

# Digital Television Switchover 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 will be 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 free up airwaves and make it possible to extend coverage to the whole country. Broadcasting in digital format is also a more efficient way to transmit television signals and will release capacity for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband, mobile television or additional television channels. Switching the terrestrial TV system to digital will ensure the UK keeps pace with other countries, many of which are also switching to all digital broadcasting.

## 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, Five, S4C and Teletext), and digital multiplex operators SDN and National Grid Wireless. Digital UK runs national and regional information campaigns and provides information to the public via a help line (08546 50 50 50) and website ([www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk)).

## What do viewers need to do?

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 (below) which identifies equipment designed to work before, during and after switchover.



## What are the different ways to get digital TV?

There are four main options, depending on where you live:

- **Through an aerial** (eg Freeview, Top Up TV, BT Vision\*), either through a digital box or a television with an integrated digital tuner (an iDTV)
- **By satellite** (eg Sky, or non-subscription freesat from Sky)
- **Through a cable** (eg Virgin Media, Wight Cable or SmallWorld)
- **Over broadband** (eg Tiscali TV)

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

\*currently requires broadband connection to view Freeview channels and download EPG information

## How much does digital television cost?

Most homes already have digital television on the main set. 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. Some homes (5-10%) may also require a new aerial to receive digital signals.

- Freeview digital boxes start from approximately £25
- Integrated digital televisions start from approximately £100
- Subscription (eg Sky, Virgin, Top Up TV) start from approximately £10 per month
- Digital television recorders start from approx £100
- A standard new roof aerial normally costs £60-180

## When will switchover happen?

The UK's first switchover was completed in Copeland in Cumbria (including the town of Whitehaven) in November 2007. The process will continue transmitter by transmitter across each TV region from 2008-2012, see map opposite.

## What about recorders?

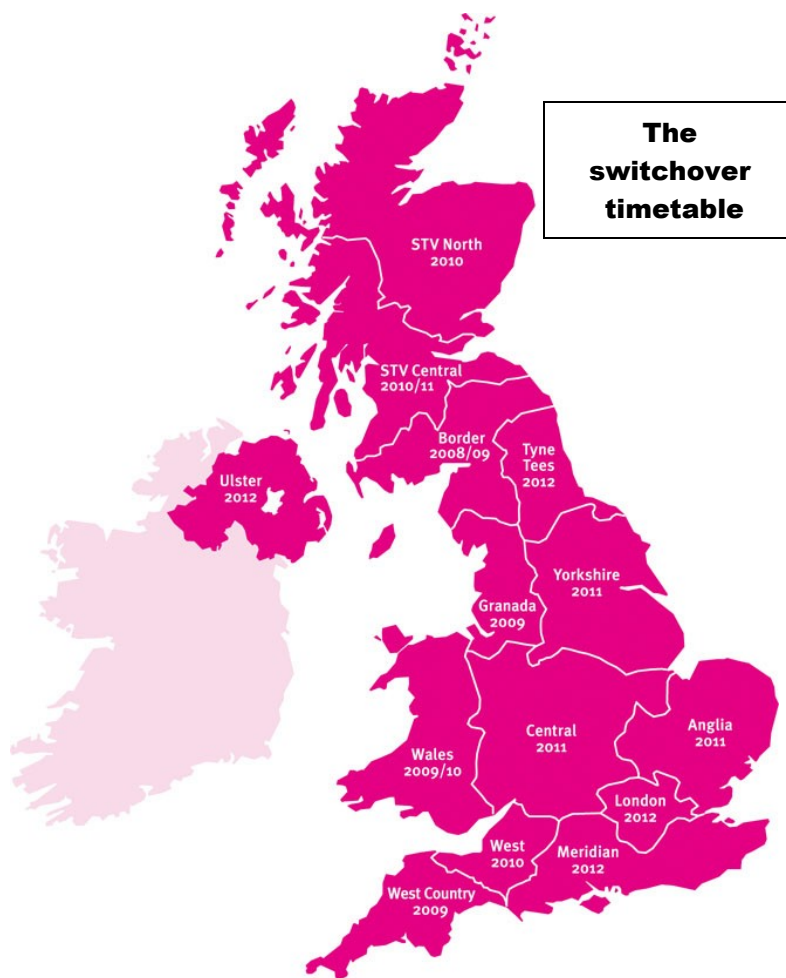
Analogue recorders will still be able to play tapes and discs but will need to be connected to either a digital box or digital television in order to record programmes after switchover. They will only be able to record the digital channel being watched.

Many viewers are swapping their old analogue equipment for a digital TV recorder (DTR) or a digital DVD recorder. These devices can also pause or rewind live TV, and some models feature two tuners allowing you to record one digital channel while watching another.

## 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, C4 (plus S4C in Wales) and Five 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. Most households will be able to receive approximately 40 Freeview channels via an aerial; 20 of the most popular channels will be available elsewhere.

Viewers can find out more about digital TV options and the channels available in their area by visiting [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk) or calling Digital UK on **08456 50 50 50**.



## What help is available?

There is a range of switchover help available. Digital UK operates a helpline (08456 50 50 50) and website ([www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk)) which provide general information about getting digital television and a postcode checker which informs viewers the digital services available in their area.

Digital UK has also signed a contract with Digital Outreach, a consortium of national charities, including Age Concern England, Help the Aged, Community Service Volunteers and Collective Enterprises Ltd, which will provide information and advice to people who might need some extra help. It will operate initially in the first four TV regions to switch: Border, West Country, Wales and Granada.

The **Digital Switchover Help Scheme** has been established by the BBC to offer practical assistance at the time of switchover to approximately seven million households. The scheme will cover households in which one person or more:

- is aged **75 years** or over; or
- has a **significant disability** – ie claims disability living allowance, attendance allowance, constant attendance allowance or pensioners' mobility supplement; or
- is registered **blind or partially sighted**

Eligible households may receive the following support:

- equipment to convert one television set
- help with installation
- an aerial replacement (if required)
- follow-up support

There will be a subsidised 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.



David Farwig

Digital Switchover West region

[David.Farwig@digitaluk.co.uk](mailto:David.Farwig@digitaluk.co.uk)

07827 323199