

DTV Transition: How to Answer Viewer Calls

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) produced this guide to help stations answer viewer calls about the DTV transition on or after February 18, 2009. The questions below made up roughly 95 percent of all viewer calls after the early transition to digital in Wilmington, N.C., in September 2008. Callers with more complex questions, or those seeking help setting up their converter box, should be referred to station engineers or other station staff familiar with technical issues.

Q: I'm not getting television reception anymore. What happened?

Federal law required all full-power television stations to switch to all-digital broadcasting by February 17, 2009. Since our station is full-power, we are now broadcasting only in the digital format. All viewers who watch television using antennas – either rooftop antennas or indoor antennas like “rabbit ears” – had to upgrade. You can restore reception by purchasing either a converter box or new digital TV set, or by subscribing to cable or satellite. Converter boxes are available at local consumer electronics retailers.

Q: I have a converter box, but I'm not getting any television reception or have lost some channels I was receiving before. What happened?

Try re-scanning your converter box. Some television stations switched channels since you first scanned, and you should re-scan your converter box to make sure you're getting all the digital TV signals out there. You may also need to adjust your antenna or even get a new antenna (*see answer below*).

Q: I have a digital TV set, but I'm not getting any television reception or have lost some channels I was receiving before. What happened?

First, check your owner's manual to make sure your TV set really is a digital TV set by seeing if it has an “ATSC” digital tuner in it. If your set does have an ATSC tuner, when you scroll through you should see channels with a number plus a dash or a period. For example, channel 4 would become channel 4.1 or 4-1. If you see periods or dashes, your TV set has an ATSC tuner and is digital, in which case you should try re-scanning for channels. You may also need to adjust your antenna or even get a new antenna (*see answer below*). However, if your TV only has an NTSC tuner, that means your TV set is not a digital TV set and you will need a converter box. Remember, not all flat screen television sets are digital – some of the older flat screen sets only have NTSC tuners.

Q: I have a converter box or digital TV set and have tried rescanning for channels, but I can't receive one or more channels, including yours, or the picture breaks up or is pixilated on some or all stations. What do I do?

[NOTE: If your station's signal contour has changed and your digital signal covers a smaller area than your analog signal, your station may receive lots of these questions. Additionally, if your station switched bands from VHF to UHF or vice versa, you need to make sure your viewers have the right VHF, UHF or combination VHF/UHF antenna for the stations in your area.]

You should first try adjusting the position of your antenna and the direction it is pointing, and re-scan each time you adjust. Also make sure your antenna is a VHF/UHF antenna, as some “rabbit ears” indoor antennas, or older rooftop antennas can only pick up VHF channels (channels 2-13).

If you use an indoor antenna and live far away from our station or in an area where reception is difficult, you may need to purchase an outdoor antenna and mount it as high as possible, preferably on the rooftop. The general rule with antennas is that the higher it is positioned, the greater the chance of receiving good signals. If you have an existing outdoor antenna installed some time ago and it is not receiving the DTV stations satisfactorily, you may

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need to reposition it or upgrade to a newer model of the right sort for your location. You will need advice from an antenna installer on these items.

Get advice on the right sort of outdoor antenna by visiting www.antennaweb.org or by contacting a local antenna installer [NOTE: Have name or recommended installers available.]

Q: I have a satellite subscription, but I'm not getting local channels any more. What happened?

[NOTE: This answer depends on whether the satellite system offers local programming on satellite in your market and the viewer is subscribed to that service, in which case, nothing should have changed. Viewers who subscribe to satellite services, but use antennas to watch local programming, need to upgrade.]

If you pay for local channels in your satellite subscription and you have a problem with reception then you should contact your satellite provider. But if you do not pay for local channels and watch local TV stations with an antenna, you need to upgrade with a converter box or new TV set.

Q: I'm having trouble installing my converter box. What can I do?

First, check the owner's manual to make sure you're doing everything right. Make sure you have re-scanned for new channels, as many stations have moved around. Then try adjusting your antenna (see answer above). If you still have trouble with your converter box, we have 1-800 numbers for the top manufacturers, as well as Radio Shack, which may be able to help. [NOTE: See below for numbers.]

Q: I'm still waiting for my coupons to arrive. What should I do?

Visit DTV2009.gov or call 1-888-DTV-2009 to check on the status of your coupon. In some cases, coupons can take several weeks to arrive. If you don't want to wait, you can check to see if any friends or family members have extra coupons that you can use. Or you can buy a new TV set or a converter box without the coupon.

Q: How can I get in touch with converter box manufacturers?

Most manufacturers have toll-free support lines, which can be found in the owner's manual that came with your converter box or TV set. Below is a list of toll-free technical support phone numbers for converter boxes that are selling at top retailers.

Best Buy

Model – Insignia NS-DXA1-APJ \$59.99

Technical Support: 1-877-467-4289

Model – APEX DT-250 \$59.99

Technical Support: 1-866-427-3946

Circuit City

Model – Zenith DTT901

Technical Support: 1-877-9-ZENITH (936484)

Kmart

Model – Zenith DTT901

Technical Support: 1-877-9-ZENITH (936484)

RadioShack

Model – Digital Stream DTX9950 \$59.99

Technical Support: 1-866-706-4367

Model – Zenith DTT901 (price not displayed)

Technical Support: 1-877-9-ZENITH (936484)

Sears

Model – DTV Pal

Technical Support: 1-888-667-0633

Model – Magnavox E175216

Technical Support: 1-800-605-8610

Target

Model – GE Smart Digital Converter Box \$60

Technical Support: 1-800-654-8483

Model – Sansonic FT-300A

Technical Support: 1-626-433-1333

Wal-Mart

Model – Magnavox TB100MW9 \$49.87

Technical Support: 1-800-605-8610



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