

Audio Description for TV

Making the story clear for people with sight problems



'Pat looks up then rolls her eyes...'



'...as Peggy stares in disbelief at the illegal card game'

Find out how easy it is

to turn on 



**Audio
Description**

TV narration
for people with
sight problems

RNIB

supporting blind and
partially sighted people

If you've ever sat there struggling to see what's on TV you may want to think about turning on Audio Description. Audio Description (AD) is a free and existing service that can transform the enjoyment of TV for people who have difficulty seeing what's happening on the screen. Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has put together this leaflet to give you the facts you need to get yourself or someone you know set up with AD.

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What is Audio Description (AD)?

Like a narrator telling a story, an additional commentary describes body language, expressions and movements on TV programmes – allowing you to hear what you might not be able to see, so you don't miss a thing.



Audio Description

TV narration for people with sight problems

How can I find out more about Audio Description?

We've tried to cover everything you need to know about AD in this leaflet but if you have any questions that aren't answered we'd be happy to help.

Call the **Audio Description helpline on 08456 01 01 81**
Visit the **Audio Description website,**
www.audiodescription.org.uk

You can find a list of relevant numbers for suppliers and manufacturers at the end of this leaflet.

What programmes can I watch with Audio Description?

AD is an additional service that is available on all major TV channels; it is not a new channel.

Many popular soaps and sitcoms like EastEnders, Neighbours, Coronation Street and Friends are audio described, not to mention loads of dramas, documentaries, cookery shows, travel programmes, children's programmes and films.

You can find full audio described programme information by calling the AD Helpline or visiting the AD website.

RNIB's Big Print newspaper includes listings of audio described programming.

How can I get Audio Description?

To get AD, your TV must be able to receive digital TV.

If you do not have digital TV already, you will need to convert your TV to receive it using a digital set-top box or by replacing it with an Integrated Digital TV (IDTV). Be aware that not all set-top boxes and IDTVs can receive AD.

Advice: Buying AD-ready digital equipment can be a challenge. Store staff are often unaware of what AD is. You can call the AD helpline or visit the website to get specific model numbers before buying equipment.

Do I already have digital TV?

It's easy to find out. If you can receive more than five or six channels then you're probably already digital. For any other questions relating to digital TV contact Digital UK (see back page for contact details).

How much will Audio Description cost?

The AD service itself is free to receive and use, but because you need digital TV to get it, you may need to buy some equipment. Prices vary, so it's worth shopping around. Check out the AD webpage or call the AD helpline for information on affordable and suitable options.

A Digital Switchover Help Scheme exists and will provide support for some people depending on your situation. See page 9 for more information.

What are my options for buying equipment to receive AD?

There are three main ways you can receive AD.

1. Join Sky or Virgin Media

With Sky and Virgin Media, AD can be turned on and off using your remote control and on-screen menus. There are several payment options if you decide to join either Sky or Virgin Media. With Sky you can pay a one-off installation cost with no monthly payments (Freesat) or you can pay a monthly subscription for more channels. Virgin Media offers digital TV with no additional monthly payments (Size M) when taken with its phone package or you can pay a monthly subscription for more channels.

If you already have Sky or Virgin Media, you already have AD. Find out how to turn on AD on Sky on page 11. Details of how to turn on AD on Virgin Media can be found on page 13.

To join either Sky or Virgin Media contact them directly or speak to your local electrical retailer.

- For Sky call 08705 66 33 33 or visit www.sky.com
- For Virgin Media call 0800 052 2525 or visit www.virginmedia.com

2. Buy a Freeview digital box

This is a set-top box that allows you to get digital TV through your existing aerial. Only certain digital boxes allow you to receive AD. Currently only some TVonics and Portset Freeview boxes can receive digital TV with AD.

- For Portset digital boxes call 01489 893 919 or visit www.portset.co.uk
- TVonics digital boxes can be purchased from the following places:
 - RNIB's shop call 0845 702 3153 or visit www.rnib.org.uk/shop
 - TVonics call 0870 803 0551 or visit www.tvonics.com
 - John Lewis stores

3. Buy a Freeview Integrated Digital Television (IDTV)

An IDTV is a TV with a Freeview digital box built in. As with set-top digital boxes, not all can receive AD – currently, only certain Sony, Panasonic, Phillips and Toshiba IDTVs can. A list of up-to-date specific models that have AD can be obtained from the AD website or helpline.

IDTVs with Audio Description can be bought from most major and independent electrical retailers.

Important: Before you buy a Freeview digital box or Freeview IDTV

- A small number of areas in the UK cannot receive Freeview. To find out if you can receive it and when your area is switching to digital you can use Digital UK's postcode checker service. Call 08456 50 50 50 or visit www.digitaluk.co.uk Digital UK is the independent not-for-profit organisation leading the process of digital TV switchover in the UK.
- Five to ten per cent of existing TV aerials cannot receive a digital signal and may need to be upgraded. Digital UK can advise on registered installers in your area.

