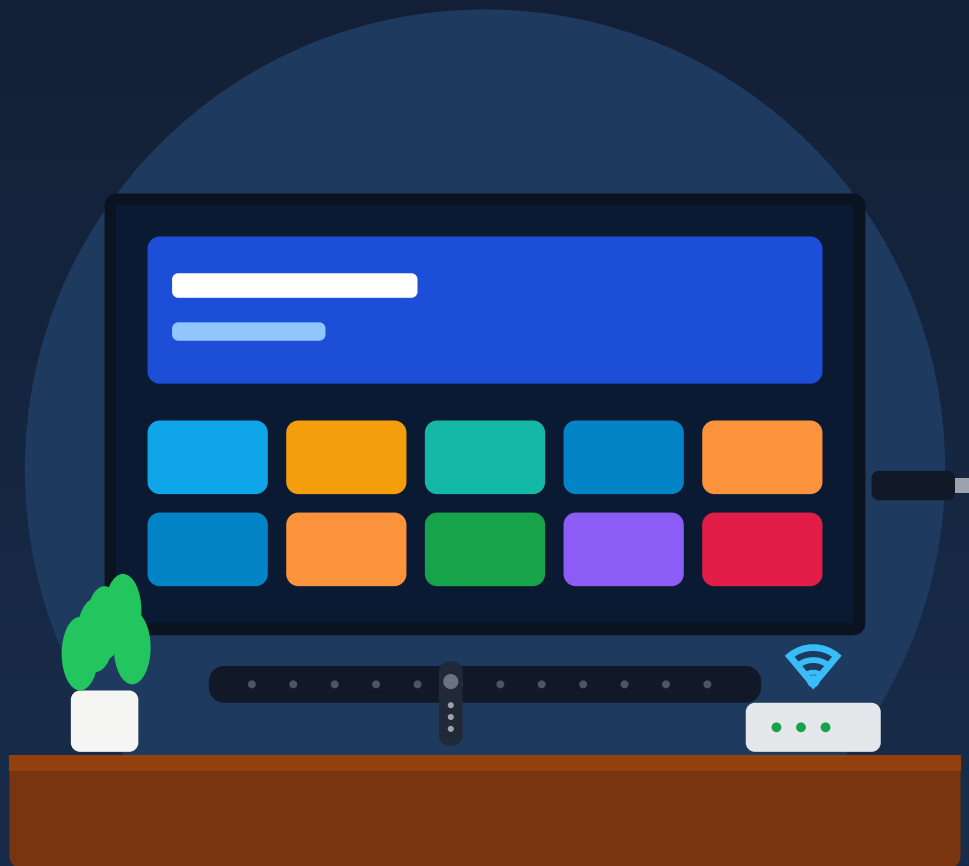




FREE GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

Choosing the Right Streaming Device

Fire TV, Google TV, Roku, Apple TV or your smart TV — for Irish homes

Start here: do you even need one?

Every legal streaming service in Ireland — RTÉ Player, Virgin Media Play, TG4 Player, Netflix, Disney+, NOW, GAA+ and the rest — runs through an app. The only question is *where* that app runs: on the TV itself, or on a small device plugged into it.

