

THE ULTIMATE

CORD-CUTTING STARTER KIT

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Ditching Cable
and Saving \$100+ Per Month

CordFreeLife.com

FREE GUIDE | 2026 EDITION

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This guide is brought to you by CordFreeLife. We help people cut the cord and stream smarter. Visit cordfreelife.com for reviews, comparisons, and weekly streaming picks.

1. Why Cut the Cord?

The average American cable bill is **\$128 per month** according to recent industry data. That's over **\$1,500 per year** for hundreds of channels you never watch.

Meanwhile, a solid streaming setup costs \$30-60 per month and gives you access to more content, better on-demand options, and zero equipment rental fees.

The Money Math

	Cable	Streaming
Monthly cost	\$128/mo	\$35-60/mo
Equipment fees	\$10-25/mo	\$0 (you own it)
Contract	1-2 year lock-in	Cancel anytime
Annual cost	\$1,536+	\$420-720
Yearly savings	--	\$800-1,100+

That's \$800 to \$1,100 back in your pocket every year.

PRO TIP: Even if you subscribe to 3-4 streaming services, you'll still save significantly. And unlike cable, you can cancel any of them anytime with no penalty.

2. Step-by-Step: How to Cancel Cable

Canceling cable feels like a big deal, but the process is straightforward. Here's exactly what to do:

Step 1: Check Your Contract

Look at your latest bill or call your provider to see if you're under contract. If so, check the early termination fee. Often it's still cheaper to pay the fee and switch.

Step 2: List What You Actually Watch

Write down every show, channel, and sport you watch regularly. This becomes your shopping list for streaming services.

Step 3: Pick Your Streaming Services

Use the comparison chart on the next page to match your shows to the right services. Start with 2-3 services max.

Step 4: Get a Streaming Device

If your TV isn't a smart TV, grab a streaming stick. Fire TV Stick and Roku start at \$25-30.

Step 5: Check Your Internet

You need at least 25 Mbps for reliable 4K streaming. Most home internet plans already cover this.

Step 6: Set Up an Antenna (Optional)

A \$20-30 digital antenna gets you local channels (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, PBS) completely free in HD.

Step 7: Call and Cancel

Call your cable provider and cancel TV service. Keep internet only. Be firm and stick to your plan.

Step 8: Return Equipment

Return your cable box, DVR, and any rented equipment to avoid ongoing charges. Get a receipt.

PRO TIP: When you call to cancel, say 'I'd like to disconnect my TV service and keep internet only.' Don't say you're 'thinking about it.'

3. Top 10 Streaming Services Compared

Here's a breakdown of the most popular streaming services, what they cost, and who they're best for.

Service	Monthly Price	Best For	Standout Content
Netflix	\$7.99-22.99	Everyone	Stranger Things, Wednesday, movies
Hulu	\$9.99-17.99	Next-day TV	Current season shows, FX originals
Disney+	\$9.99-15.99	Families	Marvel, Star Wars, Pixar, Disney
Max	\$9.99-20.99	Prestige TV	HBO originals, DC, Warner Bros
Peacock	\$7.99-13.99	NBC/Sports	The Office, Sunday Night Football
Prime Video	\$8.99 (or Prime)	Value	The Boys, Thursday Night Football
Paramount+	\$7.99-13.99	CBS/Movies	Yellowstone, Star Trek, NFL
Apple TV+	\$9.99	Quality	Severance, Ted Lasso, originals
YouTube TV	\$72.99	Live TV	70+ live channels, DVR, sports
Tubi	FREE	Budget	Free movies and shows, ad-supported

Our Starter Recommendations

The Budget Streamer (\$8-18/mo)

Netflix (with ads) + Tubi (free). Covers movies, originals, and a huge free library.

The Family Plan (\$25-35/mo)

Disney+ + Netflix + Hulu. Covers kids content, originals, and next-day TV.

The Sports Fan (\$85-100/mo)

YouTube TV + ESPN+. Live sports, local channels, and unlimited DVR.

The Everything Plan (\$50-65/mo)

Netflix + Hulu + Disney+ + Max. Premium content across every genre.

PRO TIP: Start with 2 services. You can always add more later, and you can cancel anytime. Rotate services monthly to binge different libraries.

4. Streaming Device Cheat Sheet

Every major streaming device gets the job done. The difference is which ecosystem you're in and how much you want to spend.

Device	Price	Resolution	Voice	Best For
Fire TV Stick Lite	~\$25	1080p	Alexa	Budget / bedrooms
Fire TV Stick 4K	~\$50	4K HDR	Alexa	Alexa / Prime users
Roku Express 4K	~\$35	4K HDR	Roku	Simple / neutral
Roku Streaming Stick 4K	~\$50	4K HDR	Roku	Best all-around
Chromecast w/ Google TV	~\$30	1080p	Google	Google / Android
Apple TV 4K	~\$130	4K HDR	Siri	Apple ecosystem
Nvidia Shield TV	~\$150	4K HDR	Google	Power users
ONN Streaming Stick	~\$15	1080p	Google	Ultra-budget

Quick Decision Guide

- **Alexa / Amazon user?** Fire TV Stick 4K
- **Want simplicity, no bias?** Roku Streaming Stick 4K
- **Google / Android person?** Chromecast with Google TV
- **Apple ecosystem?** Apple TV 4K
- **Cheapest option that works?** ONN Stick (\$15) or Roku Express (\$35)

PRO TIP: Plug in an ethernet adapter if your Wi-Fi is spotty. A wired connection eliminates buffering completely.