Is there any support to help me get the equipment I need for Audio Description?

You may be eligible for assistance from the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. This scheme has been set up to provide assistance to people who may need more support in switching to digital television.

You are eligible if:

- you are aged 75 or over
- you receive Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance or Mobility Supplement
- you are registered blind or partially sighted.

Some of the equipment options available from the Help Scheme will provide Audio Description. There may be a charge of £40 for basic help, depending on whether you receive income benefits or not.

The Help Scheme is being rolled out region by region and eligible people will be contacted a few months before switchover in their region.

Even if you are eligible for help, you may want to receive Audio Description before the Help Scheme comes to your area, in which case you can buy equipment as already

described. The Help Scheme will provide help to convert one TV to digital; you will have to convert other TVs yourself.

You need to be registered blind or partially sighted to qualify for help so if you think you could be registered, contact your ophthalmologist or ask your GP to refer you to an ophthalmologist.

There's currently no helpline number for the scheme but when there is, you will be able to find it from the AD helpline or website.



Already a Sky customer? Just turn on Audio Description

If you are a Sky (“Freesat” or subscription) customer you already have AD and just need to turn it on by following the steps below. You’ll need to use your remote control and follow an on-screen menu display.

If you have trouble seeing the display, call **Sky’s Accessibility Helpline on 08705 66 33 33** and they’ll talk you through the process. Once it’s set up, it’ll be on every time you turn on your TV.

Getting to the AD menu

- Press the “services” button on your remote control.
- Move the highlighter down to “system setup” and press “OK” or simply press 4 on the remote.
- Move the highlighter down to “languages and subtitles” and press “OK”, or press 3 on the remote.

Turning on AD and other options

The AD menu allows you to turn on a range of functions related to AD, including turning on AD itself.

- To turn on AD or any other function, use the highlighter to select an option then press the left or right (triangular) arrow keys to change the status from “Off” to “On”.

- The options that can be turned on or off are:
 - “Turn on AD”
 - “Indicate with a beep AD programmes when channel hopping”
 - “Flag AD programmes in white on the on-screen TV listings guide”

Saving your settings

Once you’ve set everything up how you want it, move the highlighter to “Save settings” and press “OK”.

To exit all menus, press the “Sky” button.

Using Audio Description on Sky

Even if you have turned on AD, certain channels need to be viewed on a different channel number to their regular one depending on where you live.

In London all channels are at their normal location

If you live in England (outside London)

BBC1 – Channel 974

ITV – Channel 993

BBC2 – Channel 102

Channel 4 – Channel 994

If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

BBC1 – Channel 974

ITV – Channel 993

BBC2 – Channel 989

Channel 4 – Channel 994

All other channels can be watched at their existing channel number and receive AD.

Already a Virgin Media* customer? Just turn on Audio Description

If you are a Virgin Media (*formerly NTL or Telewest) customer you already have AD and just need to turn it on. You'll need to use your remote control and follow an on-screen menu display. If you have trouble seeing the display, call Virgin Media's customer care line on 0800 052 2525 and they'll talk you through the process. Once it's set up, it will be on every time you turn on your TV.

Getting to the AD menu

- Press the "Home" or "Guide" button, (usually a large button towards the centre of the remote).
- A menu with nine options will appear. The options are numbered 1 to 9.
- Press 8 for "Settings".
- The settings menu has six options, numbered 1 to 6.
- Press 4 for "Change Display and Audio Settings".

Turning on AD

- The "Display and Audio" menu is an un-numbered list of items on the left of the page, and scrollable settings on the right.
- Push the down arrow four times to highlight the setting "Audio Description when available".
- Press the right arrow once. The display will change to "yes".

Saving your settings

Press the “OK” button to store settings

Even if you have turned on AD, certain channels need to be viewed on a different channel number to their regular one:

BBC1 – Channel 851

BBC2 – Channel 852

ITV1 – Channel 853

Channel 4 – Channel 854

Five – Channel 855

All other channels can be watched on their normal number and receive AD.

Does Audio Description only exist for TV?

No, AD exists across a range of different entertainment and cultural activities. For example:

- Cinema
- DVD
- Theatre
- Live sporting events
- Museums and Galleries

To find out more about AD in areas beyond TV call RNIB's Helpline on 0845 766 9999 or visit www.rnib.org.uk/audiodescription

Do you fancy helping out?

RNIB is looking for volunteers who want to support blind and partially sighted people with home technology, like setting up digital TV for Audio Description.

