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Introduction: Why You Should Have Your Own Home Theater System

Watching a movie on the big screen is usually an enjoyable and fun outing. You can experience all the explosions and heart-stopping excitement like you're really there. The characters seem larger than life. But sometimes, distractions can take away from this experience. You come back to reality and have to deal with the guy kicking your seat, the baby crying and the crook in your neck from straining to see behind the lady with the fancy hat. Yep, you've experienced it: Movie theater madness. But you're in luck. Today's technology allows you to bring the experience you love the most about going out to the movies home. Basically, all you need is a TV, a surround sound receiver, speakers, and a VCR or DVD player.

One of the first, most obvious benefits of creating a home theater is saving money. These days, going to the theater is like paying a bill. If you have a typical family of four, tickets can cost more than $25. That's a lot of money considering you still want to get food. Trying to feed and hydrate a family of four at the movies can be expensive. Before it's over, you've spent more than $50 to watch your favorite movie.

Secondly, creating a home theater saves time. If you have a home theater, there's no need to stand in long lines. You just walk to your theater room and hit play. It doesn't get any easier than that. Also, you don't have to work your schedule around the movie theater's schedule. Watch the movie any time you want. It will never be sold out. There's nothing like getting excited about a movie and then get to the counter and it's sold out; even if it's not sold out, but at capacity, that is not anything to get excited about. Ever been in an overcrowded theater? Not fun. What's worse is that you're jammed in a seat and the stranger sitting next to you refuse to share the armrest. So now you're stuck and can't set your drink in the cup holder.

Furthermore, a home theater is just plain convenient. Do you have to get money, get dressed, load the car with the kids and check the

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schedule for showing times if you have a theater at home? Nope. All you have to do is roll out of bed and into the theater room and you're all set.

One of the best benefits of all is pause, stop, and play. You can control the movie. No more waiting to go to the restroom. We've all been there. You've paid over $50 for your family to see a movie and you want to make sure you get ALL your money's worth. So it's either miss part of the movie or holds it. Neither is ideal.

In addition, the food's better at home. You don't have to be concerned with stale popcorn, dry hot dogs or watered-down soft drinks. You can create your own meal, pop your own popcorn and get a six-pack of sodas for the cost of one drink at the movies. You have the best selection—whatever you want!

Let's just be honest. Odds are your home theater is going to be much cleaner than a public theater. How does the idea of kicking your shoes off, and relaxing your feet sound, only to be rudely awakened by the fact that your foot's stuck to the floor from someone's spilled soda? Or how about grabbing your soda and trying to take a sip only to realize it's stuck to the cup holder with something between gum and gummy bears. Just not good.

Also, your home theater can be more than just a place to view movies. It can be a cool place to gather with friends. Or incorporate your stereo system and it can be a nice spot to listen to music. In addition, it could be the perfect place for the kids to entertain themselves by watching their videos or playing video games.

The more you think about it, a home theater is a great idea and great investment. If you love watching movies, but hate all the extras, creating a home theater just makes sense.

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The Evolution Of The Home Theater System

Years ago, before the phrase “home theater system” became a household name, things like cable TV and VCRs were exciting, new and rare. There were no big screen TVs like we know today and a sound system consisted of a speaker attached to the TV. That’s it. People actually had film projectors and screens that were more reminiscent of a prop used in a high school biology class than an exciting movie-going experience. Now as things have changed and technology has progressed, cable is competing with satellite, VCRs are giving way to DVD players and home theaters are becoming more and more common to the home.

The biggest question is, what exactly is a home theater and why does everyone need one? Home theaters consist of setting up a TV, speakers, a surround sound receiver, and a DVD player and/or VCR to duplicate the same experience and joy you get out of going to the movies.

To understand the fascination of the home theater, you have to think about all the things we love about going out to the movies in the first place. One of the first things that people remember about the joy of going to the movies is the large screen. Watching the actors interact on such a large screen make you feel like you’re a part of the action. Characters are life-sized and this makes for a really entertaining experience.

Also, while watching the movie, you can’t help but to notice how crisp and clear everything and everyone is. You get to watch every detail and the characters seem to glide across the screen.
Let’s not forget one of the most memorable things about going to the movies—the sound. Who can forget watching Jurassic Park and it seemed like the dinosaurs were right behind you!

