

# DIGITAL CONVERTER BOX HOW-TO GUIDE



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PBS

Digital TV or DTV is available now in most cities. By June 12, 2009 all high-power TV stations will broadcast exclusively in digital, but many stations will go all-digital before that date.

If you get TV over the air with an antenna and your TV does not have a built-in digital tuner, you have three options to get ready for digital television. You can:

1. Buy a new digital TV set; or
2. Purchase and install a TV converter box; or
3. Sign up for a pay TV service.

This guide offers tips and considerations for purchasing and installing a converter box.

## Digital Converter Box Overview

A digital converter box connects to an older TV and allows it to receive free over-the-air digital TV signals. A converter box is a one-time purchase with no monthly fees. You need one box per TV that does not have a digital tuner and receives its signal over the air with an indoor or outdoor antenna.

A converter box enables you to experience several benefits of DTV on your existing TV set: higher quality picture and sound, more free channel choices and additional viewing options such as enhanced closed captions. And, after TV broadcasts are exclusively digital, it will ensure your current TV still works.

## Choosing a converter box

Converter boxes are for sale from many retailers. There are a few things to consider before making a purchase:

1. You can apply for up to two \$40 government coupons to reduce the cost of approved converter boxes. New coupon applicants are being put on a waiting list. If the TV stations in your market are going all-digital before June 12, 2009 you may want to buy a box without a coupon to ensure you're ready.
  - » Call 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009) or visit [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) for more information.
  - » Coupons are limited in quantity and expire 90 days after issue.
2. There are many converter box models on the market, so research what's available in your area and what kind of box is best for you.

- » Many major retailers including Best Buy, Kmart, Sears, RadioShack, Target and Wal-Mart are selling the boxes.
  - » Your coupons will come with a list of approved converter box models and a list of participating local retailers. This information is also available from the coupon Web site.
  - » You can also use your coupons to purchase boxes through online retailers.
  - » Price ranges from \$40 - \$80.
  - » If your market has low-power TV stations or translators, you will need a box with "analog pass-through" functionality.
  - » Some boxes offer additional features such as enhanced Closed Captioning, detailed on-screen program guide, etc.
  - » Remember to ask the retailer about their return policy. Some boxes may perform better in different markets and you may find that one model works better than another in yours.
3. Consumer Reports online ([www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)) has conducted reviews of several of the available converter box models

## Converter Boxes and Antennas

If your TV currently receives good quality reception with your antenna, it should be able to receive DTV signals through the converter box with the same antenna.



## High-definition Converter Boxes

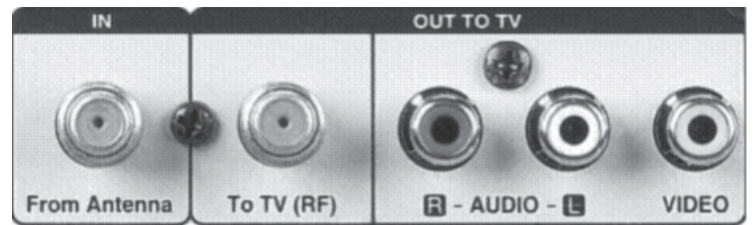
To watch free over-the-air DTV in high-definition, you need either an HDTV set or an “HD ready” TV that is connected to an HD-capable digital converter box. These boxes cost around \$200 and are not eligible for the government coupon discount.

HD Ready TVs, regular digital TVs or TVs connected to a converter box can receive high-definition television signals over the air, but they will not be displayed in high-definition.

### Connecting a Converter Box

Follow the instructions that come with your converter box. The instructions likely will walk you through these steps:

1. Unplug your TV.
2. Unplug the existing coaxial wire from the “antenna in” jack on your TV.
3. Plug that same cable into the “antenna in” jack on the converter box.
4. Plug the coaxial wire that came with the converter box into the “antenna out” jack on the converter box.
5. Plug the other end of that same cable into the “antenna in” jack on your TV.
6. Plug in the converter box power cord.
7. Put the batteries in the converter box remote.
8. Turn on the converter box. Check the instructions to see how to set the output of the converter box to either channel 3 or 4, depending on what is best in your community. This selection will likely be the same as you may have made in the past with your VCR.
9. Plug the TV back in and turn it on. Tune it to channel 3 or 4, depending on what you have set on the converter box.
10. Use the converter box set-up instructions to scan for channels.



(image of the back of a converter box)

For troubleshooting help, contact the manufacturer of your converter box.

For more tips on how to get ready for digital TV visit [pbs.org/dtv](http://pbs.org/dtv) and be sure to tune in to “Get Ready for Digital TV” premiering this fall on your local PBS station.