

TV Converter Box Coupon Program



Frequently Asked Questions

Background on Digital Television Transition

1. What is the digital television transition?

At midnight on February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100% digital broadcasting. Digital broadcasting promises to provide a clearer picture and more programming options and will free up airwaves for use by emergency responders.

2. Will my television work after February 17, 2009?

Analog television sets receiving free TV using an antenna will not work after February 17, 2009. Television viewers with these sets that are not connected to a pay TV service will need to take action before February 17, 2009, to ensure their TV sets continue to work.

3. What are my options so I can continue to get TV after February 17, 2009?

Consumers have a variety of options. If you're not sure what to do, take a quick quiz to help you figure out what to do at www.DTVTransition.org. Options to explore include:

1. Keep your existing analog TV and purchase a TV converter box. A converter box plugs into your TV and will keep it working after Feb. 17, 2009, or
2. Connect to cable, satellite or other pay service, or
3. Purchase a television with a digital tuner.

4. What is a TV converter box?

A TV converter box is a new product available in early 2008 that plugs into your analog TV and, along with your antenna, will keep your analog set working after February 17, 2009. A TV converter box is a one-time purchase and is expected to cost between \$40 and \$70. A TV connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service does not require a TV converter box from this program. For a list of TV converter boxes that can be purchased with \$40 government coupons, please visit www.dtv2009.gov.

5. What is the TV Converter Box Coupon Program?

Congress created the TV Converter Box Coupon Program for households wishing to keep using their analog TV sets after February 17, 2009. The Program allows U.S. households to obtain up to two coupons, each worth \$40 that can be applied toward the cost of eligible converter boxes.

6. How do I get my coupons?

Between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, consumers can apply for up to two \$40 coupons per household by calling 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), by going online at www.dtv2009.gov or by mailing their application to PO Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000. Coupons will be mailed to requesters.

7. Where can I use my coupons?

When the coupon is mailed to you, it will include an insert with a list of nearby participating retailers. You can expect to buy TV converter boxes and use your coupons at retail stores where you would normally buy consumer electronics products. You can also go online at www.dtv2009.gov, enter your zip code, and locate participating retailers on a map.

8. How do I install a TV converter box?

Converter boxes plug into TV sets, either in the back or front, depending on your TV. You will still need your antenna, which works with the TV converter box. Each TV converter box will come with installation instructions from the manufacturer. You should be able to install the converter box using the instructions provided by the manufacturer. For specific questions, you should ask your retailer or call the manufacturer's technical support hotline. A generic "Quick Start Guide" and installation video are available at www.DigitalTips.org.



9. Why is the digital transition happening?

Broadcasters are transitioning to digital to provide important benefits to consumers. Because digital broadcasting is more efficient, broadcasters require less of the airwaves to provide a better television viewing experience. Once the DTV transition is completed, some television channels will be turned over to fire and police departments for emergency communication and others will be auctioned to companies to provide new wireless services.

10. What is NTIA's role in the transition?

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is operating the TV Converter Box Coupon Program at the direction of Congress.

11. Will the transition affect me?

You will need to take action before February 17, 2009 if you currently watch TV on an analog TV set that is not connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service. If you own a television with a digital tuner or subscribe to a pay TV service, you will likely continue to receive TV programming as usual after the transition.

12. How do I know if I have an analog or a digital TV?

What you need to know is whether your TV set has something called a "digital tuner" already built in. If it does, your TV set will work after February 17, 2009. The best way to determine whether your TV set has a digital tuner built in is to consult your owner's manual. If that's not possible, you may be able to look up information about your TV set on the manufacturer's website. Or, you can take an up-close look at your TV set. In any case, you're trying to find out if your set has an input connection labeled "digital input" or "ATSC" (for Advanced Television Systems Committee, which is the DTV format).

