

How To Install A Digital TV Converter Box In Your RV

By Alan Wiener

Recently, I was asked the following question. "I need to install a Digital TV Converter Box in my RV. Does it go on the television or does it connect to the Video Distribution Center Box that allows me to switch my TV's from satellite/antenna and or cable?"

ANSWER: Here is the information you need to install a Digital TV Converter Box in your RV

What You Need To Do Before Installation

If you have determined that TVs in your RV do not have digital tuners, then you will need one Digital TV Converter Box and one extra length of cable (length of cable depends on how far the TV is going to be from the DTV Converter Box) for each TV. If you have a VCR that does not have a digital TV tuner, then you will need a converter box and extra length of cable for that as well (more on this later).

When purchasing the converter boxes, make sure that they include the option of *Analog Pass Through*. Analog Pass Through allows analog signals to pass through the Digital TV Converter Box when it is turned off.

If you are hooked up to cable at an RV park, or if you want to watch a video or DVD the converter box should be turned off (not unplugged) so that the analog signal will pass through the converter box directly to your TV.

If you do not get a Digital TV Converter Box with Analog Pass Through you will have to install A/B switches and basically be creating an installation nightmare for yourself.

Things You Need To Understand Before Installation

Most RVs have a video switch box with buttons and/or knobs which allows you to choose different video sources for each of the TVs in your RV. These boxes vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. But usually you have choices such as Antenna, Cable, VCR, DVD, Satellite, etc.

On the back of the Video Switch Box you will find a lot of cables coming into the box and leaving the box, do not let these cables intimidate you. We will only be worried about the cables leaving the Video Switch Box that are going directly to the TVs in your RV.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not install the Digital TV Converter Box on the cable going from your RV's Antenna to the Video Switch Box. Depending on the type of antenna your RV has, there could be 12 volts running through that cable and it will fry the Digital TV Converter Box the minute you turn it on.

Depending on how the Video Switch Box is installed on your RV, you may have to start moving things around to get to the back of the box where all of those cables are located. Due to different configurations in each RV, I can't tell you how hard or how easy it will be to get to these cables on the back of the Video Switch Box.

The back of video switch box will have labels on each of the cables that are either going in or coming out. The cables you are looking for are going directly to your TVs they will have labels such as "TV1 Out, TV2 Out, etc." or "To TV1, To TV2 etc." or "TV1, TV2 etc."

Again, the labeling will vary by manufacturer. The Digital TV Converter Box will be installed on the cable leading to your TV from the Video Switching Box. Where you put the Digital TV Converter Box on this cable depends on where the TV is actually located.

The Digital TV Converter Box should be installed right next to the TV that you are going to be using it on. Digital TV Tuner Boxes come with remote controls to setup the box and change the channels. So if you are installing the Digital TV Converter Box on the TV in the bedroom located at the back of the RV you do not want to have the Digital TV Converter Box at the front of the RV.

Remember, the Digital TV Converter Box has to be plugged into electricity to work.

Installation Of The DTV Converter Box

OK now comes the fun part actually installing the Digital TV Converter Box on your TVs. Depending on how accessible the cable leading to your TV is; will determine how easy the installation will be. Here are the supplies you will need to complete the job for each TV.

1. Digital TV Converter Box.

2. One extra length of TV cable (length of cable is based on how far away the Digital TV Converter Box is from the TV). You should have enough cable to reach the back of the TV from the back of the Digital TV Converter Box.

Usually the TV located in the front of the RV is the easiest to install. If the front TV is located right next to the Video Switch Box, then all you have to do is remove the cable that is leading to that TV from the back of the Video Switch Box and attach that cable on the "TV Out" port on the back of the Digital TV Converter Box.

Now take the extra cable you have and connect it to the "TV out" port on Video Switch Box and connect the other end to the "Antenna In" Port of the Digital TV Converter Box.

