

Best TVs to Buy Right Now

Consumer Reports tests hundreds of televisions each year. These 4K sets rise to the top.

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With clearance sales for 2018 models now well underway and more movies and TV series being presented in 4K and high dynamic range (HDR), this may be a great time to buy a new 4K TV.

Many of these older sets are still in Consumer Reports' TV ratings, and some of them are now at their lowest prices ever. But we have dozens of 2019 sets in our TV ratings as well.

Below, you'll find some of the best TVs you can buy, mainly in 65-inch screen sizes. (Most are also available in smaller screen sizes if you're looking to save money or don't need a TV that big.) While many of these models are pricey, we've also included a great 65-inch 4K set that costs less than \$1,000.

Before we get to the individual models, it pays to understand the two basic technologies used in today's televisions.

LCD vs. OLED TVs

You can choose between two basic TV display technologies: LCDs, which are also called LED TVs for the LED backlights that illuminate the screen, and OLED sets, where each pixel generates its own light.

There are far fewer OLED TVs on the market, and they tend to be more expensive, though prices have dropped significantly over the past year. OLED sets can deliver a truly stunning picture, in part because they do a great job of displaying the blackest parts of an image. The deepest shadows can really look black, as in real life, rather than gray. OLED TVs also have unlimited viewing angles, so the picture still looks great if you view it from a side of a room.

The list below includes 4K OLED sets from LG and Sony that battled it out for the top spot in our ratings. In some instances, the scoring was so close it was difficult to call one a clear winner.

A huge majority of TVs being sold are LCD sets. You can find some highly rated LCD sets for less than \$1,000, even in the largest screen sizes. But premium LCD TVs can cost several times that.

LCD-based sets generally can't deliver OLED-like blacks, but they get better every year, especially models that use full-array backlights, where the LEDs are spread across the entire rear

panel instead of just along the edges.

These models also include a feature called local dimming, which divides the backlights into zones that can be separately dimmed or illuminated, depending on the scene. This, too, can help improve black levels.

Most TVs, though, are edge-lit, meaning the LEDs are positioned on the sides of the screen. Some of these sets also include local dimming, though this feature tends to be less effective on these sets than with those that use full-array backlights. In general, LCD TVs tend to be brighter than OLEDs, making them a good choice for well-lit rooms.

Each year we test about 250 individual TVs from major brands such as LG, Samsung, and Sony, as well as emerging TV companies such as TCL. All of the sets in our ratings go through a battery of objective measurements and subjective evaluations designed to push them to their limits.

And like all the products that Consumer Reports tests, every TV we evaluate is purchased at retail. We don't accept freebies or handpicked models from manufacturers, so every tested model is just like one you might take home.

We'll be regularly updating this article as more 2019 sets make their way into our labs for testing.

Best TV Overall

LG OLED55CP9PUA

Although a few Sony OLED sets are at the top of our TV ratings now, it's mainly due to their higher reliability scores. So there's a strong argument to be made that this is the best TV we've tested so far this year.

The 55-inch 2019 LG OLED55C9PUA—the only size in this series we've tested so far—earned top scores for HD and UHD picture quality, and did a bit better than the Sony OLEDs when it comes to HDR performance. (LG 4K TVs support several HDR formats used by content creators: HDR10, Dolby Vision, HLG, and Advanced HDR by Technicolor.)

Like all OLED TVs, this model has an almost unlimited viewing angle, and the sound is also top-notch, among the best we've tested. As a bonus, it supports Dolby Atmos audio, which can give a soundtrack a three-dimensional effect. LG's updated smart TV platform includes its own voice-enabled

ThinQ artificial intelligence platform as well as built-in support for the Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa digital voice assistants.

CR QUICK TAKE

86

RECOMMENDED

LG OLED55C9PUA

- HD PICTURE QUALITY
- ULTRA HD PERFORMANCE
- HDR

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Best TV Overall, Part II

Sony XBR-65A9F

LG OLED TVs have dominated our TV ratings for the past several years, but this Sony OLED TV gives even LG's best sets a run for the money. In fact, thanks to its high reliability score, Sony OLED TVs bumped several LG OLED models from the top of our ratings.