Here are some general guidelines that may help: If you bought your TV set before 1998, it probably doesn't have a digital tuner at all. Almost every TV set made before 1998 was a traditional "analog" set. If you bought a big-screen, projection TV between 1998 and 2004, it may have a built-in digital tuner inside. But chances aren't great. Only a limited percentage of projection TV sets (and generally only those 42 inches in diameter or larger) included digital tuners before 2004.

If you purchased a new TV set since 2004, your chances of having a built-in digital tuner improve dramatically. Starting in 2004, many of the TV sets sold at popular electronics stores feature digital tuners that will work after February 17, 2009. But it's not a sure thing. Even some of the newer TV sets are purely display monitors that lack the internal circuitry needed to pick up digital broadcasts. Usually these sets have been advertised as "HD-ready" or "HDTV monitor" sets. That means they can display digital and high-definition signals, but they need help getting those signals in the first place. You'll still need a special converter or a cable TV connection.

13. I'm a cable customer. Will I be affected by the transition?

Cable and satellite subscribers should check with their providers before February 17, 2009, to see how they are handling the transition. TVs connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service will not require a TV converter box from this program.

14. I live in a community with translator and low-power television service. Do I need to take action before February 17, 2009?

Translator and low-power television stations are not required to go all-digital after February 17, 2009. Viewers of these broadcast stations should contact their station for details. As these stations go digital, consumers will need to take action to continue to receive their free TV with an antenna and may want to consider applying for TV converter box coupons between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, because after that date, coupons will no longer be available.



Consumer Options

15. What should I do to be ready for the television transition?

Analog television sets receiving free TV using an antenna will not work after February 17, 2009. Television viewers with these sets that are not connected to a pay TV service will need to take action before February 17, 2009, to ensure their TV sets continue to work. Consumers have a variety of options.

Options to explore include:

1. Keeping your existing analog TV and purchasing a TV converter box. A converter box plugs into your TV and will keep it working after Feb. 17, 2009. It is expected to cost between \$40 and \$70 and be available in early 2008, or
2. Connect to cable, satellite or other pay service, or
3. Purchase a television with a digital tuner.

If you're not sure what to do, take a quick quiz to help you figure out your options at www.DTVTransition.org.

16. Where can I purchase a converter box?

The list of certified retailers will be on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program website at www.DTV2009.gov and retailer website (www.ntiadtv.gov) when coupon distribution begins. Consumers will receive a list of nearby participating retailers when their coupons arrive by mail.

17. Will I need to buy a new television after February 17, 2009?

No, you will not need to get rid of your analog TV after February 17, 2009. If you receive your TV programs for free using an antenna—that is, your TV set is not connected to cable, satellite, or other pay TV service—you can purchase a TV converter box and plug it into your existing TV set to continue to receive TV programs after February 17, 2009.

18. Do I need a converter box if I have cable or satellite?

TVs connected to cable, satellite, or other pay services do not require a TV converter box from this program to receive programs after February 17, 2009. Check with your cable or satellite provider to determine how they will support your analog set after February 17, 2009.

19. Will I still need an antenna to receive programming?

Yes. If you currently use an antenna to receive your over-the-air programming, you will still need it after you install a converter box. In some cases, TV viewers may need a new antenna. For help choosing an antenna in order to receive your free, local broadcast TV channels, visit www.antennaweb.org.

Converter Box Options

20. How much do I have to pay for a TV converter box?

When TV converter boxes are available, retail stores will set the price. TV converter boxes are expected to cost between \$40 and \$70. The Federal Government permits each U.S. household up to two \$40 coupons to help pay for the cost of the converter box. After applying the coupon, participating retailers will charge consumers the remaining balance of between \$10 and \$30.

21. When can I buy a TV converter box?

TV converter boxes are expected to be available in early 2008 at retailers where you would normally buy consumer electronics products. Before shopping for your converter box, you might want to call ahead to make sure retailers have converter boxes available.



