



Digital Television Switchover Media Briefing

digitaluk.co.uk/press

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about **switchover**

What is digital TV switchover?

Switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels broadcast from more than a thousand transmitter sites are being switched off region by region and replaced with Freeview digital TV and radio services.

Why is it happening?

Households in many parts of the UK are currently unable to receive Freeview services. Switching off the existing analogue broadcasting system will create the capacity necessary to extend coverage to the whole country. Broadcasting in digital format is also a more efficient way to transmit television signals and will free up airwaves for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband and mobile television.

What is Digital UK?

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation set up by the main UK broadcasters to implement digital switchover. The company, launched in September 2005, is jointly owned and funded by the public-service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and S4C), and digital multiplex operators SDN and Arqiva. Digital UK is running a £148m, seven-year national and regional information campaign and provides information to the public via an advice line (08546 50 50 50) and website (digitaluk.co.uk).

What happens at switchover and what do viewers need to do?

Switchover is a two-stage process. At stage one, BBC Two will cease broadcasting in analogue and BBC digital channels will become available for the first time to viewers watching local 'relay' transmitters. At stage two, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital services. **All Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV viewers will need to retune their equipment at both stages of switchover.**

Most people have already converted their main TV to digital. Viewers must ensure that their TVs are capable of receiving a digital signal in order to continue receiving television services after switchover. Virtually any TV, even black and white ones, can be converted with a digital box. Anyone buying new TV equipment should look for the 'digital tick' logo (above) which identifies equipment designed to work through switchover.¹



¹ The 'digital tick' is a Government-owned legally protected mark that may only be used by licensed companies in conjunction with the guidelines at digitaluk.co.uk/logoguidelines.

What are the different ways to get digital TV?

There are three main options for going digital:

- **Convert your existing TV with a digital set-top box**
(eg *Freeview, Top Up TV, BT Vision**)
- **Get a service like satellite or cable TV installed for you**
(eg *Sky, Freesat, Virgin Media, Wight Cable or SmallWorld*)
- **Get a new TV with digital built-in** (eg *Freeview, Freesat*)

*Requires broadband connection

A postcode checker on the Digital UK website (digitaluk.co.uk) tells viewers which options are available in their area now and after switchover.

How much does digital television cost?

For those getting digital for the first time or who are converting secondary sets around the home, the cost will vary according to the number of TVs and method of conversion. It's estimated that 5-10 per cent of households may need to replace damaged aerials in order to receive Freeview signals.

- Freeview digital boxes start from around £20
- Digital televisions start from around £150
- Freesat from Sky costs approximately £175 (includes installation)
- Freesat from the BBC/ITV costs from £30 for a digital box, £450 for a digital TV. Satellite dish installation (if required) from £80
- Subscriptions (e.g. Sky, Virgin, Top Up TV) start from approximately £10 per month
- Digital television recorders cost from around £80
- A standard new roof aerial normally costs £60-180

When is switchover happening?

The UK's first switchover took place in Copeland, Cumbria (including the town of Whitehaven) in November 2007. The main programme began in 2008, with Border becoming the first fully digital TV region in July 2009. Wales, Scotland and the Channel Islands have now completed switchover, along with the West Country, West, Granada, Yorkshire, Central and Anglia TV regions in England. The process will continue in each TV region until 2012 (see map).



What channels will viewers get?

Switchover will make Freeview television channels available across the UK. Viewers choosing to get digital television this way will be able to receive BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1 (STV in Scotland), Channel 4 (and S4C in Wales) and Channel 5 plus a range of digital channels and services free via an aerial. Channel availability depends on where you live and which transmitter you get your signal from. Broadcasters may also change their line-up from time to time. Most households will be able to receive more than 40 Freeview channels via an aerial; around 15 of the most popular channels will be available elsewhere (see the table below for a region by region breakdown).

Viewers can find out more about digital TV options and the Freeview channels available in their area by visiting digitaluk.co.uk or calling Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50.