Now we get to the work intensive part of the installation. If your RV has a TV in a bedroom located at the back of the coach, you may have to do some digging to get to the cable that is hooked up to the back of the TV.

In most cases the TV is built into a cabinet. Your task is to get to the back of the TV to get access to that cable. I am not going to try to tell you how to take the TV out of the cabinet, because the way they are installed varies by the type and model of your RV.

Once you get to that cable on the back of the TV the actual installation is simple. Remove the cable from the back of the TV and attach it to the "Antenna In" port on the DTV Converter box and take the extra cable and attach it to the "Out To TV" port on the DTV Converter Box. The other end of the cable gets hooked up to the "Cable In or Antenna In" port of the TV.

Special note on VCRs

You can hook up a DTV Converter Box to your RV's VCR, but you really should not do it as the VCR will be limited in its operation. The VCRs built in tuner will be useless and recording programs will require that you use the DTV Converter Box to manually change to the channel you want recorded.

With the cost of the DTV Converter Box being from \$40.00 and up, you can get a good VCR with a built in digital tuner for the same price.

Setup And Operation Of The DTV Converter Box

Now that the hard part is done, the setup and operation of the DTV Converter Box is relatively simple. If my instructions confuse you, you can always refer to the owner's manual that came with your Digital TV Converter Box. Here are the steps you need to follow to get your tuner set up.

1. **Plug the DTV Converter Box into electric** (you would be surprised at how many problems occur when this first step is not followed).

2. **On the DTV Converter Box**, should be a switch that allows the box to transmit a picture to your TV either on channel 3 or 4. If you cannot find this switch, refer to the owner's manual.

3. **Turn on the DTV Converter Box.**

4. Now **turn on your TV and tune it to the channel** you chose in step 2.

5. You should now **see a menu on your TV screen**. The menu will vary by DTV Converter Box Manufacturer. If you do not see a picture, ask yourself the following questions:

Is the DTV Converter Box plugged in and turned on? Is the TV tuned to the right channel? Do I have the Video Switch Box set to Antenna for this TV?

6. Now that you **have a picture** you need to run a channel **autoscan**, using the remote control for the DTV Converter Box, find the Channel Autoscan Option. Again refer to your DTV Converter Box User's manual, if you cannot find this option.

Important Reminder: Every time you go to a new location and use your RV antenna, you will need to use the channel autoscan option to find the channels in that area. Also moving your RV's antenna around could help you find more channels.

Some of the DTV Converter Boxes have built in signal strength indicators. Move your RV antenna until you get the strongest signal.

7. Once the autoscan is done you are all set. You can now use the DTV Converter Box Remote Control to choose the channels you want to watch or choose other options from the option menus.

Depending on the brand of DTV Converter Box you bought, you might have a ton of other options you can choose from to enhance your TV's picture, resize the picture to fit your TV's screen, enhance the sound on your TV etc. Refer to the Owner's Manual for your DTV Converter Box for what options are available.

Special Note: When you are not using the antenna to view TV, turn the DTV Converter Box off (do not unplug it), so that the analog TV Pass Through is activated. That way you can use the TV to view Videos, DVDs, Cable like you did before you installed the DTV Converter Box. Remember you have to change the source for that TV at the Video Source Selector Box in your RV.

I urge you to read the Analog Pass Through section of your DTV Converter Boxes Owner's Manual, so you understand how it works on your particular box. Hopefully, this has helped you get your RV setup to receive Digital TV.

See the Digital TV Transition: FAQs government site for more information (<http://www.fcc.gov/digital-television>)

Alan Wiener and his family have over 35 years of RVing experience under their belts. They share their knowledge and passion for RVing on Everything-about-rving.com It's on this website where they describe the different types of RVs that are available, provide tips on renting an RV, tips on buying an RV, tips on financing an RV, information on things to see and do while traveling in the USA and Canada, how to inspect an RV prior to purchase and much, much, more.