

Program: Cut Your Cable? The Whys, and the Hows, and What You Can Do to Replace Some of the Content

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Attendance: 113

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Why cut the cord? To save money! But how? And in a way that you can still watch your favorite TV programs conveniently.

Don't try this if others in the family don't want to change or if you have lots of constantly used TVs or if you're getting a good deal from your cable company. But if you add up all the costs of phone, cable and internet, it can be daunting. It may be worth your time to try to find a better solution. Bill has done that and passed along the benefits of his experience. However, every family situation is different, so you'll still have to do your own homework. You can usually (and should) try out new equipment and services BEFORE you cut the cable.

For TV, the cheapest option is over the air (OTA) TV. It is possible to get most, if not all, the channels you want including sports. For example you can go to www.tablotv.com to check on what channels you should be able to get with the Tablo device. Try out antennas (sold on line or in stores) before you cut the cable. You can also get a recorder to use with in-house wi-fi to record programs. Benefits of OTA include superior quality of picture due to less compression, no buffering pauses (e.g. channel change is instantaneous), no blackouts or outages, and no delay in video which may be 30 seconds when streaming. Delays with OTA seem to be less than 15 seconds.

Try internet streaming Ensure you get adequate bandwidth, but don't pay for more bandwidth than you need. You will need 5 Mbs for each TV then double that number and then add 5 more Mbs for your total minimum requirement. Unlimited data service is best. You can sometimes get more bandwidth for the same price as your minimum. Spectrum is now offering a package at \$50/month with unlimited data at 100 Mbs on trial basis! Note that if you want to watch lots of TV and movies, video eats up data quickly. You can check your current download speed at www.Speedtest.net .

There is a learning curve to get streaming up and running. You need to get used to buffering pauses while watching. You can record programs, including previously shown episodes. Apps are available from many stations to view their content separately but if done over the internet, it is metered and counts against your data limits. You can take your streaming device on vacation although some locations may have limited service. You can also suspend apps (many have monthly fees) and reinstate when you return. First check to ensure there won't be a higher charge when you re-start. You can also start a trial for a special show you can binge on.

Devices needed for streaming are provided by many including Amazon and Google (and they don't play nice with each other). FireTV Stick remote control is a good choice for Amazon users – it works with Echo and Alexa. Google also has a remote control. It's helpful to add Sideclick to either remote so you can control your TV with one remote. Another streaming device option is Roku. And Chromcast is an option that uses your smart phone as a remote control. Apple TV is also available but more expensive than the others.

Streaming Services include DirecTVNow, YouTubeTV, PlayStation Vue, Hulu with Live TV, and Sling TV. They are generally \$40/month to get adequate service. You can watch from anywhere — on your phone, computer or TV. You'll need internet service bandwidth described above, no cable box but likely a streaming device (e.g. Roku) to play content on your TV. Check with each provider for a list of supported devices. If your provider does not show desired local channels to include PBS, you can go with the antenna (described above) to include those. Use the TV's input control to switch between antenna and the streaming device. These services generally charge a monthly fee. There are also free apps like Hoopla for movies that come free with a library card. Free apps generally have limitations. Other free apps you can check out include Crackle, Go90, PlutoTV, Roku, Tubi, Vudo, and Yahoo View.

Telephone options include land lines and cell phones, which can be expensive. One that connects through Wi-Fi or by plugging into your internet router is Ooma. The device can be purchased for \$50-\$90 and then you pay just a small monthly fee plus taxes (<\$5/month). Extra services can be provided for more money. Your existing telephone system, corded or cordless, is then connected to the Ooma or similar such device.

Warning. There are no short cuts. Research is required. And in this case it is definitely recommended that you read the long legal agreements. Use of Wi-Fi could compromise your banking information. Other personal data can be collected in some situations.

SCRIBES NOTE: I went to the net to clarify something in my notes and found that on 4 April 2018 *PC Magazine* posted an article that compares streaming services in detail: The Best Video Streaming Services of 2018. Very timely! It can be found at:

<https://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2489103,00.asp>



Bill Elliot