TV Region	Percentage of households that can receive digital TV via an aerial before switchover	Percentage of households able to receive more than 40 Freeview channels after switchover	Percentage of households able to receive approximately 15 Freeview channels after switchover
Anglia	57%	86%	96%
Border	51%	53%	98%
Central	76%	98%	99%
Granada	94%	97%	99%
London	88%	95%	99%
Meridian	61%	84%	97%
STV Central	91%	93%	99%
STV North	70%	79%	97%
Tyne Tees	91%	96%	99%
Northern Ireland	66%	78%	98%
Wales	63%	73%	98%
West	81%	94%	99%
Westcountry	63%	74%	96%
Yorkshire	83%	97%	99%
UK total	73%	90%	98.5%

Source: Ofcom, September 2008.

What other equipment is affected by switchover?

After switchover, analogue recorders will still be able to play tapes and discs but will need to be connected to a digital television or one which has been converted with a digital box in order to record programmes. They will also lose their independent recording function, ie they will only be able to record the digital channel being watched. Viewers updating their recording equipment are recommended to look for a digital DVD recorder or a digital TV recorder which stores programmes on a hard disk and can pause or rewind live TV.

The Freeview signal will be improved at switchover in each region to make it less susceptible to interference and picture break-up. Some early digital televisions and digital boxes – in particular ON Digital (and ITV Digital) devices – are not compatible with this signal. Owners of affected digital boxes are advised to replace them with a product carrying the 'digital tick'. Affected televisions can be upgraded using a digital box.

A list of affected products is available at digitaluk.co.uk/2kequipment.

How do Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV viewers retune?

These instructions are a guide – each product works slightly differently. The viewer's instruction manual will explain the process for each particular product.

- Switch on your digital box or digital television
- Press 'menu' on the remote control
- Select 'set up' or 'installation'
- Select 'first time installation' (sometimes called 'factory reset, full retune or 'default settings')
- Press "OK" if your equipment asks if you want to delete all your channels - this is normal.
- Channels will be automatically installed. This may take a few minutes; your equipment may shut down and restart.

For more information on retuning, viewers can visit digitaluk.co.uk/retuning

Do viewers need HD TV equipment for switchover?

No. There's no need to buy HD equipment for digital switchover. Viewers choosing to do so should make sure it carries the 'digital tick' logo. HD services are currently available on satellite and cable, and via Freeview in some areas.

What help is available?

There is a range of switchover help available. Digital UK co-ordinates public information campaigns in each region during the lead up to switchover. It also operates an advice line (08456 50 50 50), website (digitaluk.co.uk) and postcode checker which informs viewers about the digital television services available in their area.

Digital UK also works with a range of organisations which provide information about digital television to consumers. They include broadcasters, digital platform operators, retailers and local authorities. In addition, it has formed a partnership with a consortium of national charities, including Age UK, which will provide information and advice to people who might need some extra help.

The **Switchover Help Scheme** has been established by the BBC to offer practical assistance at the time of switchover to approximately seven million households. You are eligible for the scheme if you:



- are aged 75 years or over; or
- have lived in a care home for six months or more; or
- get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or
- are registered blind or partially sighted

Eligible households will be offered the following:

- equipment to convert one television set
- installation and demonstration of equipment
- follow-up support

There will be a fee of £40 for the help. For eligible claimants who also receive income support, job seeker's allowance or pension credit, the help will be provided free.

For more information about the Switchover Help Scheme, visit helpscheme.co.uk

some**numbers**

Digital television switchover is the biggest change to television since the introduction of colour. Here are some statistics illustrating the scale of the project.

- 60m** Estimated number of television sets in the UK
- 23.8m** Number of UK households which have digital TV on their main set
- 1,154** Number of TV television transmitter sites around the country which will be upgraded for switchover
- 85%** Proportion of UK adults aware of digital switchover in TV regions yet to switch
- 10.1m** Number of households watching Freeview on their main TV
- 11.3m** Number of households watching digital satellite TV
- 3.4m** Number of households subscribing to digital cable TV
- £5-10bn** Estimated benefit to the UK economy from spectrum released by switching off analogue TV signals
- 7m** Number of households in the UK estimated to be eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme

(Sources: Digital UK Switchover Tracker Survey; Ofcom Digital Progress Report; Gfk Retail and Technology)

your**contacts**

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**NOTE: These contacts are strictly for use by members of the media only.
If you are a member of the public, please visit digitaluk.co.uk
or ring 08456 50 50 50. This number can also be used for publication.**

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