22. What is meant by an “eligible” TV converter box?

TV converter box models must meet technical and performance standards determined by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in order to qualify for the Coupon Program. A list of eligible make and model numbers for purchase with the coupon can be found at our website, www.dtv2009.gov.

23. Which manufacturers are making the TV converter boxes? Are there differences?

See a complete list of eligible TV converter boxes on our website at www.dtv2009.gov. TV converter box features may vary depending on the brand; however all models will allow your analog TV to continue to operate after February 17, 2009. The best way to get information on individual converter boxes is to visit the manufacturer’s website—or ask a customer service specialist at a store that sells them.

24. Does someone have to come into my home to install the converter box?

No, you should be able to install the converter box yourself using the instructions provided by the manufacturer. For specific questions, you should call the manufacturer’s technical support hotline or ask your retailer. The NTIA program does not provide technical support.

25. How big is the converter box?

Converter boxes are about the size of a paperback book. Most will fit on top of a small to medium TV set.

26. Can I use the converter box along with my cable box?

No. Converter boxes from this program work only with over-the-air broadcast television signals, not cable or satellite service.

27. Will I receive Closed Captioning through a converter?

Yes. Manufacturers of converters are required to provide Closed Captioning for display on your television.

28. Do I need to purchase a TV converter box that is the same brand as my TV? No.

29. I have a handheld or battery-powered TV. Will this work after February 17, 2009? Can I connect it to a TV converter box? Generally not.

30. Will my VCR or DVD player still work once I plug my converter box into my TV?

The analog equipment you currently use will continue to work with (output to) your analog TV set just as before, but they will not be able to receive over-the-air programming without the TV converter box. Attach the converter to your VCR, TiVo, DVD-R, etc. instead of hooking it directly to your TV.

31. Can I start using my TV converter box now or do I need to wait until after February 17, 2009 for it to work?

Consumers can begin enjoying the benefits of digital television today. Because most full-power stations are currently broadcasting both in digital and analog, viewers can plug in their converter boxes and generally receive a clearer picture and “multicast” channels, where they are available.

32. Will I receive High-Definition TV with a converter box?

No. Analog televisions are not capable of displaying High-Definition resolution, but the picture will generally be better with a TV converter box. If you want to view High-Definition TV, then you will need one of the newer sets rated for “High-Definition” resolution.

Coupon Program: Getting a Coupon

33. When can I apply for my coupons?

You can apply for a coupon between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, while supplies last.

34. How do I request a coupon?

Between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, you can request a coupon while supplies last in one of four ways:

- Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov
- Call the Coupon Program 24-hour hotline **1-888-DTV-2009** (1-888-388-2009).
- Mail a coupon application to: PO BOX 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000
- Fax a coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632)
- Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English/TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish/TTY). TTY Service is available from 9 AM – 9PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.



The consumer contact center will operate in six languages in addition to English: French, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. The contact center will be accessible for hearing-impaired persons through a TTY number. The contact center and website can help answer questions you may have about obtaining and redeeming coupons, checking the status of your coupon request, and other issues.

35. Are coupon applications available any place else such as the library or grocery store?

NTIA is working with its partners to make applications available in the places where it makes the most sense for each community. The easiest way to apply is to call 1-888-388-2009, or, if you have Internet, apply online at www.dtv2009.gov. If you don't have a computer, your local library probably has computer terminals for public use.

36. Will retailers make coupon applications available in their stores?

Some retailers may offer coupon application forms at their stores. Retailers, however, cannot provide the coupons; consumers must request them from the Government. The decision to provide applications is up to each retailer. The easiest way to apply is to call 1-888-388-2009, or, if you have Internet access, apply online at www.dtv2009.gov.

37. When will I get my coupons?

We began mailing Coupons in late February. Coupons are being sent based on the date of application, in the order in which the application was received. They are being mailed on a staggered basis, not all at once. Updates about timing of coupon distribution are available at www.DTV2009.gov.