5. Hidden Streaming Services Most People Miss

Everyone knows Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+. But these 5 services fly under the radar and offer incredible content that most cord-cutters never discover. All are free or nearly free.

Kanopy (FREE with a library card)

This is the best-kept secret in streaming. Kanopy partners with public libraries and universities to offer thousands of premium films completely free with no ads. We're talking A24 films, Criterion Collection classics, award-winning documentaries, and foreign cinema. All you need is a library card to sign up. The quality of content rivals paid services, and you won't see a single commercial. If you appreciate film beyond mainstream blockbusters, this is a must-have.

Plex (FREE + optional premium)

Most people know Plex as a media server app, but it's quietly become one of the best free streaming services out there. Plex offers over 600 free live TV channels and 50,000+ on-demand movies and shows, all ad-supported. What makes it special is it also lets you organize your own personal media library alongside its free content, so everything lives in one app. The interface is clean, the content is surprisingly good, and it works on every device.

Xumo Play (FREE)

A joint venture between Comcast and Charter, Xumo Play offers 300+ free live channels and 10,000+ on-demand titles. Think of it as free cable. It has news (ABC, BBC, CBS, Fox), movies from major studios, kids content, sports highlights, and even Xumo Originals. The interface is one of the cleanest among free services, and it does not require an account to start watching. Seriously underrated.

Hoopla (FREE with a library card)

Like Kanopy, Hoopla connects to your public library card, but it goes way beyond movies. You get free access to movies, TV shows, audiobooks, ebooks, comics, and music, all in one app. It even offers a BingePass feature that gives you temporary free access to services like Hallmark+ and CuriosityStream. If you have a library card and you're not using Hoopla, you're leaving free entertainment on the table.

Sling Freestream (FREE)

Most people know Sling TV as a paid live TV service, but Sling Freestream is their completely free tier that almost nobody talks about. It offers 400+ free live channels and 41,000+ on-demand titles.

You get ABC News, CBS News, BBC News, Fox Weather, plus hundreds of entertainment, movie, and lifestyle channels. No credit card needed, no account required. If you miss the experience of flipping through channels like cable, this is the closest free alternative.

These 5 services alone give you 1,500+ live channels, 100,000+ on-demand titles, and premium film libraries — all for \$0.

PRO TIP: Get a library card this week if you don't have one. It unlocks both Kanopy and Hoopla instantly, giving you thousands of free movies, shows, books, and audiobooks with zero ads.

6. Monthly Cost Calculator

Use this worksheet to calculate exactly how much you'll save. Fill in your current cable costs, then pick your streaming services.

Your Current Cable Cost

Item	Your Cost
Cable TV package	\$_____/mo
DVR / equipment rental	\$_____/mo
Regional sports fee	\$_____/mo
Broadcast TV fee	\$_____/mo
Other fees & taxes	\$_____/mo
TOTAL CABLE COST	\$_____/mo

Your New Streaming Cost

Service	Price	Subscribe?
Netflix (with ads)	\$7.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Hulu (with ads)	\$9.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Disney+	\$9.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Max (with ads)	\$9.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Peacock (Plus)	\$7.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Prime Video	\$8.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
YouTube TV (live)	\$72.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Apple TV+	\$9.99/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Other: _____	\$_____/mo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
TOTAL STREAMING	\$_____/mo	

Your Savings

	Monthly	Yearly
Cable cost	\$ _____	\$ _____
Streaming cost	\$ _____	\$ _____
YOUR SAVINGS	\$ _____	\$ _____

7. Your Cord-Cutting Setup Checklist

Print this page and check off each item as you go. You can be fully set up in a single weekend.

BEFORE YOU CANCEL

- Check your cable contract status and termination fees
- List every show, channel, and sport you watch regularly
- Test your internet speed (need 25+ Mbps for 4K streaming)
- Call your ISP and ask about internet-only pricing

EQUIPMENT

- Buy a streaming device (Fire TV, Roku, Chromecast, or Apple TV)
- Consider a digital antenna for free local channels (\$20-30)
- Get an HDMI cable if your device doesn't include one
- Optional: Buy a budget soundbar for better audio (\$30-50)

STREAMING SERVICES

- Sign up for your chosen paid streaming services
- Download the hidden gems: Kanopy, Plex, Xumo Play, Hoopla, Sling Freestream
- Get a library card to unlock Kanopy and Hoopla for free
- Set calendar reminders for when free trials end

CANCEL CABLE

- Call your cable provider and cancel TV service
- Keep internet-only plan
- Return cable box, DVR, and all rented equipment
- Get written confirmation of cancellation
- Check your next bill to confirm TV charges are removed

ENJOY YOUR SAVINGS

- Calculate your monthly savings using the worksheet on page 11
- Set up your streaming device and download your apps
- Explore the hidden free services first
- Visit cordfreelife.com for weekly recommendations and tips

You're Ready to Cut the Cord

That's everything you need to get started. Cancel cable, pick your streaming services, grab a device, and start saving. It really is that simple.

If you want to go deeper, check out our premium guides on Gumroad:

- **The 2026 Streaming Services Comparison Guide** — 25+ services broken down in detail
- **The Streaming Device Buyer's Guide** — every device reviewed and ranked
- **Home Theater on a Budget** — build a \$500 setup that looks like \$5,000
- **CordFreeLife Insider** — monthly what-to-watch picks delivered to your inbox

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