



An Extended Guide · No. 1036

# Free Streaming Roundup

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Watch more, pay nothing

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## A Note From Bill

You do not have to pay two hundred dollars a month to watch good television. There are streaming services that are genuinely free, no credit card and no sign-up, and I wrote this guide to show you which ones are worth your time and how to get them running.

I am Bill. I am a one-person shop in Atwater, and I help seniors, families, and small businesses across Portage County keep their everyday tech working. Folks are often stunned at how much they can watch for nothing once the cable bill is gone. The part that trips people up is telling the truly free services from the ones that want your card. We will sort that out together.

### What's in this guide

- The free services worth watching, like Tubi and Pluto TV
- The difference between live channels and on-demand movies
- What you need to start, and a good device under thirty dollars
- The trade-off you make when a service is free
- A simple plan to replace a big cable bill for very little

#### ★ Feeling stuck? That is what I am here for.

If setting up free streaming has you frustrated, I will come out and sort it. Flat \$99 first visit, 30-day follow-up included. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

## The 60-Second Version

Short on time? Here is the whole story in a few checkmarks. Read these and you already know most of what matters.

- ❑ Free streaming means watching movies and shows at no cost, paid for by short ads instead of your wallet.
- ❑ Tubi has tens of thousands of free movies and shows, no account needed.
- ❑ Pluto TV gives you hundreds of live, cable-style channels for free.
- ❑ The Roku Channel, Crackle, Plex, PBS, and Local Now are all free too.
- ❑ Some Freevee favorites like Jury Duty are now free inside Prime Video.
- ❑ A streaming stick under thirty dollars opens all of these on any TV.
- ❑ The trade-off for free is ads, not a monthly bill.

### ✓ You do not need all of them.

Pick two or three services that match what you like to watch. You can always add more later, and every one of them is free to try.

## What Free Streaming Actually Means

Let me start with plain words, because free means something specific here and it is worth understanding before we go further.

Free streaming services let you watch movies and shows over your internet at no cost. They pay their bills by showing short commercials, the way regular broadcast television always has, instead of charging you a monthly fee. That is the whole trade. No credit card, no sign-up, and no surprise bill at the end of the month. The picture and the movies are real; you just sit through a few ads.

- You watch over your home internet, on a TV, phone, or tablet.
- The service earns money from ads, so you do not pay.
- Most need no account and no credit card at all.
- The catch is commercials, not a hidden fee.

### **! Truly free asks for nothing up front.**

If a so-called free service wants your credit card number before you can watch anything, be careful. The genuinely free ones in this guide do not need it.

## What You Need To Get Started

Getting into free streaming takes very little. Odds are you already own most of it. Here is the short list.

- Home internet, the faster the better, but most any home plan works.
- A way to get apps onto your TV, either a smart TV or a small streaming device that plugs into it.
- A free app for each service you want, downloaded once.
- A little patience the first time while things get set up.

If your television is a few years old and already connects to the internet, you may have several of these apps built in. If it does not, a small streaming stick adds them all for very little money, and I will cover those in a bit.

### ✓ Strong Wi-Fi makes a big difference.

Streaming leans on your internet. If the picture freezes or turns blocky, the signal near your TV is likely weak. See my guide on extending home Wi-Fi.

## Tubi, the Big Free Library

If you only try one free service, make it Tubi. It is the closest thing to a giant free video store.

Tubi holds tens of thousands of free movies and shows, well over fifty thousand titles, and you do not even need to make an account to start watching. You open the app, browse by category, pick something, and go. It leans heavy on movies, older favorites, and plenty of shows you will recognize. It is owned by a big broadcaster, so it is a real, safe service, not some fly-by-night site.

- Tens of thousands of free movies and shows.
- No account required to start watching.
- Strong on movies and familiar older favorites.
- Runs on nearly every TV, phone, and streaming device.

### ✓ **Make a free account to save your spot.**

You can watch without one, but a free Tubi account remembers where you left off and keeps a list of what you want to watch. Still no credit card needed.

