

Apple TV 4K Review: Should You Upgrade to the Newest Version?

The newest Apple TV 4K is different from its predecessors in a few key ways.

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If you didn't know, Apple has a new Apple TV 4K for 2022. It shares the exact same name as its predecessors — it's still called the Apple TV 4K —

that were released in 2021 and 2017, respectively. And it's mostly similar in every way: the set-top box allows you to stream your favorite shows, movies and sports, as well as play games on Apple Arcade and workout with Fitness+. It works as a smart home hub, as well.

If you currently have an Apple TV 4K, there's probably little reason for you to go out and immediately upgrade to this new version. Pretty much everything that Apple did to this new Apple TV 4K is under the hood to make it faster, smaller and more future-proof, such as supporting new technologies — a few of which aren't widely available yet.

If you have an older Apple TV HD (from 2015) that's hooked up to an older non-4K TV, the new Apple TV 4K is going to feel *significantly* faster and run smoother. It's going to upscale content on your 1080p TV to look a little better (though not 4K). And it's going to get you the newest Siri Remote, which has buttons and not those frustrating trackpad controls on the old remote. Whether you're willing to drop \$129 — which is the cheapest an Apple TV has ever been — for these upgrades is up to you.

There are some other key differences with the newest Apple TV 4K, of course — and I'll get to those below — but it's also important to know that Apple has also done some significant rejigging of its current Apple TV offerings. Here's what you need to know:

- **There's no more Apple TV HD.** That's right, Apple only sells 4K models of its streaming box. If you don't have a 4K TV, don't worry — these 4K models will work on HD TVs as well.
- **Apple lowered the price and upped the storage.** Apple previously sold the Apple TV HD and the Apple TV 4K for \$149 and \$179, respectively. The new Apple TV 4K starts at just \$129. And instead of 32GB and 64GB options, the newest Apple TV 4K is available in 64GB and 128GB capacities.
- **Apple sells two models of the new Apple TV 4K.** Apple offers the new Apple TV 4K with two storage capacities, 64GB and 128GB models — but they are different in other ways, too. The 64GB version is Wi-Fi only and doesn't have Thread support, while the 128GB model also has Ethernet and Thread support.

The new Apple TV 4K supports new technologies.



The newest Apple TV 4K provides pretty much the same exact Apple TV experience as previous Apple TV models. It's just faster and supports a few new future-facing technologies.

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The newest Apple TV 4K has been upgraded with an A15 Bionic processor, which is the same chip that's in last year's iPhone 13 and iPhone 13 Pro. This is an upgrade from last year's Apple TV 4K,

which has the A12 Bionic processor, but you're not going to really notice a big difference between the two. Both processors are very fast. And both support 4K TVs support 4K HDR at up to 60fps.

The newest Apple TV 4K does include two notable technologies:

First, it supports HDR10+, which is an HDR technology that's integrated in the newest Samsung TVs to make content brighter and with higher contrast; it's a competitor to Dolby Vision (which a lot of Samsung TVs still don't support), which is an HDR technology that the newest Apple TV 4K (and the 2021-released Apple TV) also supports.

Second, it supports Quick Media Switching (or QMS_VRR). This is a new technology that will be integrated in many of LG's upcoming TVs, and it will allow the Apple TV 4K to feel like it's running more smoothly; when switching between apps and content that have different frame rates, you won't experience any lagging or black/blank screens like you typically do. However, this is a future-facing technology, as most current TVs don't support it — so unless you plan on getting a brand new LG TV in 2023, you probably don't need to worry about it.

The Apple TV just got a bit smaller.



All the above are Apple TV 4K models. From left to right, you can see the model released in 2017, 2021 and 2022.

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For the first time in years, Apple has actually updated the design of the Apple TV 4K. It's not a big update, granted, but the newest Apple TV 4K is,

according to Apple, 20 percent smaller than the previous generations. It's about the same length and width, but the newest Apple TV is just a little shorter now.

There are two factors that allowed for this smaller design. First, the A15 Bionic is really powerful and efficient; so much, in fact, that it allowed Apple to remove the fan from the newest Apple TV 4K. I've never really noticed the fan in my Apple TVs — they've always been quiet — but theoretically this new Apple TV 4K should be quieter than ever.

The Siri Remote is the latest Apple gadget to switch to USB-C.



Pictured: The redesigned Siri Remotes of the 2021-released and 2022-released Apple TV 4Ks. The one on the right is the newer model, which charges via USB-C instead of Lightning.

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Apple introduced the new Siri Remote with the previous Apple TV 4K — which scrapes the old touchpad in favor of a more traditional D-pad controller, and it has dedicated buttons for power and Siri — and the new Apple TV 4K comes with *almost* the exact same remote. It looks and feels the same, but the newest Siri Remote is the latest gadget that made the jump away from Lightning. It now charges via USB-C.

This comes off the back of Apple seemingly admitting that it would have to bow to EU pressures and eventually make an iPhone with a USB-C charging port. Apple has also introduced a new entry-level iPad that supports USB-C instead of Lightning.

If you have an HomeKit smart home, you need to get the Apple TV 4K that packs 128GB.



The 2021-released Apple TV 4K (left) is 20-percent larger than the newest model (right), which has the faster A15 Bionic chip and a new fan-less design.

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As previously mentioned, the new Apple TV 4K comes in two different models: one with 64GB of storage and one with 128GB of storage. If you plan on building a smart home around HomeKit, or you

already have a bunch of HomeKit-enabled gadgets, you really want to spend the extra \$20 on the higher-capacity model. It's the only model that has an Ethernet and supports Thread, a low-power mesh networking standard that allows many smart devices — including HomeKit devices — to communicate better and more efficiently with each other.

Note: If you have the previous Apple TV 4K — the 2021-released one — then that one also supports Thread. The 2017-released Apple TV 4K does not support Thread.



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