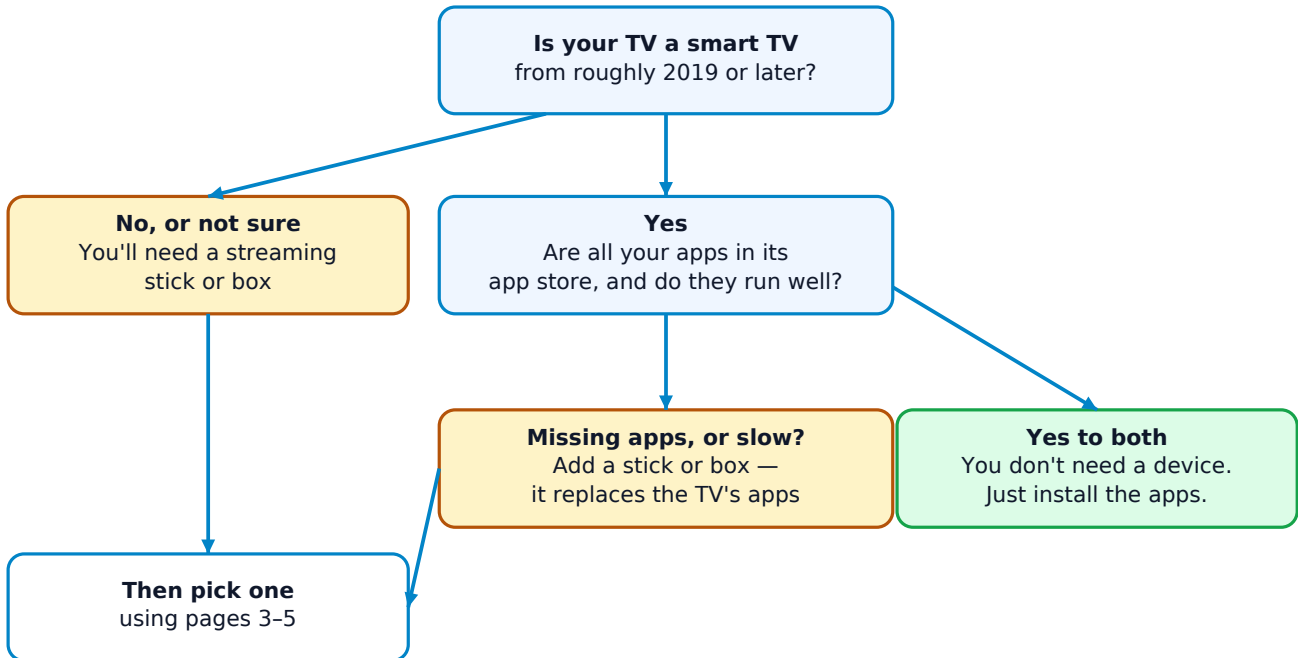


Figure 1. Deciding whether you need a streaming device.

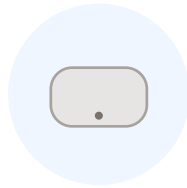
The quick test

Open your TV's app store and search for **RTÉ Player**, **Virgin Media Play** and any paid service you use. If they're all there and the menus don't lag, you're done. If an app is missing, or your TV no longer gets software updates, a streaming stick is usually the cheapest fix — far cheaper than a new TV.

The five types of streaming setup



Streaming stick
Fire TV Stick



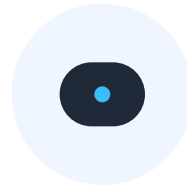
Streaming box
Google TV Streamer



Premium box
Apple TV 4K



Smart TV apps
Samsung, LG, Sony...



Provider box
Sky Stream, Virgin 360

Type	What it is	Good for	Watch out for
Streaming stick	Plugs straight into an HDMI port; powered from the wall	Cheapest way to modernise any TV with HDMI	Wi-Fi only on most sticks unless you add an adapter
Streaming box	A small box beside or behind the TV	Faster, more storage, often an Ethernet port	Costs more than a stick
Premium box	Apple TV 4K	iPhone households, polished interface, long software support	Highest price
Smart TV apps	Apps built into the TV (Samsung, LG, Sony, Philips, TCL, Hisense...)	No extra box or remote	Older TVs stop getting app updates; some apps disappear
Provider box	Sky Stream, Virgin TV 360, Eir Vision box	One remote for live channels, recordings and apps	Tied to a monthly TV contract

Avoid “fully loaded” boxes

Android boxes sold as “fully loaded” or “IPTV ready” with every channel for a one-off fee are selling access to pirated streams. They're illegal in Ireland, often carry malware, and stop working without warning. Every device in this guide is a mainstream product that only runs licensed apps from an official app store.

The main devices, compared

Amazon Fire TV

The most common choice in Irish homes: wide app support, an Alexa voice remote, and frequent sales. The range runs from a basic HD stick to the Fire TV Stick 4K and 4K Max and the hands-free Fire TV Cube.

- **Best for:** most households, especially Amazon Prime members.
- **Watch out:** the home screen promotes Prime Video content heavily.
- **New in 2025-26: the Fire TV Stick 4K Select** runs Amazon's new Vega OS instead of Android. Its app store is different and still growing, and you can't sideload apps. Before buying one, check that the Irish apps you need (RTÉ Player, Virgin Media Play, TG4 Player, GAA+) are listed for it — or choose a Fire OS model such as the Fire TV Stick 4K or 4K Max.

Google TV Streamer

Google's replacement for the Chromecast with Google TV, which was discontinued in 2024. It's a small box rather than a stick, with 4K HDR and Dolby Vision, 32GB of storage, built-in casting, an Ethernet port and a smart-home panel. It costs €119 from the Google Store in Ireland.

- **Best for:** Android phone users, and anyone who casts a lot from their phone.
- **Watch out:** pricier than basic sticks. If you already own a Chromecast with Google TV, it still works — there's no need to replace it.

Apple TV 4K

The most polished interface and the longest software support, with tight iPhone integration (AirPlay, quick sign-in from your iPhone). RTÉ Player and GAA+ both have Apple TV apps.

