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# READY NET GO ... NEWS

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## Tip of the Month

Since more and more people are purchasing HDTVs, they want hardware and media that can take advantage of the new digital technology. So as 2008 comes to a close, here are some tips on entertainment options.

### Need a new DVD player?

If you're in the market for a new DVD player, **Blu-ray** is a good option as it will play both standard DVDs as well as Blu-ray (high definition) discs.

**TIP:** For best video and audio playback, use an **HDMI cable** to attach your Blu-ray or DVD player to your TV. If you don't have an HDMI cable or port, use component cables.

### Tired of recording shows to VHS?

If you're still in the old technology camp of recording TV shows on your VCR, now may be a good time to upgrade to a **DVD Recorder**. Instead of VHS tapes, a DVD Recorder will record to DVD±R/RW media. Just think, no more rewinding, immediate access to scenes and additional footage options. Aah, progress ....

### Can't deal with tapes or discs anymore?

If you want to forgo disks entirely, you can migrate to **TiVo** which is a digital solution that records TV shows to a hard drive for playback. In fact, any **DVR (digital video recorder)** solution will work. Many satellite and cable companies will provide a DVR/set-top box with paid service. Check out our December 2006 newsletter for more information or give us a call for more details.

## **The Digital TV Transition Are you ready?**

On Feb 17, 2009, cable companies around the nation will transition from analog to digital television signals. Digital signals provide much better quality which consumers want and free up much needed bandwidth which the government and businesses want. So will the DTV transition affect you?

The primary people this will affect are those who watch TV with a rooftop antenna or "rabbit ears" on top of their television. If you pay for cable or satellite service and you live in the Philadelphia area or outlying areas, you won't need to do anything. The cable companies will convert the digital signal to analog for you (for the time being that is – cable companies are not mandated to stop transmitting analog signals but they probably will as more people buy new TVs that are digital ready).

If you currently don't pay and don't want to start paying for cable or satellite service, you will need to purchase a **digital converter box** for each of your analog-only TVs. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), is providing 2 - \$40 vouchers per household for the purchase of a digital converter box. Digital converter boxes are priced between \$40-\$70 and are sold at major retailers and online stores.

To receive your voucher, go to: <https://www.dtv2009.gov/Options.aspx>. There are multiple ways to submit your application (via phone, fax or mail).

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## **WWW (Websites Worth Watching)**

1. [www.pricegrabber.com](http://www.pricegrabber.com) – Looking for the best price on retail goods? Check out this shopping comparison site for the best deal.
2. [www.retailmenot.com](http://www.retailmenot.com) – Want a coupon code for online shopping? Check here for user submitted coupon codes for popular retailers
3. [www.dealnews.com](http://www.dealnews.com) – Another site for coupons and special deals from local stores and online retailers.

**Additional information:**

- If you purchased an electronic device (TV, VCR, DVD player, etc.) **after March 1, 2007**, by law it must include a digital (ATSC) tuner or it must be labeled as containing only an analog (NTSC) tuner. Since there are many different types of digital TVs, as long as your TV has a digital tuner, you will not be affected by the transition.
- If you wish to receive broadcasts in High-Definition (HD), your TV must have HD capabilities such as 720p, 1080i or 1080p resolution. If your TV does not have this capability, you will not benefit from paying for or receiving HD broadcasts.
- If you have an HDTV and an antenna, either on your roof or inside your home, you may already be able to pick up over-the-air HD broadcasts. Analog stations are listed like this - 2, 10, 65 while Digital TV stations are listed as decimals such as 2.1, 10.1, and 65.7. The digital spectrum allows for more bandwidth so multiple stations are possible with each channel. As you channel search, if the HD broadcasts are nearby, these digital channels will show up and you may select them when you're searching for stations.
- Digital cable is not the same as HDTV programming. **HDTV reception requires two components:** 1) high definition reception either through an HDTV antenna (accessing specific channels) or through a cable or satellite company (paid service) and 2) a TV that has HDTV hardware.
- Only full power broadcast stations are required to go digital on Feb 17, 2009. Other channels such as CNN, Lifetime, MSNBC are not required to broadcast in the digital format.
- If cable companies stop broadcasting analog signals (unlikely for the next couple of years) and you currently pay for service for your analog TV, you may need a cable set-top box to convert the digital signals (from the cable company) to analog signals (that your TV can process). The set-top box is different than the analog-to-digital converter box which requires using an external antenna to receive over-the-air broadcasts. If you don't have an antenna on your roof, you may need a set-top box to receive and decode signals. The set-top box would be provided by the cable company. [Note: Consumers who subscribe to satellite service (Dish Network or DirectTV) currently need set-top boxes in order to receive the company's signals. The set-top box allows you to view only those channels for which you pay.]
- If you have an HDTV and don't want to pay for HD programming from your cable or satellite provider, you can purchase an HD antenna and access over-the-air HD broadcasts. Currently, there are fewer HD channels available compared to analog channels but more will be converted in the future. So, depending on where you live, if there is a particular channel you want and it is not being broadcast in HD, you may need to pay for service in order to watch that channel. To find out which stations are broadcast in HD in your area, go to: <http://www.antennaweb.org>
- **IMPORTANT:** If you purchase, configure and start watching an HDTV before the February 17 deadline, you will have to conduct a channel search after this date in order to pick up any new channels that come online. The process won't happen automatically.

**Remember:** If you currently pay for service, you don't have to do anything. Your TV will still work after February 17, 2009. If, however, you watch over-the-air broadcasts on your TV, then you will need a converter box for each analog-only TV you have.