There's a lot to like about the Sony XBR-65AF9, a 2018 model in the company's new high-end—meaning pricey—Master series. This TV has great overall picture quality, plus the unlimited viewing angle we've come to expect from OLED TVs. It can also deliver an effective HDR experience. (The Sony supports the HDR10, Dolby Vision, and HLG HDR formats.)

This set also has Sony's unique "Acoustic Surface" audio technology, which uses vibrating actuators that turn the entire panel into a speaker and delivers Excellent sound quality. Sony 4K TVs use Google's Android TV smart TV platform, which offers access to Google Cast for streaming from mobile devices. It includes built-in Google Assistant and is compatible with the Amazon Alexa digital voice assistant.

CR QUICK TAKE

90

RECOMMENDED

Sony XBR-55A9F

- HD PICTURE QUALITY
- ULTRA HD PERFORMANCE
- HDR

See all TVs Ratings

Best TVs That Aren't OLEDs

Samsung QN65Q90R

Samsung QN65Q80R

So far, our top two 65-inch LCD-based 2019 sets come from Samsung. Both the flagship Samsung QN65Q90R model and the Samsung QN65Q80R, the model below it, offer top-notch HD and UHD picture quality, along with very effective HDR performance, among the best of any tested sets. They also boast very good sound.

In addition, they have full-array LED backlights with local dimming, where the tiny LEDs are grouped into zones that can

be controlled individually. (The main difference between the models is that the Q90R has more dimmable zones.) With local dimming, parts of the screen go truly dark during nighttime or indoor scenes.

But the real difference between these two sets and other Samsung models in 2019 is that they use a special screen formulation that produces the widest viewing angle we've ever seen from an LCD-based TV.

Both models have Samsung's smart TV platform, which includes the company's own Bixby digital voice assistant, plus compatibility with Google Home and Amazon Alexa voice assistants. And at least for now, Samsung smart TVs are the only TVs that have the new Apple TV app, which lets you watch iTunes movies and TV shows right from the TV itself.

CR QUICK TAKE

86

RECOMMENDED

Samsung QN65Q90R

- HD PICTURE QUALITY
- ULTRA HD PERFORMANCE
- HDR

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CR QUICK TAKE

85

RECOMMENDED

Samsung QN65Q80R

- HD PICTURE QUALITY
- ULTRA HD PERFORMANCE
- HDR

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Best Super-Sized TV

Sony XBR-70X830F

LG 70UK6570PUB

When it comes to the jumbo-sized TVs in our ratings, 2018 produced a toss-up between the Sony XBR-70X830F and the LG 70UK6570PUB, which have nearly identical scores.

Both have Excellent high-def picture quality, Very Good UHD performance, and comparable viewing-angle scores. The LG sounds a little bit better, but we're giving the Sony set the nod as our top pick because it has a slight edge in HDR performance and reducing motion blur. (Sony TVs also have a bit better reliability scores.)

But the LG set is a few hundred dollars cheaper right now, so there's a strong argument for it being the better deal.

CR QUICK TAKE

76

RECOMMENDED

Sony XBR-70X830F

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CR QUICK TAKE

85

BEST BUY

LG 70UK6570PUB

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Best TV for Under \$1,000

TCL 65R615

Despite its comparatively low price—we're seeing it for about \$800 right now—this 65-inch 4K set, a Roku TV model, delivers the goods with Excellent scores for HD and UHD picture quality, and very effective HDR performance—something not usually found at this price. The one big drawback is the Fair sound. But the set could be a great choice for those thinking of using an external

sound system, such as a sound bar speaker.

Note that TCL's R615 models are exclusive to Best Buy, but they're almost identical to the R617 sets sold elsewhere. The difference? The R617 sets come with a voice-enabled Roku remote and cost a bit more.

CR QUICK TAKE

69

TCL 65R615

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CR QUICK TAKE

68

TCL 65R617

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