



## Digital satellite receivers

Most receivers are digital these days, with a handful also able to pick up analogue channels. To use them you'll need a suitably sized dish pointed at the satellite you want (see Channel Check) fitted with a universal LNB. Pay-TV channels require a CAM (or a receiver with one built in) and a viewing card. Watching high-definition TV requires a dedicated receiver. None of the following can be used to watch Sky.

**HDTV receiver:** Suitable for high-definition TV  
**Combined analogue:** Can receive analogue and digital channels  
**LNB loopthrough:** Can pass dish signal to a second receiver if first is in standby  
**DiSEqC level:** Version 1.2 provides positioning and movement limits. USALS and Satscan can be used to calculate positions of satellites

**Polariser control:** Polarisers are controlled by pulse (servo motor), current (magnetic), or voltage (combined LNB/polariser used in universal LNBs). Only current and pulse control allow skew adjustment for multi-satellite  
**Symbol rate:** Data rate varies between transponders. Astra, Eurobird and Hot Bird use 22000 and 27500

**FEC:** Forward Error Correction is used by channels to help receivers correct transmission errors. Most detect it automatically (A) but selectable FEC can help locate weak signals.  
**CAM:** A Conditional Access Module (CAM) required to access encrypted channels with a viewing card – often built into/supplied with receiver

**Card slots:** A viewing card is required to watch encrypted channels  
**Common interface:** Slot for inserting CAMs  
**RS232 interface:** Links a printer or other peripherals to receiver and can be used to add PC software updates  
**UHF tuning range:** Some receivers have a modulator for watching without using a Scart connector

Make and model	Receiver price	HDTV receiver	Combined analogue	No of LNB inputs	LNB loopthrough	DiSEqC level	Polariser control	Satellite positions	No of channels	Symbol rate	FEC	CAM	Card slots	Common interface	Event timer	Teletext	RS232 interface	Software update	No of Scarts	S-video outputs	Digital audio output	Dolby Digital	UHF tuning range	Comments	Rating (%)	Tested
Digenius TV Box	£299	-	-	1	-	1.2	Voltage	100	5,000	1000-45000	S	-	2	-	-	●	●	OTA	2	-	●	●	21-69	DTT/sat combi. Great images but user-unfriendly	65	Dec 04
Dreambox 500S	£149	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	65	UL	2000-45000	S	Dreamcrypt	-	1	●	●	●	PC	2	-	●	-	21-69	Palm-sized brother of 7020s is good value	82	Oct 04
Dreambox 7020S	£349	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	65	UL	2000-45000	S	Dreamcrypt	-	1	●	●	●	PC	2	-	●	-	21-69	Uniquely customisable Linux-based receiver	72	May 05
Echostar DSB-780 FTA	£99	-	-	1	●	1.2	Voltage	100	4,500	4,500	A	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	2	-	●	●	21-69	Slick menus. Disappointing remote	75	Mar 05
Force 516S CV	£299	-	-	1	●	1.2/2.0	Voltage	35	5,000	2000-45000	F	Conax/Viaccess	2	2	●	●	●	OTA	2	-	●	●	21-69	Great value for money. No manual	80	Aug 04
Force D-Master 2044S	£399	-	-	1	●	1.2/2.0	Voltage	36	3,500	1000-45000	S	Viaccess	2	2	●	●	●	OTA/PC	2	-	●	●	21-69	Good DVD/sat combo but steep learning curve	-	Mar 04
Fortec Star Lifetime Diamond	£130	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	50	3,000	2000-45000	F	-	-	-	●	●	●	PC	2	-	-	-	21-69	FTA sat/Freeview combi. Poor AV support	75	Sep 04
Fortec Star Ultimate	£259	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	49	10,000	2000-45000	S	Conax	1	2	●	●	●	PC	1	-	●	●	21-69	Competent twin tuner sat PVR. No S-video support	70	Apr 05
Fortec Star FSCH-5100 Diamond	£129	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	54	3,000	1000-45000	A	-	-	2	●	●	●	PC	2	-	●	-	21-69	DTT/sat combi. Power scan, poor AV support	73	Aug 05
Fortec Star FSCH-5100 Platinum	£109	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	64	4,000	2000-45000	A	-	-	2	●	●	●	PC	2	-	●	-	21-69	Budget CI receiver. Good picture; lacks digital audio	77	Sept 05
Fortec Star Lifetime Classic	£60	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	60	5,000	2000-45000	S	-	-	-	-	●	●	PC	2	-	-	-	21-69	Cheap FTA receiver. Limited connections	75	Dec 05
Humax F2 Fox	£99	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	51	2,500	1000-45000	S	-	-	-	●	●	●	OTA/PC	2	-	●	-	21-69	Compact, speedy FTA box. Also expensive	80	May 05
ICE FC3000CI	£99	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	32	5,000	1000-45000	A	-	-	2	●	●	●	OTA/PC	2	1	●	-	21-69	Some picture feathering but, overall, good value	76	Nov 04
Inverto IDL5000 HD	£299	●	-	1	●	1.2	Voltage	20	6,000	2000-45000	A	Irdeto	1	-	●	●	●	OTA	-	●	●	●	21-69	Budget HD receiver lacks digital video outputs	71	Jun 05
Kaon KVR-1000Plus	€900	-	-	2	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	60	8,000	2000-45000	A	-	2	2	●	-	●	OTA/PC	2	2	●	●	21-69	Excellent PVR receiver and multimedia	90	Mar 05
Liberty CI9800	£129	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	40	5,000	1000-45000	S	-	-	2	●	●	●	PC	2	-	●	●	21-69	Budget CI receiver, but poor performance	71	Mar 05
Lidl Digital Camping Satellite System	£70	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	32	4,000	2000-45000	S	-	-	-	●	●	●	2	-	●	-	-	21-69	Dish and receiver in one bargain box	87	Aug 05
Manhattan Plaza ST-200	£129	-	-	1	●	1.2/USALS	Voltage	40	5,000	2000-45000	S	Irdeto (optional)	-	2	●	●	●	OTA/PC	2	●	●	●	21-69	Low price, great features, but tuner lacking	79	Nov 04
Manhattan Plaza ST-550	£249	-	-	1	-	1.2/USALS	Voltage	40/	5,000	2000-45000	S	Irdeto	-	2	●	●	●	OTA/PC	2	●	●	●	21-69	Great blind search and performance	87	Feb 05