

The right TV guarantees the best seat in the house

FEBRUARY 5, 2015 | LAST UPDATED: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2015, 12:51 AM
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SPECIAL TO HOMESCAPE |
HOMESCAPE



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PHOTO COURTESY OF LG

This LG flat-screen TV is hung at the right height and distance for everyone in the room's seating area to enjoy the big game.

Was watching the Super Bowl at home a disappointment for you - not because of who won and who lost, but because your TV set leaves a lot to be desired? Did the dull, flat picture and "off" colors leave you determined to upgrade for the new year?

In time for baseball season, you can have a set with a high-definition picture so you feel as if the game is being played in your own living room! But only the right TV can provide that experience. The trick is to pick one that fits the room where it will be placed, has the features you want and still is priced within your budget.

THE LATEST AND GREATEST

TV screens have gotten bigger, while the cabinets have become thinner and sleeker. Along with the new look has come a revolution in technology.

"The biggest thing right now is 4K resolution," said Rob Kohlhase, owner of Rock Solid Audio-Video, with locations in Paramus and Rockaway. "First there was standard broadcast, then came high definition, then 4K - which is ultrahigh definition that is four times the resolution of standard high definition."

Manufacturers make the picture sharper by squeezing more pixels - elements that make up the image - onto the screen. What does that mean for the viewer?

- A better picture, but little to watch. A 4K picture is extremely sharp, but currently there is little 4k content - some movies, but no broadcast programming and no live shows, such as sports. 4K technology is in the same place as HD was a few years ago. Manufacturers produced HD sets, but it took a while for HD programming to catch up. "The good news is that the better 4K sets can take a conventional broadcast beyond normal resolution," said John LaRegina, senior buyer for electronics for P.C. Richard & Son. "It won't get it all the way to 4K, but it will definitely jack it up."

- Buying a set with a bigger screen. If you sit too close to a standard HD TV, the individual pixels become visible. "When viewing a standard HD set, I recommend taking the size of the screen and multiplying that number by 1.5," said Kohlhase. "Then I say, don't sit closer than that. But with a 4K set, you can move in closer without the image becoming pixelated, or you can buy a TV with a bigger screen. So a room that could only handle a 55-inch set in the past can now handle a 65-inch 4K set."

- Paying more, but not much more. New technology always comes with a premium price tag, but prices are dropping rapidly. "The pricing on 4K sets is 60-percent lower this year than last year," said LaRegina.

NOT ULTRA, BUT STILL GOOD

While 4K may be the future of TV, most sets sold today are still the standard HD type. But you may have noticed TVs the same size from the same manufacturer with different price tags. Various features and components that can raise the price include:

- 3D-Ready. Some HD sets are 3D-ready, so you can view 3D content with special glasses. 3D-ready sets also show normal 2D content without the need for special glasses.

- Smart Sets. Some allow for Internet connection, to use streaming services such as Netflix. Most Smart TVs also have built-in WiFi.

- The Numbers Game. Manufacturers list a number that represents a measurement of the screen's resolution. The standard numbers for HD sets are 720p, 768p or 1080p; the higher the number, the better the resolution. Another number stands for the times per second the image is updated; a set with low rate of 60Hz is not as good as a rate of 240Hz. But there is disagreement about the importance of this number. Kohlhase advised, "Spend a little more for a high refresh rate, especially if you are a sports fan who watches fast-moving sports like hockey." LaRegina said he thinks the term will soon disappear,

because manufacturers will stop publishing them and 4K technology makes the refresh rate irrelevant.

SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT

As TVs have become thinner, the speakers inside them have become smaller, compromising sound quality. The solution is a sound bar, which can be mounted on a wall or placed in front of the TV to provide surround sound.

"A critical component is a separate subwoofer," said LaRegina. "It can bring a movie alive. Most subwoofers are wireless, so installation is not an issue." Sound bars start at about \$200.

"I always recommend a sound bar," Kohlhase said. "I tell people to buy the TV now and we can add the sound bar later if you don't like the way the set sounds."

Allthe better to hear the roar of the crowd!