

Should You “Cut the Cord”?

Tina Nerat

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

Given the ages of Oakmont residents, we all grew up with a landline phone, free over-the-air TV, radio that used an antenna, and a newspaper delivered every day. Now most of us find that our telecom/entertainment/media/phone expenses every month are hundreds of dollars because time and technology have changed our habits.

Streaming video has evolved over the past few years and has become even more popular during the ongoing Covid pandemic. There has been a lot of hype over “cutting the cord” from satellite TV and cable companies. In Oakmont’s case, this generally means DIRECTV and Comcast/Xfinity. People think they will save money by cutting the cord, but this is not usually the case.

Not too many years ago Netflix had a lock on most of the streaming subscriptions. Lately, the streaming subscription choices have exploded, with most networks having their own subscription services. You might be able to watch older major network shows on Netflix, but if you want to watch their newer episodes, you’ll have to subscribe individually to the network subscription services at varying costs per month for each one if you don’t want commercials. Examples are: Amazon Prime, Paramount Plus (CBS), Peacock (NBC), Disney, Roku, Hulu, Acorn, HBO MAX, YouTube TV. These streaming services are also creating their own content these days.

Google News and Apple News have reputable news feeds, but now subscriptions are required to read many of the news outlets. Pandora, Spotify, and YouTube Music have music subscriptions, rather than listening to the radio or tapes/CDs as we used to when we were younger.

Evaluate what is important for you. What programs do you watch regularly? Do you want to watch them with or without commercials? Do you watch sports that might only be on cable/satellite TV? Do you listen to Spotify or Pandora?

This writer has evaluated cutting the cord every year for the last five years and decided this year to trim back cable TV to just the basic channels and decided to increase the bandwidth/speed on my Internet service to accommodate streaming without the dreaded buffering. With Comcast/Xfinity, this means needing to get someone on the phone who knows how to set you up with something besides their bundled packages, where basic TV channels are combined with slower Internet bandwidth/speed in a bundled package. Good Internet service is required for streaming.

Ever sit around searching for what to stream and 20 minutes later nothing has appealed to you? Keep a list of what you want to watch. Read the oakmont-learning.org 1/22/2022 article about keeping “notes” of programs/movies on your computer/devices just for this situation.