

#1: Secrets of the Remote

Be Smarter Than Your Smart TV

Smart TVs and Streaming Services

Many of us use our television remote control for a very limited range of operations: switch the TV on or off, adjust the volume, or change the channel. Or, if we're a bit more adventurous, switch to a different device input. This seminar is designed to demonstrate a surprising variety of functions one can perform using the TV remote, from modifying user settings to streaming a favorite movie, all from the comfort of a favorite easy chair. Note: we will not cover using the cable box or satellite dish remote in this session.

Smart TVs

Smart TVs are also known as connected TVs. What makes a TV smart is that it has integrated Internet and interactive Web 2.0 support. This allows a user to stream videos and music, browse the internet, and view photos. It's basically a TV with a built-in computer.

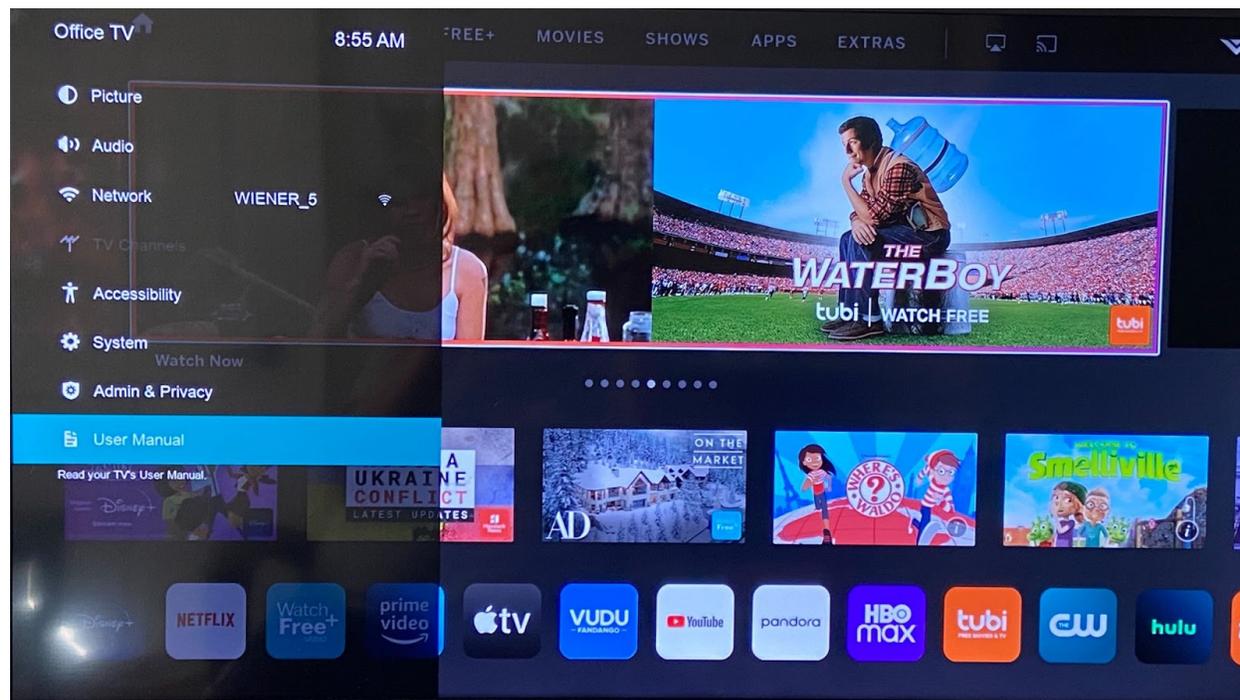


Do I have one and do I need one? Chances are if you purchased a new TV within the last five or so years, you have one. If you don't have one, you don't necessarily need one to enjoy the features of a smart TV. Many other connectivity options exist. If your television service is provided by COX or DirecTV, your set-top box will include streaming options. There are also external devices you may purchase for a fraction of the cost of a new television, such as Apple TV, Roku, or FireStick. Even some Blu-Ray disc players come with smart features.

