Antenna Types & Placement

Getting a multi-directional antenna will be the best choice for most people. If a couple of the towers in your region are on opposites sides of your home, say greater than that 90 degree angle, a multi-directional antenna can pull signals in from both directions.

An omni-directional antenna is often touted as a style of antenna where you don't need to pay attention to where you place it. But I've rarely found that to be true. Don't get me wrong. Omni-directional antennas can be a powerful tool for pulling signals from towers from all around you. That's right, 360 degrees. But you still need to pay attention to where you locate any TV antenna.

How to hook up your antenna for HDTV

The coaxial cord you are plugging in to your TV looks a lot like the one your cable provider used to use. Screw the cord into the input outlet on the back of your television. Don't go channel surfing.

You're not done yet. You need to go to the menu settings on your TV. I'm assuming that your TV is fairly new. And by fairly new, I'm talking about a TV manufactured after February 2007.

Go to the menu and find the section of your menu where you can set up channels. It's usually broken down to two choices: Cable or Air TV/antenna. Choose the antenna option, then scan for channels.

The scan can sometimes take a while – up to 30 minutes sometimes! That's OK. Just let your TV do its thing. Once the scan is complete, your TV is now receiving channels from the antenna.

The Best TV antennas: 5 Tips to Help You Choose

Here are five things to be aware of while choosing the best antenna for your particular location. I give a similar rundown on my months-long study mentioned below.

Marketing-speak: There's no such thing as a HD antenna, or 4K antenna. All antennas pull in digital signals that are up to 1080i and 720p HD. You'll likely also pull in some channels of lesser picture quality. So when I talk about getting an antenna for HD channels, I'm just talking about pulling in channels with the highest quality picture that you're currently being charged for as a cable subscriber.

Uncompressed HD: The real advantage of using an antenna for HD channels is that you'll get a clearer picture. Cable companies often compress digital signals to pipe them into your home over a cable cord. That can impact picture quality. With an uncompressed HD signal, you'll notice a clearer and brighter picture.

Range vs Gain: A lot of antennas are advertised with phrases like "50 mile range". You shouldn't pay attention to claims about range because it's not a great indicator for decent reception. Instead, see if there's anything on the box about antenna signal gain. Digital signals get weaker over distance. So you'll need a higher antenna gain to get a quality picture and pull in VHF and UHF channels. Gain is measured in decibels. A high gain is 32dB. Find an antenna with about 20dB and you'll be in good shape.

Get sub-channels not on cable: Idaho Public Television broadcasts 5 FREE channels that reach 99% of households in Idaho.