Experiencing surround sound is unforgettable. Unfortunately, much has changed during the years. Rising costs, overcrowded theaters, long lines, and lack of convenience, overshadow the movie-going experience. People are just tired of paying more than $50 to take the family out for a movie. Also having to wait for show times, overpriced

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food, and irritating strangers distracting you from the movie is just too much when the technology exists to duplicate your own movie theater at home. Therefore more and more homes have started adding a home theater.

In the early stage of the home theater experience, many started to upgrade their television sets. The screen was one of the first noticeable changes in the evolution of the home theater. TVs screens have gotten much larger and thinner. At the very minimum, people are getting 27 inch TVs to duplicate the movie theater experience. But it doesn't stop there. There are plasma TVs that offer contemporary design, a good picture and compact size. Then there are the projectors that are just about the closest thing to an actual movie theater. Like a movie theater, a projector projects the image on a screen, with some screens as big as 200 inches!

The quality of what you're viewing has also changed dramatically with the rise of DVD players. VCRs were once the hottest craze, but the enormous difference between watching a movie on a VCR compared to a DVD was remarkable. Images on DVDS are sharp, crisp and extremely close to what you experience at the movie theater.

The next important thing is the sound of the movie. Nowadays, surround sound is a must-have if you want to experience true movie theater fun. With all the new technology and advancements in audio/video, you too can experience theater quality and the unique sound of dinosaurs right behind you, or a car crash that looks like it's going to jump out of the television.

So the days of going to the movies are not over, but it is safe to say that things are definitely changing. Even though for years people have had the opportunity to either wait until a movie came on cable or rent it and watch it on a VCR, this didn't stop the movie going experience because you couldn't get the same sights and sounds of the big screen. But now with the increase of home theaters, the future holds what may become of going out to the movies. What used to take lots of money, time and patience, will now involve walking to your theater room and pressing play.

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Choosing A Home Theater System

Selecting A Home Theater System To Meet Your Needs

When you are looking for a home theater, you might or might not have a clear idea of what you are searching for. The term “home theater” can be a bit vague to many people, who assume that it means spending a lot of money and getting lost in a sea of cables and bills. Of course, you can choose to create an elaborate home theater, or you can keep it simple with just the basic items that you need. Whether you intend to invest a lot of money and time to put your home theater unit together, or just a little, don’t be afraid of the term “home theater”. After all, whether it is large or small, you should take pride in the fact hat you are re-creating the effect of going to the movies or attending a concert in your own home.

If you are looking for the most expensive home theater (and most of us are not), you can expect to pay tens of thousands of dollars for a cutting edge projector, DVD, amplifiers, a controller for each individual channel, in-wall speakers and subwoofers that can shake your walls. At the other end of the spectrum, the most basic home theater will cost you a few hundred dollars and may include nothing more than a TV, a DVD with or without a VCR, a stereo and speakers. What really makes something a “home theater” is the goal of replicating, as much as possible, the experience of the cinema in one’s own home. A true home theater should include good speakers which aim to create a “surround sound” experience, much like that of a movie theater, where everywhere you walk within the cinema is filled with sound. Therefore, speakers are an essential part of every home theater unit.

For those who want to set up a home theater on a budget, a “home theater in a box” is a popular option. These sets cost anywhere from $200 to $2,000, and include the basic items needed to set up a home theater, such as a DVD/CD player (or sometimes a VCR) and five or six compact speakers which can be placed unobtrusively throughout the room. The home theater in a box and is intended to be hooked up to existing equipment, such as a television, and is usually easy to assemble. It is usually much less expensive to purchase a home

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theater in a box than it would be to buy all of the items separately. The main disadvantage to these sets is that the speakers are usually not of the highest quality, and the equipment often does not have sufficient power to fill a large room with sound. However, you can always upgrade you home theater in a box with additional speakers, a satellite speaker or subwoofers. The home theater in a box may still be the best option for people who are looking for an inexpensive, low cost way to set up a home theater. We'll be taking a closer look at the pros and cons of systems in the next chapter.

Where you want to purchase you equipment depends on the kind of home theater unit you want to set up. If you are looking for the most basic equipment or a home theater in a box, you can shop at basic stores such as Wal-Mart or Best Buy. You won't find state of the art equipment at these places, but you might get value for your money. Ensure that your equipment has a good warrantee and find out where and how it can be serviced if something goes wrong.