TV settings

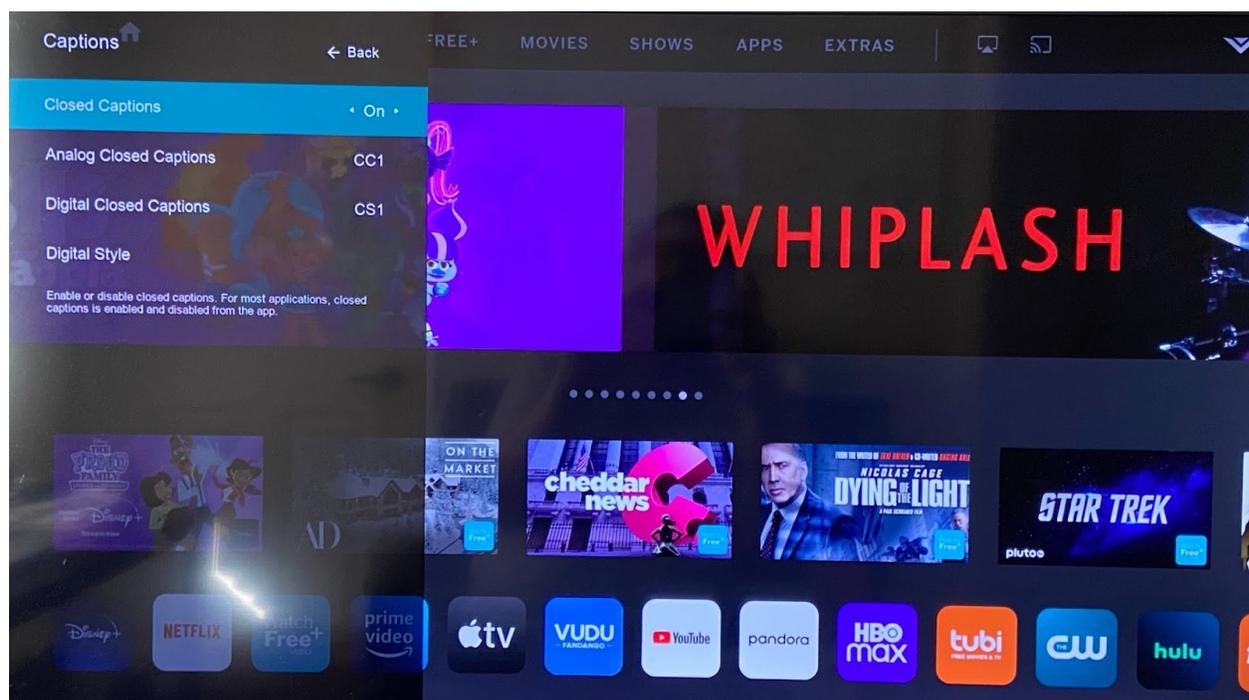
Your remote should have a **settings button**, usually marked with a **gear icon**, but sometimes indicated by the term **home** or **tools**. This button is the shortcut to all available settings for your television.

Most new TVs will have a **built-in user manual** which can be a very helpful thing. It makes it so you don't have to go find your printed user manual every time you have a question or need to refresh your memory about a particular function.

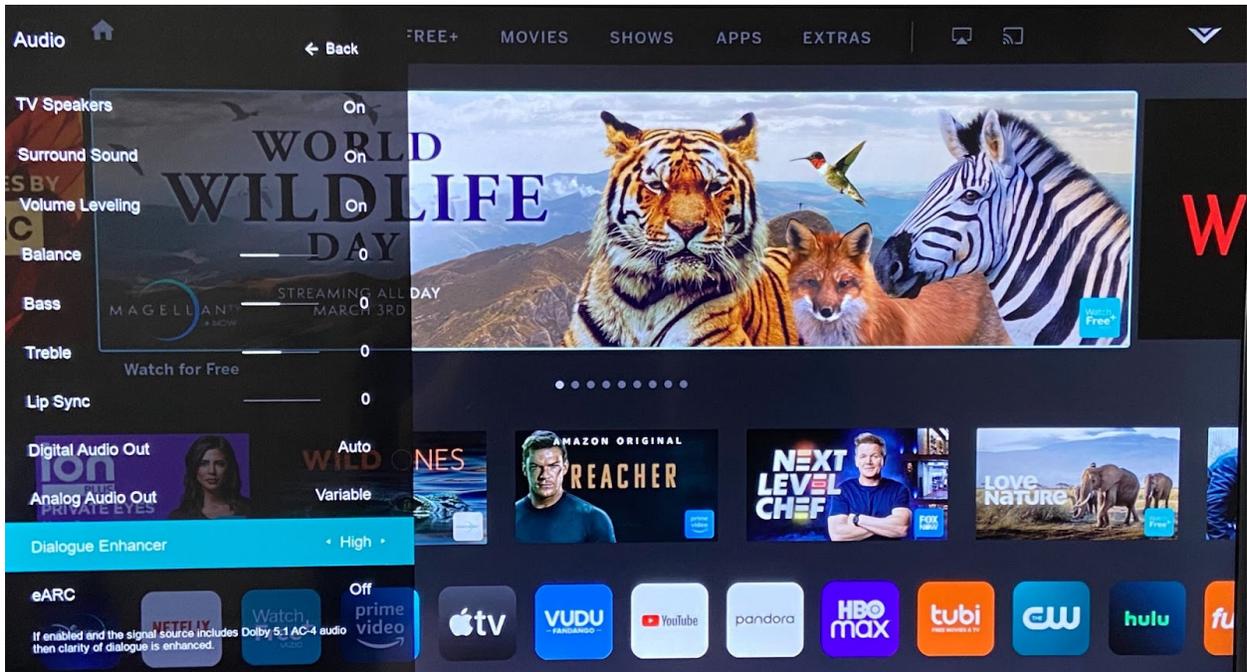


While one could wish that turning on or off **closed captioning services** was more intuitive, it often isn't. Closed captioning can be controlled from your TV settings or from within a streaming service. The former will set your television to display captions whenever it detects them as being available.