- **Best for:** iPhone households who want a premium, ad-light experience.
- **Watch out:** the most expensive option here.

Roku

Simple, uncluttered menus and a straightforward remote, which suits less tech-confident viewers. Roku isn't officially sold in Ireland, so you'll be buying a UK model from a marketplace or importer.

- **Best for:** anyone who finds other menus confusing.
- **Watch out:** warranty and returns can be harder, and support for Irish apps has been patchier — check the Roku Channel Store for RTÉ Player and Virgin Media Play first. GAA+ lists Roku as supported.

Smart TVs and provider boxes

Smart TV platforms

Platform	Found on	Notes
Tizen	Samsung	Strong app support on recent models. GAA+ supports Samsung TVs from 2021 onwards
webOS	LG	Well supported by Irish apps, including RTÉ Player and GAA+
Google TV / Android TV	Sony, Philips, TCL, Hisense (some)	Uses the Google Play store, so most apps are available
Fire TV built in	Xiaomi, Panasonic (some), Amazon-branded TVs	Same app store as a Fire TV Stick
VIDAA	Hisense	Smaller app store — check for Irish apps before buying

Rule of thumb: TV makers only keep updating a model's apps for a number of years. After that, apps may slow down or be withdrawn, and a stick is the cheapest way to keep the TV useful.

Provider boxes

If you pay for Sky, Virgin Media or Eir TV, your box already runs many of the apps you need, including RTÉ Player on Sky and Virgin TV 360. Check what your box offers before buying another device — you may only need one for a service your provider doesn't carry.

Which one should you buy?

If you...	Our suggestion
Want the easiest all-rounder	Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K (Fire OS)
Have an older TV in a bedroom or kitchen	A basic HD Fire TV stick
Use an Android phone and cast a lot	Google TV Streamer
Live in the Apple world	Apple TV 4K
Want the simplest possible menus	Roku (check Irish apps first)
Have a recent Samsung or LG TV	Probably nothing — try the built-in apps first
Watch lots of live sport in 4K	A box with an Ethernet port, wired to your router

Setting up a streaming stick in 10 minutes

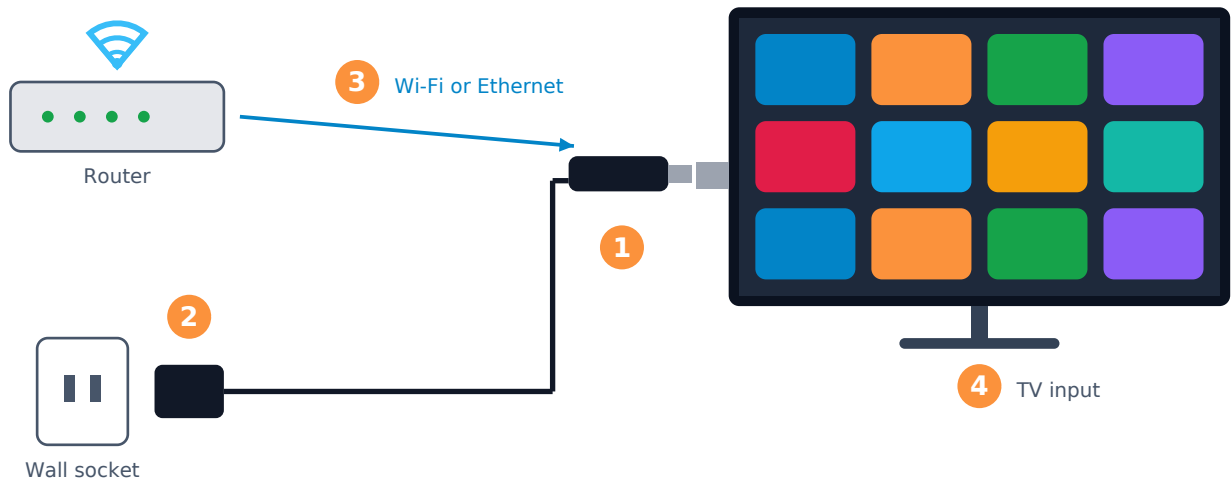
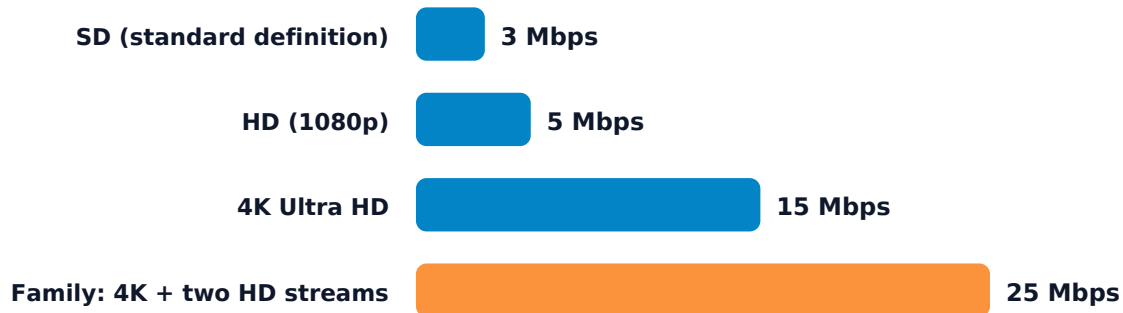