There are those who make shopping for home theater equipment an art or a pastime, and will browse and research items thoroughly before making substantial purchases. The Internet is a great tool for checking out a wide array of different items as well as making purchases. You might prefer to surf for hours until you find exactly the right speakers, or you might like to do things the old fashioned way and talk to your salesperson at your favorite home entertainment store. Establishing a relationship with a particular salesperson might pay off in the end in the form of having a contact person to let you know about sales and special discounts, as well as candid recommendations for the best items. The best stores will service your items on the premises if something goes wrong, often with little or no fee. It might be worth it in the long run to buy good-quality equipment at a home entertainment shop rather than going the budget route, since a fine home theater unit can last many years if it is well-made and maintained properly.

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Home Theaters “In A Box”

These days, everyone talks about wanting a home theater system. This allows you to bring the movies home to you; But after the idea is generated, then what? Many people aren’t quite sure of all the things that are involved in creating a home theater, much less where to start.

Basically, a home theater consists of a TV, speakers, a surround sound receiver, a DVD player and/or a VCR. If you want to get really fancy, you can designate a room in your house specifically known as the “home theater,” install dimming switches, and purchase luxurious leather recliners to really recreate an upscale home theater. But before you get carried away with all the expensive details, there are a few basic essentials. If you’re new to this whole home theater idea, a home theater in box might be just what you’re looking for.

A home theater in a box comes with speakers, a surround sound receiver, DVD player and/or VCR, and some even come with a DVD/VCR recorder. All you have to add is a TV, preferably a 27-inch. Home theaters in a box have become pretty popular and are a great introduction to home theaters.

One of the first things you realize when you purchase a home theater in a box is the price. Some cost as little as $200, which is a great bargain for everything that you get. This makes creating a home theater affordable for everyone.

If your not technically inclined, don’t worry. Home theaters in a box are easy to assemble. If you can read simple instructions and diagrams, you’re well on your way to creating a great home theater system.

Convenience is also a very important part of purchasing a home theater in a box. You don’t have to worry about buying all separate pieces. This is great because it eliminates the need to bargain shop for every detail, which can be a hassle if you’re not into that. Home theaters in a box are already affordable, so once you purchase it, you know you’re getting a decent price for everything you need at once.

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Space is an important issue when setting up a home theater. If you don't have a lot of room, a home theater in a box is just what you need. They are really compact and don't take up a lot of space, which is perfect for setting up a home theater in a room designated for something else, such as the family room.

Though home theaters in a box are affordable, don't expect perfection. The quality of parts, such as speakers, may not be as high a standard than if they are purchased separately. If you're really particular about sound quality, a home theater in a box may not be the best choice.

Also, the home theater in a box is not extremely versatile. If listening to music is a favorite pastime, a home theater in a box may not be the best device use. These systems are specifically designed for watching movies and do not deliver the best quality when used for things other than watching movies.

In addition, if you have numerous things you need to plug-in such as a DVD recorder, or some type of video game system, you're out of luck. Most home theaters in a box do not allow for multiple connection options. Also you cannot change or add speakers if your tastes change in the future. If something major breaks or an important cable is ruined, then the whole system is broken. So if you're looking for flexibility and long-term durability, a home theater in a box may not be the best thing to get, no matter how affordable it is.

The important thing to remember when setting up a home theater system is your needs. If you know that you want the biggest and the best, the clearest sound quality and versatility, you may want to invest in better, separate products. It all depends on what you want. The home theater in a box is like a dream come true to some and a nightmare for others. Being knowledgeable about the good and bad involving systems like this will help you make the best decision when spending your money and investing your time in your home theater system.

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Creating An Affordable Home Theater Solution

You love the idea of bringing the movie experience home. The idea of a home theater system produces images that may include a fancy TV, monster-sized speakers that produce great surround sound, a DVD player and maybe even an upscale room specifically designed for you home theater needs. Then reality sets in, finances bombard you, and your home theater idea gets put on hold. But it doesn't have to! These days, anyone who wants to can create a great home theater without going broke.

First, you may already own at least half of the things needed for your home theater. Odds are you already have at least a TV and DVD player. If your TV works well and you're comfortable with your DVD player, you're half way there. Now all you need to is a receiver and good speakers. Chances are that you already have your stereo receiver and speakers connected to your CD or cassette player. Try connecting your TV to the receiver and start understanding what it's like to enjoy the show as it plays through your stereo speakers. You're already getting a feel for a home theater with out spending much money. If you're trying to work with what you have, but aren't quite sure of the technical side of things, try contacting an audio/video specialist. You may only need a few upgrades to your current devices and spending money on good advice and expertise will most likely save you lots of money in the end.