## Pluto TV, Free Live Channels

Pluto TV is for folks who miss the feel of cable, flipping through channels to see what is on. It is free and made to feel familiar.

Pluto TV offers hundreds of live channels arranged in a grid, just like the old cable guide. There are channels for news, old westerns, sitcoms, movies, cooking, and much more, each playing on a schedule you do not control. You do not pick a specific movie; you pick a channel and watch whatever is on, the way television always worked. It also has movies and shows you can start on demand.

- Hundreds of free live channels in a cable-style grid.
- Channels for news, movies, classics, cooking, and more.
- Feels familiar if you grew up flipping through cable.
- Also has on-demand movies and shows when you want a specific title.

### ✓ Great for background watching.

If you like the television just playing while you go about your day, Pluto is perfect. Turn it on, land on a channel, and let it run.

## The Roku Channel

If you own a Roku device or a Roku TV, one of the best free services is already built right in and waiting for you.

The Roku Channel is a free service that comes on every Roku device and Roku-branded television. It gathers free movies, shows, and live channels into one place, so there is nothing extra to install. You do not need a Roku to use it either; it also works through a web browser and other devices. Like the rest, it is supported by ads, so there is no fee.

- Built into every Roku device and Roku TV, nothing to install.
- Free movies, shows, and live channels in one spot.
- Also available on the web and other devices.
- Ad-supported, so there is no monthly cost.

### ✓ Look for it on your home screen.

On a Roku, the Roku Channel is usually right there among your apps. If you cannot find it, I can add it in a moment on a visit.

## Free Shows Inside Prime Video

Some shows people loved on a service called Freevee, like the hit Jury Duty, are now free to watch inside the Prime Video app.

Amazon folded its free service, once called Freevee, into the regular Prime Video app. The good news is that a batch of those shows and movies stayed free, with ads, even if you do not pay for a Prime membership. Jury Duty is the best-known example. You will find these titles marked as free to watch inside the Prime Video app, mixed in with the paid ones, so read the labels.

- Freevee was Amazon's free, ad-supported service.
- It is now part of the regular Prime Video app.
- Some titles, like Jury Duty, are still free with ads.
- Look for the free-to-watch label so you do not pay by mistake.

### **! Watch the labels in Prime Video.**

Prime Video mixes free titles with rentals and purchases. Before you press play, make sure it says free or included, not rent or buy.

## The PBS App

For documentaries, history, and the kind of programs public television is known for, the free PBS app is a quiet gem.

The PBS app lets you watch many public television programs for free, including favorites like Antiques Roadshow and the long documentaries from Ken Burns. A good deal of it is free to everyone; some of the newest episodes ask you to support your local station, which is a donation, not a required fee. If you enjoy thoughtful, calm programming without a lot of noise, this one is for you.

- Free access to many public television programs.
- Home to Antiques Roadshow, Ken Burns films, and more.
- Much of it is free to everyone with no account.
- Supporting your local station unlocks some newer episodes early.

### ✓ A calm change of pace.

If the other services feel loud and busy, PBS is the opposite. It is a nice one to keep for a quiet evening.

## Crackle and Plex

Two more free services round out a good lineup, each with its own personality. Both are free and worth a look.

Crackle is a long-running free service with movies and shows, supported by ads, and it needs no payment. Plex started as a way to organize your own home movies, but it has grown to include a large batch of free movies and free live channels anyone can watch. Between the two, you get even more choices at no cost, and they fill in gaps the bigger services might miss.

- Crackle offers free, ad-supported movies and shows.
- Plex adds free movies and free live channels.
- Neither one charges a fee for the free content.
- Good for widening your choices beyond the main services.

### ✓ Try one at a time.

There is no need to install everything at once. Add Crackle or Plex when you have watched through your first favorites.

## Local Now, for News and Weather

One thing people worry about when they drop cable is losing local news and weather. Local Now helps fill that gap for free.

