analogue which may still deliver a poor fuzzy picture, digital is basically perfect or non-existent, simply displaying a blue screen if the signal is inadequate. See our other article on '**Digital Antenna Troubleshooting**' for more information.

As far as the broadcasts themselves go, the quality and quantity differ from station to station. Most stations which are broadcasting a digital signal aren't doing HD full-time. And those that are don't all do it at the same quality. Typically, 576p is considered the minimum for HDTV with 1080i being the maximum currently available. Contact your local stations to learn more about their plans for rolling out HDTV programs.



\*HDTV is the abbreviation for High Definition Television

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