If you don't want to make do with what you have and are ready to make upgrades, shop around. There are great deals on TVs, DVD players, surround sound receivers, and speakers during store sales and promotions. Since this is your first home theater system, know that you don't have to spend a lot to get everything you need. Check online at major electronic stores because some products are cheaper if purchased online. But don't shop solely on price. You do not want to sacrifice decent quality to save few bucks. For example, the idea of cheap speakers may sound like music to your ears, but get them home and your movie experience is horrible because the quality is bad.

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Maybe shopping around for separate pieces is too much for you. If you want to get just about everything you need in one stop, you might try a home theater in a box, as we discussed in the last chapter. These types of kits usually come with speakers, a surround sound receiver, DVD/CD player and maybe a VCR or DVD recorder. To get the closest thing to the top-notch home theater experience, all you have to add is your 27-inch TV. Again, you could use your current TV, but to really start to duplicate the theater experience, a bigger screen is the way to go.

Basically, creating a great home theater system really can be easy and affordable. If you purchase a 27-inch TV and a theater in a box, or a series of relatively inexpensive separate components, costs may only amount to about $1000 total. If you already own a 27-inch TV, you can cut your costs in half and only spend about $500. Buying everything separately doesn't have to cost a fortune, if you shop wisely. Purchasing a 27-inch TV, DVD player, surround sound receiver, and speakers will cost you between $1000-$1500. Not bad for a complete home theater system. Admittedly, your system will not rival the high-end home theaters enjoyed by true audiophiles and the technologically obsessed, but it may still be enough to satisfy your specific needs.

Once you know what's out there and how to find bargains, a fabulous home theater system can become a reality. Doing your homework, catching sales, and even contacting an audio/video specialist are all great ways to get the most for your money. The most important thing is finding out what things are most important to you and what fits your needs. If you still feel like splurging and purchasing more expensive pieces, you may buy them piece-by-piece. No one said you had to buy everything at one time! The important thing is getting exactly what you want and paying no more than you must.

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A Closer Look At Building A Home Theater System

If your old television has seen better days, you want to throw out your VCR and cut-rate DVD player and your speakers hardly pick up sound anymore, it is time to invest in a high-quality home theater. Most people think of quality audio and video equipment, they have in mind items that create the best picture and sound quality and are made to last. Without spending a fortune, you can find a good quality home theater unit if you are willing to ask the right questions and spend some time on research online or at your favorite store.

Many people who are purchasing a home theater for the first time prefer to get an all-in-one set commonly referred to as “a home theater in a box”. The most basic combination comes with speakers and a DVD player, both of which can be connected to a television. A more sophisticated home theater in a box can contain subwoofers, which work with your speakers to pick up more bass. The home theater in a box has a mixed reputation, as we noted earlier. While it is a good idea (but not always the best option) to purchase the same brand of equipment, many people are unhappy with the quality of some items in the home theater in a box, particularly the speakers. Often this combination is quite basic and the speakers are usually unable to fill a very large room with sound. However, you might be able to find a home theater in a box that is an exception to this rule and has high-quality speakers included. This requires knowledge of how much power you need for your room and what the speakers can deliver. Always test the speakers at the store before purchasing them, and do not be afraid to turn the volume up full blast for a few seconds, even when the store is crowded.

A good quality home theater has a DVD player with channel programming and special recording features. A good DVD player should also have a recorder included, which can copy other disks, as long as anti-copy encoding does not interfere. Usually, about five small speakers are included that can be placed in various locations around the room. These are usually about 100 watts, which deliver a good amount of power. Better sets include a subwoofer, to pick up

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bass tones, and an amplifier. If you are not satisfied with the speakers in your current home theater unit, consider purchasing an amplifier and subwoofer alone to maximize your sound.

The problem with you current home theater unit may not be the equipment, but the cords you are using. Changing your cords is certainly cheaper than purchasing a whole new home entertainment set and it is much easier. The best cables for sound delivery are made of copper, which are especially designed for efficient sound transfer. Experiment with different types of copper cables, since you need to change you cables periodically anyway. You might get the benefits of having new, good quality speakers without actually having to go out and buy them.

You might also want to check your current home theater equipment for dust, and you might find that a good cleaning is better than a repair or a replacement. To keep your high quality home theater equipment in top shape, brush off the dust that collects on the surfaces of and inside your equipment. You can purchase small machines that will clean your CDs and will remove scratches from those disks that were nearly destined for the trash. Always use specially designed cleaning fluid for screens and microfiber clothes; it is a common mistake to use window cleaner for your screens or water. Finally, your speakers might not need to be replaced, but their foam might be rotten. You can order a kit that will instruct you on how to replace your speaker foam yourself, which will save money on expensive repairs or new speakers.

