

# Cut the Cord, Ditch the Dish, and Take Back Control of Your TV



Fun, Tried-and-Tested, and Absolutely Legit Ways  
to Customize, Control and Change  
How You Watch TV

*An indispensable resource  
of information and new technology:  
gizmos & gadgets, Smart TVs & streams, dongles & devices  
and some pretty cool  
how-to projects and hacks  
that will revolutionize  
your relationship with your TV*

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# Navigating the journey ahead

## Before proceeding...

- The politics of change is very active here. Unless everyone in your household is okay with change, it will fail. Somehow things will come apart...it's just the way it is.
- Don't dump what is working now until you know it can be-or has been-successfully replaced.
- This book is country-specific and focused on the United States.
- Technology can be very scary, but it is also a fundamental platform upon which we conduct our daily lives. To confront, explore, own and change how we use our technology - TV or otherwise - gives us control and removes (or reduces) the fear. This book tries to act a guide and partner for all but the truly technophobic.

## What skills do you need?

There are many setups and useful projects in this book that can be completed by people with basic levels of technical ability. It's worth trying: that's how most of us learn. What is hard for one person is not for another, and not every person is "technical" in the same way. Someone who is comfortable connecting coax wiring and placing antennas may be less comfortable with an Android device. A person comfortable with Linux computer may not feel as comfortable with a Windows computer. What is "easy" varies with every individual.

Some projects take longer to complete, are more intricate, or rely more deeply on particular technical skills and we have tried to indicate this with a [ranking](#).

Finally, we are talking about TV home entertainment here, so nothing should be taken too seriously. If something breaks - and it may, part of the journey is fixing things and being more knowledgeable for it - give yourself time and breathing room, ask a friend or family member for help, and try to have some fun. Remember we are all new at this.

## Choosing how to proceed.

After reading through some of the ideas and technology discussed and seeing what you might be interested in, take a look at the projects [overview section](#) of chapter 5. If there is a project that looks interesting and may be a fit for you, work back from it, putting the pieces in place as needed. The projects are structured so as to offer complete solutions, rather than focusing on a single technology or vendor. We assume that the technology specific setups done in earlier chapters will not be done in isolation, but as a part of a larger project.

Here are some items to consider when choosing your solution:

- Do you need your cable or satellite TV subscription? Some content can only be viewed with a cable or satellite subscription. If life is not complete without it AND there is absolutely no way to replace it, then stay as you are.
- Is good quality internet service available and affordable? Does your internet connection have bandwidth or usage caps which will limit your choices?
- How comfortable are you with changing, modifying devices, TVs and technology generally?
- How comfortable are you working with coax [wires](#), [hookup cables](#) and TV antennas?
- Are there parts of a solution already in place? For example, if you have a bunch of Apple gear in use and have purchased Apple content – your solution should probably include this. Already successfully using a [Roku](#), [AndroidTV](#) device, [Chromecast](#), etc.? Same. Don't buy new gear unless you have to, but also consider that we have tried to use the latest versions in our testing. Product versions and updates mean that features and methods can change. The time spent resolving these issues can counter any cost savings of re-using existing gear. Your time is valuable.
- Do you want to use the big screen TV as a shared activity center? A smart TV (or a TV with a computer or console attached) can be a great place to collaborate when planning trips, playing games, viewing documents and photos, planning activities, investing, etc.
- Do family members view TV and movies on [devices](#) (tablets, phones) besides the big screen? Do you have - or want - a big screen?
- Do you live within 70-100 miles of TV station transmitters? See our section on [TV antennas](#) for how to find out.
- How good is your in-home network? Is it ready for streaming multi-media content? See the [Networks](#) section for more information for how to test this and improve things.
- How much of what you watch is available on major networks and PBS? If not much, then an internet only solution may work.
- How smart is your TV? Is it good at browsing the internet and streaming? As the operating systems used in [smart](#) TVs mature, they become a viable solution in themselves – this is explored as a solution in several projects [later](#). Alternatively you can attach "smarts" to a TV using an [external console](#), [streaming gadget](#) or even a [computer](#).
- Is most of what you watch recorded? If so you will need a [DVR](#).

- Is there a particular technology universe are you comfortable or invested with, such as Google, Microsoft, Linux, Apple, Amazon, Roku, etc.? If so, you should build upon that.