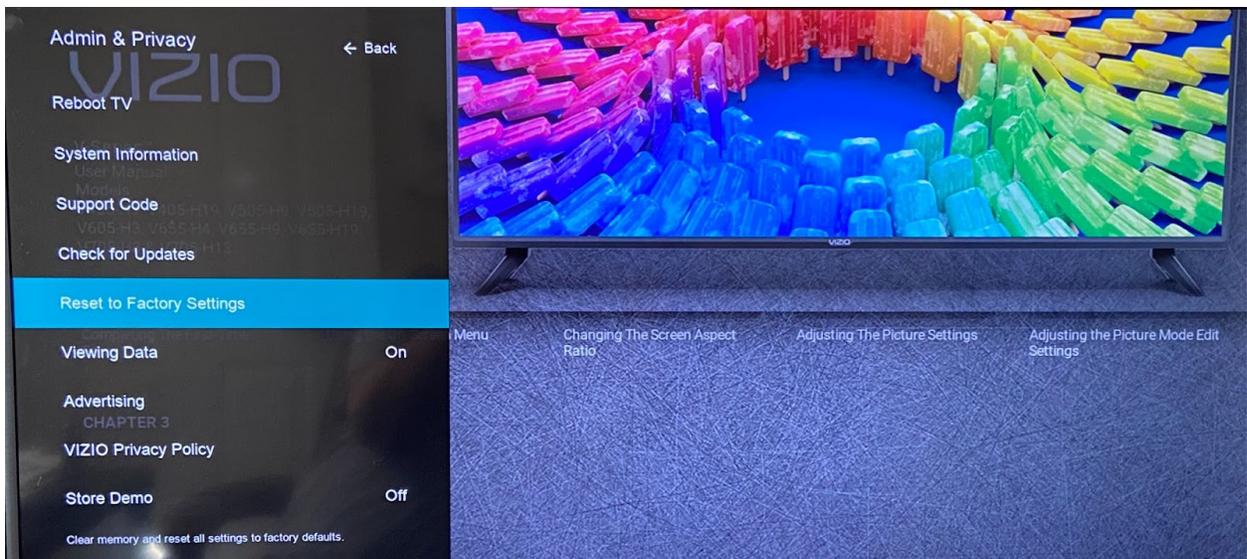
Within the settings menu on your TV, there may be an accessibility menu (see photo on previous page). That's where you'll find all the settings to help out those with lower hearing or vision. As a person who is hard of hearing I always have closed captions turned on through my TV.



Another helpful setting for people who have trouble with hearing is **dialogue enhancing**. This feature is usually to be found in the audio section of the settings menu (see photo on previous page). It works by boosting the volume of any speech in whatever is being displayed on screen. Many movies and television shows these days have a music score playing in the background of a scene of dialogue. Boosting the speech level is a very helpful way to increase your enjoyment of the content. See the image on the following page for an example.



One thing to remember about changing your TV settings is that nothing needs to be permanent. If you can't find a way to undo a thing you've done or if a setting changes and you don't know how it happened, you may always **reset your TV settings** to the original factory defaults. This feature will not always be easy to find, but all smart TVs have it. For this demo, my TV has the reset feature tucked into the **Admin and Privacy** settings. To find it on your TV at home, you may need to consult your user manual.



Find and view live, recorded, or streamed content

When looking for viewing options, the first thing you need to do is make sure you have the proper streaming device selected. A typical household may have up to three or more devices connected to a television as possible inputs. In addition to the offerings provided by the manufacturer of your smart TV, you may have a cable set-top box or DVD/Blu-Ray disc player connected, or an Apple TV, Firestick, or other device. Make your choice among these by pressing the **input or source button** on your remote control. Some TVs, like newer Samsung models, have input selections available in the **home menu**.