When looking for a high-quality home theater system, don’t assume that a hefty price tag means better sound and picture. One consumer paid $1,000 for a home theater that lacked even the basic requirements for a decent sound system. For around $700, you can find a great quality home theater, with a DVD, which produces rich colors and speakers that can pick up both treble and bass quite clearly. However, many very good systems can be a bit complicated to install, so it might be worth the investment to hire someone to install your system for you. With whatever quality home theater you choose, make sure that all of your equipment comes with a good warrantee.

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High Tech Home Theater Options

If you are looking for more from your home theater unit than a television, a VHS/DVD recorder and speakers, then you may be in the market for the most sophisticated home theater on the market. Perhaps you began with a “home theater in a box” and want to upgrade your current equipment, or perhaps you want to start again from scratch. Needless to say, the most high-tech items do cost some money, but for those who prefer state of the art home theater equipment, it is well worth it.

The premise behind the home theater is that it should replicate, as much as possible, the auditory and visual experience of the cinema. This is the reason many good home theaters have wide-screen televisions and surround sound technology. Your high tech home theater equipment can create this effect with a few extra items. If you purchase the best items you can afford, you can have a home theater that will be a source of pride.

Tower speakers with built-in amplifiers and subwoofers are quite popular. An all-in-one system is preferable to purchasing separate units, and will save you a lot of space on your floor and your power strip. You can find designs that have a hardwood base, or a more contemporary metallic look.

If you are looking for the best high-tech sound system on the market and are concerned about space and aesthetics, satellite “nucleus” speakers in the form of heavy, colored balls are the best option. For their modest size (some have a diameter of as little as four inches) they really are a powerhouse of sound. Their cool, fun design merits placing them on bookshelves or plant stands to be displayed rather than hidden away. These small speakers pick up dialogue just as well as music and they do not have that cut-in/cut-out effect you may experience as you walk past other speakers. Most micros have 22 H2 high frequency, which means a lot of power in a small space. Although many micros need about 50 hours to really “warm up” after being taken out of the box, the nucleus speakers perform at their highest capacity when they are brand new. These little round

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speakers are a great value for money, and a subwoofer disguised as a footrest is usually included.

The VHS recorder is quickly becoming a thing of the past, so most high-tech home theaters will eschew a traditional VCR in favor of a DVD player and recorder. The best DVD recorders are combined with a hard drive, and the prices keep plunging as more and more consumers are investing in these models. The best DVD recorders use laserdisc technology, which enables smooth functioning. DVD recorders usually function much like VHS recorders, and most models have AV inputs, and a TV tuner. You can usually copy home made videos or recordings from other sources, but you cannot bypass anti-copy encoding. Other features included in a good DVD recorder are: playback format, AV inputs for 3 composites, AV outputs for 5 composites, Dolby digital, a built-in channel programming system.

Plasma TV definitely says “high tech”. These can be mounted on the wall and are quickly consigning those bulky boxes to the history books. These can be used as a centerpiece of your high-tech home theater or can be mounted on the wall. A typical plasma television has around 1024x768 pixel resolution, a 60,000-screen life and can display HDTV signals. The average size of a plasma TV is 42” with a 16x9 screen, although some “compact” varieties are around 37” with a 4” thickness for easy wall mounting. Some Plasma TVs have built-in stereo capabilities are compatible with most sound systems.

Even the typical camcorder is going digital these days, so you will want to put the same care in selecting your digital camcorder as you would your digital camera. Basically, there are two varieties of digital camcorder on the market: MiniDV and Digital 8. The former was developed first and is the most common variety. Most consider it to be the most users friendly, and it uses a 6mm tape with 90 minutes of recording. The digital 8 models are slightly larger but use 4 mm tapes with one hour of recording time. However, digital 8 models can sometimes have more sophisticated copying capabilities and other special features. If you are looking for a basic digital camcorder with a good reputation, try a MiniDV, although if you like the special features of the Digital 8, it may be worth your investment.

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Assembling A Great Home Theater System Step-by-Step

Do you love the large screens, great sound and enjoyment of going to the movies, but don't want to go out every night in order to see a great film? Well, maybe it's time to create your own home theater system. Yes, it sounds like a really daunting task, but it doesn't have to be.

