

Your Tube

Maybe you are looking forward to watching the spring television season on a new 60-inch. Or perhaps you want to catch every moment of March Madness in ultra high-definition.

Whatever the reason, it's never been a better time to buy a new TV. That being said, the sheer number of models and features available can get confusing, fast. So this issue's column is all about finding the right HDTV for your budget and lifestyle.

▶ Decide what size is right for you

The first step is determining what size TV to buy based on how much space you have. The last thing you want is to either be so close to an oversized TV that you begin to see the pixels, or so far away from a too-small TV that you begin losing detail. A 20-to 32-inch TV is usually perfect for a bedroom or small apartment, while a 42-to 55-inch inch screen will work well in an average-size living room. Remember that the larger the screen, the further away you need to sit. If you want to get the most out of a 70-inch screen, you need a big enough room that you have at least 8 feet (preferably 13-14 feet) of space between the TV and the couch.

Another factor to consider is whether you want a giant screen for entertaining guests, or if you should save money and buy a regular-sized model for everyday viewing. If you decide to go bigger, you will have more options when it comes to HD quality or 3-D features. But even smaller TVs can offer a top-notch picture and built-in services like Netflix.

▶ Choose your display

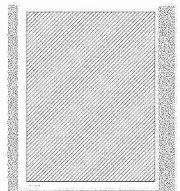
The next thing to consider is what kind of display you want. LED (Light Emitting Diode), plasma, and 4K are the most popular displays on the market now. Just to avoid confusion, LEDs are also known as LED-LCDs.

LED TVs offer a crisp, bright picture that makes them perfect for watching TV in a well-lit room. Additionally, LEDs tend to be slimmer than other displays and use less power. If you are looking for a TV smaller than 30", then an LED is probably your best choice. While higher-end LEDs offer excellent picture quality, they are not as good as plasmas when it comes to showing dark contrasts. Also, cheaper LED models can suffer from motion blur.

If you enjoy watching movies or playing games, you will want to consider plasma. That's because a Plasma model typically offers deep shades of black and therefore better contrast than LEDs. This is important if you want to recreate a movie theater experience.

Plasmas also capture rapid motion better than LEDs, which makes them perfect for video gaming or watching fast-paced sports. Of course there are several drawbacks to consider when buying a plasma. First, they are not as bright as LEDs and are therefore more suitable for darkened rooms. Secondly, there are fewer Plasma models on the market than LEDs and some experts predict that this technology is on the way out. Finally, it's recommended that you buy a medium- to large-size screen to get the most out of a plasma display.

If you're looking to be an early adopter or have a sizable budget, 4K may be what you're looking for. These Ultra HD displays deliver four times the picture resolution of a comparable LED model. As you probably already guessed, 4K models command a premium price. While you can find bargain models for \$500, most mid-size 4K TVs cost between \$2,000 and \$6,000 and top models can go for as much as \$40K. Also, you won't really notice the difference in picture resolution unless you're watching a program or movie in Ultra HD. Netflix and Amazon have announced they will start offering Ultra HD streaming this year, but you probably won't see your favorite movies on 4K Blu-ray until 2015 at the earliest.



▶ Smart TVs, 3D and more

Once you've decided upon your TV's size and display, it's time to take a look at what extra features you want. You can find numerous "Smart TVs" that feature built-in streaming services like Hulu and Netflix, as well as Wi-Fi for surfing the Internet. Make sure when buying a Smart TV that the particular model offers the services you really want. Also, you can still save money by buying a regular TV and using your DVD player, gaming console, or a device like Google Chromecast to stream media.

More TVs now come with 3-D capabilities, but here's what to keep in mind before buying one. First, you will also need a 3-D Blu-ray player and 3-D glasses. Secondly, there are currently only a few hundred Blu-ray movies available and only a handful of 3-D TV channels to pick from. In other words, 3-D may be a nice feature but it's not necessarily worth paying a lot of extra money for.



VIZIO E-Series 60"
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▶ What's around the corner

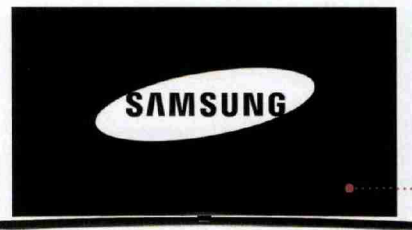
Finally, gaming fans should keep an eye on the 2014 Sony Bravia which will be able to stream best-selling PlayStation games without the need for a console.

It's worth mentioning that there are some fascinating new trends in TVs that will likely become more popular in the next few years. OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode) is a major breakthrough for TV displays. OLEDs feature pixels made of organic molecules that light up individually, creating a nearly perfect picture. They are also energy-efficient and super-light. The cheaper models start around \$9,000, so it may be a few years before they become affordable to the average customers.

The other new trend are curved TVs designed to create a surround theater effect similar to IMAX screens. These screens won't be available on the mass market anytime soon, but it's an interesting future option for movie buffs.

Hopefully these tips will help you make sense of all the different options

and models available on the market. Remember – the perfect TV isn't necessarily the one with the biggest price tag or the most features but rather the one that best meets your needs.



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