

What cables do I need to watch my laptop content on TV?

Start by checking the video-out connection on your laptop and video-in connection on your TV. If they share the same connection, such as HDMI, simply run that cable type from the laptop to the TV. If your devices don't share a connection, the right adapter can make it work. Not all cable options include sound, so you might need a separate 3.5mm audio cable.

HDTVs offer multiple video inputs, with HDMI and DVI being the most popular and highest quality options. Here are the video-out connections you're most likely to find on your laptop.

HDMI

HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) is currently the highest quality connection available, providing optimum picture and sound from one cable. To connect a laptop to TV with HDMI, just plug an [HDMI cable](#) into the HDMI port on each of the devices. If you purchased your television within the last ten years, chances are very good it has an HDMI port. If your laptop doesn't have an HDMI port, you'll need an [adapter](#).

Mini DisplayPort and DisplayPort

Initially developed by Apple for use in Mac products, Mini DisplayPorts are now included in various tablets and PC laptops. Like HDMI, a DisplayPort cable carries both audio and video over a single connection. With an adapter, it can connect to HDMI, DVI or VGA on your TV.

DVI

(requires 3.5mm audio cable for sound)

[DVI](#) (Digital Video Interface) is a common connection on desktop computers, but less likely on laptops. Its digital signal provides better picture quality than S-Video or VGA. If you want sound with a DVI connection, connect a 3.5mm audio cable from the headphones output of your laptop to the audio inputs of your TV.

VGA

(requires 3.5mm audio cable for sound)

[VGA](#) (Video Graphics Array) connections are still found on many computers and HDTVs. In terms of picture quality, VGA is better than S-Video. If you want sound with a VGA connection, connect a 3.5mm audio cable from the headphones output of your laptop to the audio inputs of your TV.

S-Video

(requires 3.5mm audio cable for sound)

[S-Video](#) (also known as Y/C) cables used to be the typical method for connecting a laptop to a TV. There are two types of S-Video cables: 4-pin and 7-pin. Most laptops and PCs are equipped with a 7-pin port, so if your TV only has a 4-pin S-Video port, then you will need an adapter. As with DVI and VGA, a separate audio cable is necessary for sound.

Thunderbolt

The Thunderbolt connection accommodates both video and audio for [Apple MacBook](#) users. As with PC connections, you should determine the type of the connections on your MacBook and TV, and use the correct cable and/or adapter(s).

After selecting the cable.

Be sure to connect the cable to the TV before turning on your laptop. Otherwise it might fail to recognize the external display.

Once your cable is connected, select the correct input on your television like you would when using your DVD or Blu-ray player. If the picture appears distorted, you can change the screen aspect ratio and resolution with the laptop's display settings. Mac laptops automatically adjust these picture settings.

What about connecting wirelessly?

If cables aren't ideal for your situation, you could go wireless. Connect a [wireless video transmitter](#) to your computer and add a wireless receiver to your television. These devices have different connections (HDMI, DVI, etc.), so you need to know which ones your laptop and TV support.

Other options for streaming internet content to your TV.

To enjoy content from YouTube, Netflix and similar online services on your TV — without involving your laptop — you could upgrade to various home theater products that link directly to your internet signal. For instance, streaming media players easily plug into your TV to deliver movies, music, games and more via your home's wireless network. If you're considering a new TV, look for a [smart TV](#), which has the streaming functionality built in. Smart Blu-ray players and various gaming consoles also let you access content via an internet connection. Keep in mind, not all these products offer a full web browser, which you would have by connecting your laptop to your TV.