

Set-top boxes

An update on our Best Buys



BEST BUYS

We've tested six new Freeview set-top boxes – but none is as good as our previous Best Buys, also in the table below.

To be a Best Buy, a box must be able to show the seven-day Freeview electronic programme guide (EPG), which makes recording digital TV much easier. It must also be easy to use and have decent reception.

The top-scoring **Humax (1)**, £85 from John Lewis, is easy to use, as is the EPG, and has all the features you're likely to need. It has two Scart outputs, but will also suit older TVs without Scarts, as it can be hooked up to the aerial socket, too.

Some readers have reported that the EPG doesn't contain the full seven-day listings. Humax tells us that an 'over the air' software update should now have rectified this.

The **Sony (2)**, £100 from Argos, Comet, Dixons, John Lewis, Miller Brothers and Powerhouse, is the only other box to meet our stringent requirements. It's got virtually the same features as the Humax and a decent EPG. But it can't be connected to a TV aerial input, so consider this box only if your TV has Scart sockets.

Unlike our Best Buys, two boxes – the Digifusion (3) and

Echostar (7) – have the viewing card slot necessary for Top-Up TV, the pay-TV service that offers an additional package of channels for £8 a month – see www.topuptv.co.uk for details. If you're interested in this, the Digifusion (3) is the one to go for.

Two boxes have unusual features. The Sagem (6) has a slot that accepts all digital camera memory cards so you can display your photos on TV. The rewind feature of the cheaper Digifusion (8) can store 30 seconds of TV programming so you can replay footage – though we think that's too short a time to be really useful.

TABLE NOTES

Specification

Price The lowest we found on the high street.

Audio outputs

Analogue/Digital Whether you can connect the box to your hi-fi or digital recorder, for example.

Convenience

EPG How easy it is to access and use the seven-day EPG.

Performance

Interactive features How quickly you can access programmes' interactive content. **Text** How quickly you can navigate and access digital text pages.

WHICH? EXTRA

For full details and test results of 16 set-top boxes we've tested (including models from previous reports), go to www.which.co.uk/settopboxes

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Performance and ease of use	50%
Features	40%
Power consumption	10%

KEY

★ ☆ ○ ● ●	Best Worst
■	Best Buy

Set-top boxes

MODEL

	Specification		Audio outputs		Convenience		Performance				Score (%)
	Price (£)	Size (cm) wxdxh	Analogue	Digital	EPG	Use	Interactive features	Text	Power (standby)	Power (in use)	
1 Humax F2 Fox T	85	26x21x6	✓	✓	★	★	★	○	★	★	81
2 Sony VTXD800	100	25x15x3	✓	✓	★	○	★	○	○	★	74
3 Digifusion FRT101T	90	23x20x4			○	★	●	★	★	★	60
4 Philips DTR500	70	26x17x4	✓	✓	●	●	●	★	○	★	60
5 Daewoo DS700	50	23x20x4			○	★	●	★	★	★	59
6 Sagem ITD66	80	22x14x4	✓	✓	●	●	○	★	○	★	56
7 Echostar T-105	100	36x23x5	✓	✓	●	●	●	●	○	★	51
8 Digifusion FRT101	60	21x19x6	✓		●	●	●	●	●	○	36