38. What will the TV converter box coupon look like?

Coupons will look like plastic credit cards or gift cards used widely in the retail industry. Unlike gift cards, TV converter box coupons will carry no stored value and can only be used towards the purchase of eligible TV converter boxes.

39. Are all consumers eligible for the coupon program?

Yes, but supplies are limited. There are 22.25 million coupons available to all U.S. households. Once those coupons have been used, there are an additional 11.25 million coupons available only to households that solely receive their TV broadcasts over-the-air using an antenna. Households with TVs connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service are not eligible for this second batch of coupons. Consumers can apply for coupons until March 31, 2009, or until the funds are exhausted.

40. How many coupons can I request?

Each household can request a maximum of two coupons. Each coupon may be applied towards the purchase of a single converter box. The coupons can be ordered one at a time or both at the same time.



41. What information do I need to provide the government to request my coupons?

The TV converter box coupon application requires that you provide your name, household address, number of coupons requested (maximum of two) and whether you subscribe to cable, satellite or other pay television service.

42. Will the government use my name and address for other purposes?

No. Your personal information is protected under privacy laws and will not be sold or used for other purposes other than administering the NTIA Coupon Program.

43. Are nursing homes, group homes and other institutions eligible for coupons?

Applicants must meet the Census definition of a household as consisting of "all persons who currently occupy a house, apartment, mobile home, group of rooms, or single room that is occupied as separate living quarters and has a separate U.S. postal address." A household is defined as separate living quarters with a separate U.S. postal address. This definition includes all households located in U.S. Territories, but does not include Post Office Boxes.

44. Can I apply for someone who is unable to apply for themselves, such as an elderly parent?

Yes, but you will need to use their home address which will be validated for eligibility. Only two coupons can be used per U.S. household address, and the coupons are intended for the resident of that household.

45. What if I receive my mail at a Post Office Box?

The government can mail coupons to Post Office boxes in areas without home mail delivery. Post Office boxes will be accepted only for households on Indian reservations, Alaskan Native villages and other rural areas. The government may request additional information to validate the physical location of these households.

Using a Coupon

46. If I can't find a retailer in my area that carries TV converter boxes, can I purchase one online?

Check the TV Converter Box Coupon Program website to see a list of participating online retailers at www.dtv2009.gov

47. Can I use my coupons to purchase any TV converter box?

No. The government will provide a list of coupon-eligible converter boxes and participating retailers on its website, www.dtv2009.gov. You may also ask participating retailers whether TV converter boxes in their stores can be purchased with the \$40 government coupon.

48. Can I use my coupon to purchase other consumer electronics products, such as DVD recorders or televisions?

No. Coupons will be electronically coded to be used only for purchases of coupon-eligible converter boxes.

49. Can I use my coupon to get \$40 off a TV converter box I've already purchased?

No. Coupons must be presented at the point of sale and must be redeemed at the time TV converter boxes are purchased.

50. What happens to my coupon after I use it?

It is instantly deactivated and cannot be used again. Stores may keep them or you can throw them away. You should keep your receipt and a record of your coupon number in case you decide to exchange or return the converter box.



51. Can I replace a lost or stolen coupon?

No. Coupons cannot be reissued. If you have requested one coupon, you may be eligible to receive another. If both coupons have been lost or stolen, or you have requested both coupons, used one, and the other coupon is lost or stolen, by law we are unable to reissue coupon replacements.

52. Can I use both coupons toward the purchase of one converter box?

No. Only one coupon can be used per coupon-eligible converter box.

53. Can coupons be used by other members of a household?

Yes. Coupons can be redeemed by anyone in your household. However, only two coupons can be issued per household regardless of the number of occupants or families.

54. Can I transfer the coupon to someone else?

No, but anyone from your household can redeem the coupons when purchasing a TV converter box from a certified retailer.