Local Now is a free service that pulls together local news, weather, and traffic along with a set of free channels. It is not quite the same as your hometown station, but it keeps you connected to headlines and the forecast without a bill. Paired with a good weather app on your phone and an over-the-air antenna for local channels, most folks do not miss cable news at all.

- Free local news, weather, and traffic in one place.
- Includes a set of free channels to browse.
- A handy stand-in when you drop cable.
- Pairs well with a phone weather app for the daily forecast.

### ✓ An antenna brings back local channels.

For your actual hometown stations and their news, a simple indoor antenna pulls them in for free over the air. Ask me about it on a visit.

## Live Channels Versus On-Demand

You will hear two phrases over and over: live channels and on-demand. Knowing the difference makes everything else click.

Live channels play on a schedule you do not control, just like old cable or broadcast television. You land on a channel and watch whatever happens to be on. On-demand means you pick a specific movie or show and it starts right then, and you can pause it. Pluto and Local Now lean live; Tubi and Crackle lean on-demand; several services offer both. Neither is better; they just suit different moods.

- Live means whatever is playing right now on that channel.
- On-demand means you choose the title and it starts at once.
- Live is great for background and browsing.
- On-demand is great when you want one specific thing.

### ✓ Use both, depending on your mood.

Some evenings you want to flip channels; some you want a particular movie. Keeping one of each kind covers you either way.

## Those Free Cable-Style Channels

Those grids of free live channels have a nickname in the business, and understanding them helps you know what to expect.

The free live channels on Pluto, the Roku Channel, and others are built to feel like cable. There are channels devoted to a single old show all day, channels for movies of one type, news channels, and more, all playing on a fixed schedule. Because they are free and ad-supported, you will see commercials, and the lineup can change over time. It is a genuinely good way to have television on without thinking hard about what to pick.

- Channels are themed, sometimes around a single show.
- Everything plays on a set schedule, like broadcast television.
- Expect commercials, since the channels are free.
- The lineup can shift as services add and drop channels.

### ✓ Skip around to find your favorites.

Spend a few minutes browsing the grid the first time and note the channels you like. After that, you will go straight to them.

## A Good Streaming Device Under Thirty Dollars

If your television cannot run these apps on its own, a small streaming stick fixes that for very little money.

A streaming device is a small gadget that plugs into your television and gives it all these apps, even if the TV is older. The budget models from Roku and Amazon Fire TV often cost under thirty dollars, and they carry every service in this guide. You plug it into the back of the TV, connect it to your Wi-Fi once, and you are set. It is the cheapest way to turn an older television into a streaming television.

- A small stick that plugs into your TV's HDMI port.
- Budget Roku and Fire TV models often run under thirty dollars.
- Works on older televisions, not just new smart TVs.
- Carries every free service covered in this guide.

### ★ I will pick and set one up for you.

If you are not sure which device fits your television, I will bring the right one, plug it in, and load your apps on a visit. No guesswork for you.

## Setting Up Your Streaming Device

Setting up a streaming stick is a short, one-time job. Take it one step at a time and you cannot break anything.

- ❑ Plug the device into an open HDMI port on your television.
- ❑ Plug in its power, either to the wall or a USB port on the TV.
- ❑ Switch your TV to that HDMI input using the source or input button.
- ❑ Follow the on-screen steps to join your home Wi-Fi.
- ❑ Open the app store on the device and add the free services you want.

Once it is set up, you simply turn on the TV, switch to that input, and your apps are waiting. After the first time, there is nothing to configure again.

### **! Keep the remote and note the input.**

Write down which HDMI input the device is on, like HDMI 1, and keep the small remote somewhere handy. That saves a lot of confusion later.

## Watching On Your Phone or Tablet

The television is not the only screen. Every one of these free services also runs on a phone or tablet, which is handy in more places than you might think.

You can download the same free apps, Tubi, Pluto, PBS, and the rest, onto a phone or tablet from its app store at no cost. That lets you watch in the waiting room, in bed, or out on the porch, all over your home Wi-Fi or your phone's own connection. Just remember that watching over your phone's cellular data, away from Wi-Fi, uses up your data plan, so lean on Wi-Fi when you can.