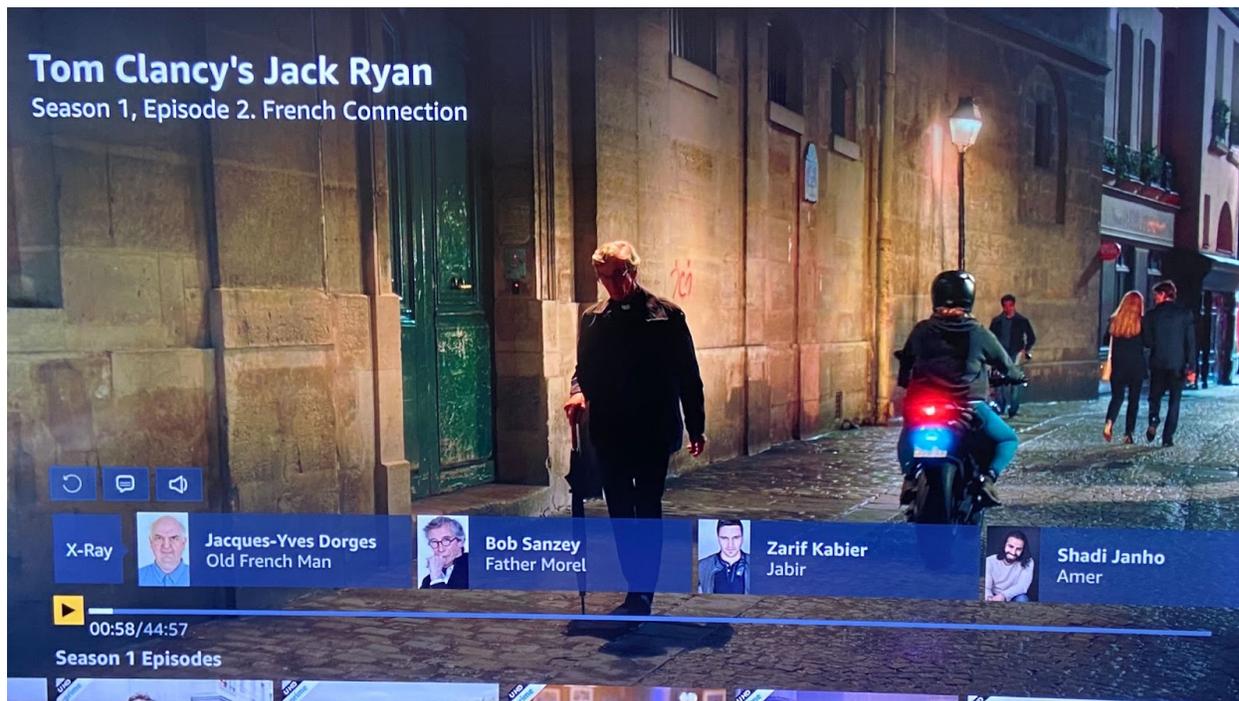
Once you've chosen your input device, it's time to **select content for viewing**. So, what are the options? This is where things get more complicated. There are so many options for streaming television shows, sports, or movies that it may be difficult for you to choose. Luckily, all streaming services provide a free trial period ranging from a couple of days to a couple of weeks. That gives you a chance to explore a provider's offerings without paying up front. But, beware! Most providers will want you to provide a credit card to sign up and will automatically charge you at the end of the trial period if you don't manually cancel the service.

If you look at the image on the first page of this handout, you'll see many different options, called **apps**, running across the bottom of the screen. Disney+, Hulu, Netflix, and Apple TV are known for high quality original productions you can only see by subscribing to their services. Other providers offer episodes of classic television or old movies. Research into each service is pretty straight forward. For example, if you navigate to **netflix.com** in your computer's browser, you can read all about what Netflix is currently streaming and the cost for a subscription. Remember, the providers want you to sign up, so they make finding out about their services fairly simple.

Once you've chosen a television show or movie to watch, you'll want to know how to **navigate** during your viewing: play, pause, stop, fast forward, rewind.



The **circle pad or arrow buttons** on your remote are going to be the most important tools while navigating to or within a streaming app. Use these to scroll on the screen or to highlight individual options. Think of these buttons as a computer mouse for your TV. Once you've selected a program or movie to view, streaming video service providers vary widely in what you can do during viewing.



When viewing video in **Amazon Prime Video**, for example, pressing the center button on your remote brings up play/pause/fast-forward/rewind options as well as the ability to see which actors appear in a given scene. Navigate to the actor to see a brief biography.

Other services have fewer options available while streaming, but even so, the center navigation button, or sometimes the up/down/right/left button, is your best friend. Regardless of what options a provider gives you, the center button is the way to find out what they are.

For individualized help with setting up a streaming service or any other issues with your digital devices (TV, computer, tablet, smart phone), I provide in-home help and training with very modest fees. Feel free to call, text, or email.

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Computer

Smart TV

Phone

Tablet