55. Do the coupons have cash value? No. The coupon has no cash value.

56. Can coupons be sold? No. It is illegal to sell, duplicate or tamper with the coupon.

57. Can a retailer refuse to accept the coupons?

Retailers that are not participating in the Coupon Program will not be able to accept the coupons. Only retailers certified by the NTIA will accept the coupons. A list of certified retailers in your area can be found on the program website at www.dtv2009.gov.

58. How long are coupons active?

Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed. Each coupon has an expiration date printed on it.

59. How long should I wait before checking on the status of my coupon?

We began mailing Coupons in late February. Coupons are being sent based on the date of application, in the order in which the application was received. They are being mailed on a staggered basis, not all at once. Updates about timing of coupon distribution are available at www.DTV2009.gov. Please allow three weeks after you applied before contacting us to check on the status of your application if you have not received your coupons.

60. If I used the coupon to buy a TV converter box and then return it for credit with the retailer, can I use that credit for any other purchase at the retailer?

You will not be able to receive cash or credit for the coupon amount, but you can receive cash or credit for any amount you paid out of pocket, if the store policy permits returns or exchanges.

61. Can I exchange my TV converter box for another one?

If the retail store permits exchanges, you can exchange the converter you purchased for another coupon-eligible converter box.

62. If a coupon expires before it is used, can a consumer re-apply?

If a consumer requests only one coupon and it expires before it is used, then they can apply for a second coupon. Once two coupons have been issued to that household, the consumer will no longer be eligible to request any more coupons. Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed.

63. Can coupons be used toward the price of an upgraded converter box (for example, a box that includes a DVR)?

No. Coupons are only valid for eligible converter boxes. The intent of the program is to allow consumers to continue to view TV over-the-air on the same TV they used prior to the transition, not to enable upgrades in technology.



64. Can a coupon be used to pay for sales tax?

No. The \$40 coupon can only be used towards the price of an eligible TV converter box, excluding any sales tax.

65. Can a consumer purchase two TV converter boxes with two coupons in a single transaction?

Yes, if the consumer is purchasing two TV converter boxes with two valid coupons.

66. What is the last day to redeem coupons?

Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed and will have the expiration date printed on the coupon. The last day to apply for coupons is March 31, 2009, or until supplies are exhausted.

67. If the TV converter box costs less than \$40, can I get cash back or use the difference for another purpose?

No, the coupon can only be used for the price of an eligible converter box. Consumers will not get change back. If the converter box is priced below \$40, then consumers will only pay any applicable sales tax.

68. If the converter box is more than \$40, how can the consumer pay the difference?

The consumer may pay the difference with any other form of payment acceptable to the retailer. Two coupons may not be combined towards the purchase of a single converter box.

69. What happens if a consumer purchases more than one converter box and has only one coupon?

Consumers may purchase as many converter boxes as they choose. However, a single coupon can only be used to purchase one coupon-eligible converter box. If the consumer decides to purchase additional converter boxes, they must pay the full cost.

70. Can two coupons be combined towards the purchase of a single converter box? No.

Other

71. Who runs the Coupon Program website, www.dtv2009.gov?

The website is run under the supervision of the Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

72. What is the NTIA?

The **N**ational **T**elecommunications and **I**nformation **A**dministration (NTIA), part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is the Federal government agency in charge of administering the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. More information on the NTIA can be found at www.ntia.doc.gov.

73. Who do I contact to comment on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program?

To comment on the Coupon Program, you may contact us in writing at the following address:

DTV 2009 Coupon Program Comments
PO BOX 2000
Portland, OR 97208-2000

74. Where can I find out more information about the digital transition?

There are several useful websites you can visit:

- Coupon Program www.dtv2009.gov administered by NTIA

- Private sector - Digital TV transition www.dtvtransition.org administered by the DTV Transition Coalition
- Government – Digital TV transition www.dtv.gov administered by the Federal Communications Commission
- Retailer participation – www.ntiadtvtv.gov administered by NTIA for retailers