- The same free apps work on phones and tablets.
- Add them from your phone or tablet's app store, free.
- Great for watching in bed, waiting rooms, or the porch.
- Use Wi-Fi when you can, to spare your phone's data plan.

### ✓ A tablet makes a fine second television.

If you want to watch in the kitchen or bedroom without buying another TV, a tablet propped on a stand does the job nicely.

## The Trade-Off You Are Making

To be fair, free is not perfect. It helps to know the trade-off going in, so nothing feels like a surprise.

The price of free is commercials. You will see ads during movies and shows, usually shorter and fewer than old cable but present all the same. The newest releases often are not free right away, and the exact lineup can change as services add and drop titles. For most people, a few ads is a fine trade for saving well over a hundred dollars a month, but it is your call to make.

- You will watch commercials, since ads pay the bill.
- Brand-new releases are usually not free right away.
- The lineup of titles can change over time.
- For most folks, the savings far outweigh the ads.

### ✓ Free plus one paid service is a fine mix.

Many people keep all the free services and add just one paid one for new releases. Even then, the bill is a fraction of cable.

## The Low-Cost Combo Strategy

Here is how folks replace a two-hundred-dollar cable bill and still watch plenty, often for around ten dollars a month or even nothing at all.

Start with the free services, which cost nothing: Tubi and Crackle for movies, Pluto and the Roku Channel for live channels, PBS for documentaries, and Local Now for news. That alone is a mountain of television. If there is one paid service your household truly wants, add just that one. The result is a small bill instead of a large one, with no contract and nothing you cannot cancel anytime.

- ❑ Cover movies with Tubi and Crackle, both free.
- ❑ Cover live channels with Pluto and the Roku Channel, both free.
- ❑ Cover news and weather with Local Now and a phone weather app.
- ❑ Add one paid service only if your household really wants it.
- ❑ Cancel or change any paid service anytime, with no contract.

★ **I will build your lineup with you.**

Tell me what you like to watch and I will set up the right mix of free and paid so you keep your shows and drop the big bill. Flat \$99 visit.

## Staying Safe From Fake Free Sites

There is one important warning with free streaming. Some websites pretend to be free but are really traps. Here is how to stay clear of them.

The real free services in this guide come as apps you add from your TV or device's own app store, and they never need your credit card to watch. Be very wary of random websites that promise free movies, especially brand-new ones, and ask you to install something or enter card details. Those can carry viruses or steal your information. Stick to the named services here, added through the official app store, and you are safe.

- ❑ Only add services from your TV or device's official app store.
- ❑ A truly free service never needs your credit card to watch.
- ❑ Be suspicious of websites promising brand-new movies for free.
- ❑ Never install something a strange video site tells you to.
- ❑ When in doubt, stick to the services named in this guide.

### **! If it feels too good, it usually is.**

A site offering this year's blockbusters for free is a red flag. The honest free services carry older and mid-tier titles, not the newest releases.

## When to Skip the DIY and Just Call

Most of this you can do yourself with a little patience. But some days you would just rather hand it off, and that is fine.

**Q: I want to drop cable but keep my shows.**

Tell me what you watch and I will build a mix of free and paid services that keeps it, for a fraction of the cable bill.

**Q: My TV will not run these apps.**

I will bring the right streaming device, plug it in, connect your Wi-Fi, and load your apps before I leave.

**Q: I am worried about scams and fake sites.**

I will show you exactly which services are safe and set them up the right way, so you never wander onto a bad site.

**★ Flat \$99, and it works before I leave.**

Whether it is choosing services, setting up a device, or cutting the cable bill, I will sort it at your kitchen table. Flat \$99 first visit, 30-day follow-up included. Call (330) 200-8042.

