Ten Things You Need to Know About HDTV

1. Digital: HDTV is digital television that produces resolutions of 720 lines or more. Standard digital television (SDTV) signals produce 480 lines.

2. Not automatic: You need HD equipment to see HD broadcasts. If a TV show is broadcast in HD, but you don't have an HD receiver or HD cable, you will see a digital picture in standard definition. Not only does your TV have to have an HD tuner, but you'll also have to invest in an HD satellite or cable box.

3. Choices: You can choose a traditional CRT style HDTV or a slim panel, LCD HDTV. The choice is yours.

4. Upconverting the signal: HDTVs include integrated processors that will "up-convert" the digital signal for you. So if you have a 1080p set it will up-convert a 720p or 1080i signal to the higher 1080p signal.

5. Integrated tuner: Most TVs on the market today will have the HDTV tuner integrated into the set. Ensure that the set you're buying has ATSC (the new digital standard) or QAM (basic cable) tuners. NTSC tuners are for analog signals so after February 2009, they will be obsolete.

6. Widescreen: HDTVs display in 16:9 or 16:10 aspect ratio. While some HDTVs come in the square 4:3 aspect ratio, HDTV is broadcast in widescreen 16:9, So to get the most out of your HDTV, you should look for a widescreen display.

7. Resolution: HDTVs can display 720p, 1080i or 1080p resolution. The "p" stands for "progressive" and means that all the lines are scanned from top to bottom at the same time, resulting in a crisper picture. The "i" stands for "interlaced" which means that half the lines are scanned first then the other half. 1080p is also called full HD and is noticeably crisper than 720p and 1080i.

8. Native resolution: Native resolution is usually expressed in terms such as 1920x1080 or 1024x768. The second number in the native resolution specification must be at least 720 for the TV to be able to display HDTV.

9. Signal acquisition: If you want to get HD signals over the air, you need an aerial antenna capable of transmitting HD signals. Or you can get your HD from a cable or satellite provider using their HD box.

10. HDMI: To truly get the best picture possible, use HDMI cables to connect your TV to your cable or satellite box and to your DVD or Blu-Ray player. HDMI cables ensure the least amount of signal degradation and combine video and audio into a single cable. The images on your TV will only be as good as the connections used.

For more information about the transition to digital television, go to dtv.gov.

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