If you would like to find out more, contact the RNIB Volunteering Support Team on 0845 603 0575, email volunteering@rnib.org.uk or visit www.rnib.org.uk/volunteering

If you have any further questions about Audio Description on TV

- AD helpline: 08456 01 01 81
- AD website: www.audiodescription.org.uk

Get the right equipment

At the time of publication the following Audio Description digital TV equipment could be purchased.

AD-ready Freeview digital boxes

- Portset digital box
- Portset Accessible Freeview Set-Top Box

TVonics digital box

- MDR-300
- DTRFP-1600AD
- MFR-300

AD-ready Freeview IDTVs

Panasonic IDTVs

All Panasonic plasma and LCD Integrated Digital TVs bought from the start of 2007 onwards can receive Audio Description.

Toshiba IDTVs

- 32CV505DB
- 32XV505DB
- 37CV505DB
- 37XV505DB
- 42CV505DB
- 42XV505DB

Sony IDTVs

- KDL-70X3500
- KDL-52X3500
- KDL-46X3500
- KDL-40X3500
- KDL-46X3000
- KDL-40X3000
- KDL-52W3000
- KDL-46W3000
- KDL-40W3000
- KDL-46V3000
- KDL-40V3000
- KDL-46D3500
- KDL-40D3500
- KDL-32D3000
- KDL-32T3000
- KDL-26T3000
- KDL-40S3000
- KDL-40T2800
- KDL-32S3000
- KDL-32S3020
- KDL-32T2800
- KDL-26S3000
- KDL-32S3020
- KDL-26T2800
- KDL-20S3000
- KDL-20S3020
- KDL-20S3030
- KDL-20S3040
- KDL-20S3050
- KDL-20S3060
- KDL-20S3070
- KDL-40P3020
- KDL-37P3020
- KDL-32P3020
- KDL- 26P3020
- KDL-23B4050
- KDL-20B4050
- KDL-40U3000
- KDL-32U3000
- KDL-26U3000

Sky and Virgin Media will supply a digital box when you sign up.

Technical terms explained

Audio Description is additional commentary on TV between programme dialogue that explains points like body language, expressions and movements. It's only available through digital TV.

Digital set-top box (or digibox) is a small box that allows your existing TV to receive a digital signal. Your existing aerial plugs in the box and you connect the box to your TV's aerial or scart socket.

Digital Switchover will happen between 2008 and 2012 as the UK gradually switches to digital TV, region by region. The UK's old analogue television broadcast signal is being switched off and any TV set that's not converted to digital when the switchover takes place will no longer receive TV programmes.

Digital Switchover Help Scheme is a government scheme to help eligible people (including registered blind and partially sighted people) switch to digital TV. It is still being set up but will be up and running in 2008.

Digital TV is a way of broadcasting TV that allows your TV to receive more channels and access various services. Virtually all TVs can be converted to receive digital TV with a set-top box, or you can buy a new Integrated Digital TV (IDTV).

Digital UK is the independent, non-profit organisation leading the process of digital TV switchover in the UK. Digital UK provides impartial information on how people should prepare for the move to digital and when to do it.

Freesat is a similar service to Freeview, but is received via a satellite dish rather than via an aerial.

Freeview is a free digital TV service bringing you channels including ITV2, E4 and BBC Three. When you buy a set-top box this normally comes as standard.

IDTV (Integrated Digital TV) is a TV with a digital box built in. With an IDTV you don't need to buy a separate set-top box to receive digital TV.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

is a charity that provides information, support and advice for anyone with a sight problem. If sight loss is affecting you or someone you know call the RNIB Helpline on 0845 766 9999 or email helpline@rnib.org.uk to see how we can help.

Every day another 100 people will start to lose their sight. Your support helps us rebuild lives devastated by sight loss.

www.rnib.org.uk

Audio Description Helpline

AD helpline: 08456 01 01 81

AD website: www.audiodescription.org.uk

For information relating to digital TV

Call Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50

or visit www.digitaluk.co.uk

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation leading the process of digital TV switchover in the UK.

Suppliers of Digital TV equipment that can receive Audio Description

- **Virgin Media:** call 0800 052 2525
or visit www.virginmedia.com
- **Sky's Accessibility Helpline:** call 08705 66 33 33
or visit www.sky.com
- **RNIB shop:** call 0845 702 3153
or visit www.rnib.org.uk/shop
- **TVonics:** call 0870 803 0551 or visit www.tvonics.com
- **Portset:** call 01489 893 919 or visit www.portset.co.uk
- Many high street electrical retailers and John Lewis stores

This guide is also available in braille and on audio CD.

To get your copy contact RNIB Customer Services on 0845 702 3153 or email cservices@rnib.org.uk