

# The new remote: your tablet or smartphone

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Your grandparents probably had but a handful of fuzzy TV stations for distraction. The rest of us more likely flip through dozens if not hundreds of channels, thanks to cable and satellite service.

The latest multiplier is the Internet, which brings even bigger streams of programming from YouTube, Google TV, Netflix, Hulu and other sources.

What's the best way to merge all of your favorite content? Yep, there are apps for that, which means a tablet or smartphone can be a good choice for bringing it all together – and sometimes making it mobile.

Here are some of our favorite systems:

## Basic control

↓ For those still fighting with a remote for every device in their home theater lineup, help can be found in a tiny dongle that plugs into the earphone jack of a tablet or smartphone.

Download the app for Zmart Remote to use your iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch or Android smartphone as a universal remote. Use the app to control your DVD and Blu-ray players, cable box, home theater components and other systems. Check here to find out whether your electronics brands are compatible: [viatekproducts.com/zmart-remote-supported-devices](http://viatekproducts.com/zmart-remote-supported-devices).

An online video walks you through the process for setting up individual rooms and connecting devices in those spaces. Commands are transferred by wireless signals to your tablet or phone. It's easy to toggle back and forth between devices, and all the familiar remote commands appear as touch-screen buttons. One dongle comes with two activation codes, which allows programming on a second device.

## • Changing habits

• 56 percent of U.S. households that receive Internet service through high-speed networks such as cable or satellite have at least one television connected to the Internet directly (smart TVs) or indirectly (Blu-ray, game consoles, etc.), according to TDG Research, a technology research firm. The number of smart TVs doubled between 2012 and 2013, from 12 percent to 25 percent, the company noted.

• By 2017, 2 billion mobile users will watch TV and video on their devices, according to Juniper Research, a mobile market research firm.

• 53 percent of tablet owners already watch video or TV on their devices at least once a month, compared to 20 percent of smartphone owners, according to comScore, a source for digital analytics.

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Retails for \$19.99 at [myzmartproducts.com](http://myzmartproducts.com). Need more devices – maybe for the babysitter’s smartphone? Additional activation codes are \$12.99.

## Long-distance access

← For the sports junkie who has a special cable or net-based package featuring the home team, the Slingbox 500 captures content sent to your home television or DVR and forwards it in real-time to a second device (tablet, phablet or laptop). Send the Tar Heel game from your home theater system to your tablet while you are on the road in Japan.

Setup is simple, with an initial connection of the set-top box to satellite or a cable box. Download the app to a smartphone or tablet, and you’ll have access to your cable/satellite programs wherever you connect to the Internet. You can also tie in your DVR to record or play remotely. Slingbox has full HD picture, no subscription service, and can be streamed to up to five devices. \$300 at Best Buy, Amazon and online at [www.slingbox.com/go/buy](http://www.slingbox.com/go/buy).

## Connect your TV to the Internet

← Converting your television to a smart TV, one that incorporates an Internet browser and allows Web navigation, is a bigger, bolder way to browse or watch YouTube, Google TV, Hulu, Nickelodeon and other content.

FAVI Entertainment’s thumb-size SmartStick converts televisions that are equipped with a High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI), without need for cable or a set-top box. Use your tablet as a controller/remote after downloading your preferred apps, or purchase FAVI’s SmartStick Keyboard Controller with touchpad, a mini keyboard/touchpad that also has traditional TV controls. Starts at \$49.99, plus \$39.99 for Keyboard Controller.

Available at [www.favientertainment.com/default.asp](http://www.favientertainment.com/default.asp).

## Personalize your content

↑ If you find yourself wanting to share great programs with family or friends and wishing they could do the same, check out Peel, a free app for Apple and Android tablets and smartphones. Peel builds in social media



connections and makes program recommendations based on your likes and interests.

Tap on a program icon to get brief program summaries. Tap again to go right to that show. [peel.com/dl/download-peel](http://peel.com/dl/download-peel).

## Imbedded remote onscreen

Chromemote is a free app for your tablet, smartphone or computer browser that superimposes a “virtual remote” on screen, allowing you to control Google TV and any devices attached to it. Use your mouse or touchpad to point, click and “fling” programs to your TV for instant viewing. <http://bit.ly/1bjdZXt>.



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