# Everyday Cheat Sheet

Clip this to the fridge. It is the quick answer to the free streaming questions that come up most.

| I want to...            | Do this                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Watch free movies       | Open Tubi or Crackle                     |
| Flip live channels      | Open Pluto TV or the Roku Channel        |
| See documentaries       | Open the PBS app                         |
| Catch news and weather  | Open Local Now, plus a phone weather app |
| Add apps to an older TV | Plug in a streaming stick under \$30     |
| Avoid a monthly bill    | Stick to the free, ad-supported services |
| Get help                | Call Bill: (330) 200-8042                |

## Plain-English Word List

A few terms in plain English, so nothing about free streaming feels like a foreign language.

### **Q: Streaming**

Watching movies or shows over your internet, instead of from cable or a disc.

### **Q: Free, ad-supported service**

A service that costs nothing because short commercials pay for it, like Tubi or Pluto TV.

### **Q: Live channel**

A channel that plays on a set schedule, so you watch whatever is on, like old cable.

### **Q: On-demand**

When you pick a specific movie or show and it starts right away, and you can pause it.

### **Q: Streaming device**

A small gadget that plugs into your TV to add streaming apps, even on an older television.

### **Q: App**

A small program you add to your TV or device, one for each service you want to watch.

### **Q: HDMI input**

The port on your TV where a streaming device plugs in, usually labeled HDMI 1, HDMI 2, and so on.

### **Q: Antenna**

A simple device that pulls in your local broadcast channels for free over the air.

# A Picture to Follow Along

## Five Genuinely Free Services

No credit card, no subscription - paid for by short ads.

|                 |                                                                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tubi</b>     | <b>Movies and TV on demand</b><br>A big library of films and shows, free with ads  |
| <b>Pluto TV</b> | <b>Live channels, like old cable</b><br>Hundreds of themed channels that just play |
| <b>Roku</b>     | <b>The Roku Channel</b><br>Free movies and shows, no Roku device needed            |
| <b>Crackle</b>  | <b>Movies and originals</b><br>A rotating set of films, free with ads              |
| <b>PBS</b>      | <b>News, nature, and drama</b><br>Public television, much of it free to stream     |

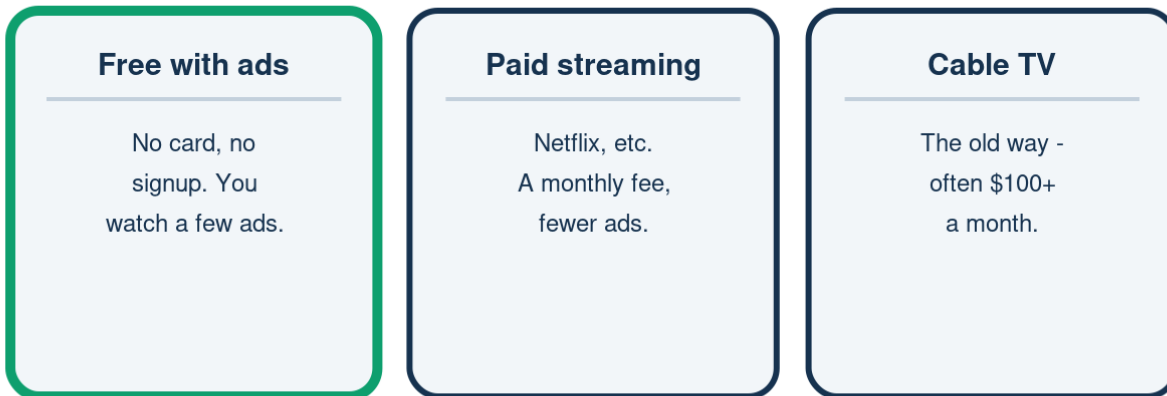
**None of these ask for a card - if one does, it is not the real thing.**

Illustration - libraries change month to month.

## A Second Look

### How 'Free' Really Works

Three ways to watch, and what each one costs you.



**Free-with-ads services can replace a lot of what cable charged for.**

Illustration - prices and ad amounts vary by service.



## Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.  
You just have to remember you can call.  
Friendly, in-home tech help — I come to you.

### BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will  
make it right — or refund it. No awkwardness,  
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

**(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com**

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

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### Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



## A Note From Bill

### A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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