Figure 2. 1 stick into the HDMI port · 2 power from the wall · 3 Wi-Fi from your router · 4 switch the TV to that input.

1. **Plug in.** Put the stick in a free HDMI port. If it won't fit, use a short HDMI extender (Fire TV sticks include one) — it also improves Wi-Fi reception.
2. **Power it from the wall.** Use the supplied adapter. TV USB ports often don't give enough power, which causes random restarts.
3. **Pick the input.** Press Input or Source on your TV remote and choose the HDMI port you used.
4. **Join Wi-Fi and sign in.** Follow the on-screen steps and sign in to your Amazon, Google, Apple or Roku account.
5. **Install your apps.** Start with RTÉ Player, Virgin Media Play and TG4 Player (all free), then your paid services.
6. **Sign in to each app.** Most show a short code on screen that you enter on your phone — quicker than typing passwords with a remote.
7. **Tidy up.** Turn on HDMI-CEC (sometimes called Anynet+, SimpLink or Bravia Sync) so one remote controls the TV volume and power.

Broadband and Wi-Fi: the real secret to smooth streaming

Most buffering isn't the device's fault — it's the connection between your router and the TV. Here's how much speed you need, per stream:



Per-stream figures are Netflix's recommendations; the family figure adds them together.

Figure 3. Recommended broadband speed per stream. Source: Netflix Help Centre.

Five fixes that work

1. **Run a speed test on the TV itself** (most devices have one in Settings, or use the Netflix app's network check). Your broadband may be fast at the router but slow at the TV.
2. **Use Ethernet where you can.** A cable, or a USB Ethernet adapter for a stick, beats Wi-Fi every time for live sport.
3. **Move the router out of cupboards** and away from the TV's metal back panel. Thick stone walls are common in Irish houses and block Wi-Fi badly.
4. **Add a mesh system** if the TV is two or more rooms from the router. It works better than a single plug-in extender.
5. **Restart everything** — router, then device — if streams suddenly get worse. It fixes most sudden slowdowns.

Useful extras

A certified **High-Speed or Ultra High-Speed HDMI cable** for 4K HDR boxes, a **long Ethernet cable** or **mesh Wi-Fi** for distant rooms, and a **soundbar** — the single biggest upgrade over TV speakers. See our Best Prices page on onairireland.ie for current options.

More free guides from On Air Ireland

Everything on our site covers licensed, legal services only. Good places to go next:

- **Best streaming devices for Irish homes** —
onairireland.ie/devices/best-streaming-devices-ireland/
- **Best budget streaming sticks** —
onairireland.ie/devices/best-budget-streaming-sticks-for-irish-homes-in-2026/
- **Fire TV Stick 4K Max: worth the upgrade?** —
onairireland.ie/reviews/fire-tv-stick-4k-max-worth-the-upgrade/
- **Google TV Streamer review** —
onairireland.ie/reviews/google-tv-streamer-review-should-you-switch-from-fire-tv/
- **How to set up RTÉ Player on a Fire TV Stick** —
onairireland.ie/installation-guides/how-to-set-up-rte-player-fire-tv/
- **Why is my streaming app buffering?** —
onairireland.ie/troubleshooting/why-is-my-streaming-app-buffering-common-fixes/
- **Every legal streaming service in Ireland, with prices** —
onairireland.ie/streaming-services/legal-streaming-services-ireland-2026/

Sources

Google Store Ireland, “Google TV Streamer (4K)”; Tom's Guide, “Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K Select review”; Cord Busters, “Fire TV 4K Select hits UK: Vega OS changes everything”; GAA+ Support, “On what devices can I watch GAA+?”; Netflix Help Centre, “Internet connection speed recommendations”; Wikipedia, “RTÉ Player” and “Virgin Media Play”.

This guide reflects information available in September 2026. App availability, device models and prices change often — check the app store listing and the retailer's page before you buy. Some links on onairireland.ie are affiliate links; as an Amazon Associate we earn from qualifying purchases. On Air Ireland is independent and not affiliated with any device maker or broadcaster.