The TV

Let's start with the television. Now technically, any basic TV will work, but if you want to begin to duplicate a movie theater experience, you have to start with a bigger screen. For home theaters, at least a 27-inch TV is the minimum. There are a few things to keep in mind when purchasing a TV for your home theater. The idea is to get a big screen, but remember where you're going to put it. There's no point in buying a huge TV and then it's so awkward in the space that it makes viewing uncomfortable.

Also, note the quality of the picture when buying a TV. What's the point of a TV that's big on size but small on quality? And lastly, make sure your TV has at least one set of audio/video inputs and one set of outputs. This will be very important when connecting the sound system of your home theater system.

The Surround Sound Receiver

Besides the big screen, sound is one of the major things enjoyed at the movie theater. But how do you get theater sound at home? Well you need to make sure you connect the surround sound receiver, also known as the home theater receiver, because it is one of the most important parts of your home theater system. It is like the brain between your audio and video components. The receiver takes all the signals from the movie or show you're watching and transforms it into surround sound that comes out of the speakers.

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The Speakers

Now speakers are another big part of your home theater system. Good sound quality depends on them. You need at least 4 to 5 speakers to create surround sound. It is important to focus on features such as loudness, crispness, and space when choosing speakers. Depending on what your want and your budget, you can choose speakers that deliver a certain level of sound and you can get them as small or as big as you want. If you want to really go the extra mile in replicating your movie experience, you may look into a subwoofer. This is not a necessity, but it does make a big difference when watching an action-packed movie with lots of explosions, for instance. If you're not sure, compare the sound of a movie with and without one when shopping for subwoofers.

VCR

When creating your home theater, you'll probably watch a lot of home movies in addition to your regular TV shows. The VCR, though once really popular, is losing its demand with the increase of DVD players. But if you already have home movies or other items in VHS format and don't want to part with having a VCR, you can still have a great home theater system. The one thing to look out for is to make sure you VCR is compatible to your surround sound system. One way to know if it's compatible is if the words "hi-fi" are on the VCR somewhere. If this is on your VCR, you probably don't have to worry about buying a new one. But if not, instead of buying a new VCR, maybe it's time to invest in a DVD player all together.

DVD

The letters DVD (digital versatile disk) are becoming so common today that VCRs are almost obsolete. If you want to experience the closest thing to actually going out to the movies, watching a video on a DVD player is the next best thing. DVDs allow you to view movies at an intense level and the images are much sharper and crisper with unbelievable sound quality. You can't get these effects with a VCR.

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Everyone's idea of the perfect home theater system is different and there's so much to choose from. The most important thing to remember is to make sure you purchase what works best for you.

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Video: A Key To Home Theater Systems

One thing that most people have noticed about television screens the past few years is that they have been getting bigger and wider. Those small, square boxes are becoming a thing of the past as more and more types of screens are replicating the cinematic experience. However, you might prefer your old-fashioned (or perhaps “classic”) television, as it might seem odd to see your favorite sit-com or game show on a large screen. Whether you stick to your smaller television for nostalgic reasons, or you are in the market for a wide screen that will give you the feeling that you are at the movies, there are advantages to both large and small screens.

An important thing to consider when discussing the difference between large and small screens on televisions is Screen Aspect Ratio. This is basically the ratio of the horizontal length of a screen to its height. For instance, a traditional television has a screen aspect ratio of 4x3. Today’s HDTV has a ratio of 16x19, and obviously gives a much wider view. This wider view, in many ways is an advantage, especially when watching sports or action films. There is an increasing number of programs filmed especially for HDTV. This means that, if you have a traditional television set, you will be able to see the whole picture, but there will be a black bar at the bottom of the screen.

However, those with HDTV experience the same thing on their televisions when they view a program that is designed for a traditional television (although these black panels will appear on the side). This is called a “burn in effect”. Some people find it quite annoying, and other people hardly notice the black border. The only way to completely avoid a “burn in” effect when viewing programs not formatted for your type of television is to purchase CLCD flat panels which are more expensive, but which are not affected by the “burn in” effect.

A wider screen certainly allows you to see a film the way it was originally viewed in the theater. When a movie is prepared for a small screen, it is edited according to the “pan and scan” technique. Since small screens often cannot accommodate images of two actors at

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once, the editors have to zoom in on each individual actor as he or she is speaking. This can create a “ping-pong” effect which is common in movies edited for television, and many of the reactions of other actors or periphery details are lost through this editing process. Action films that are edited this way tend to have close-ups on the pursuer and then the pursued rather than showing a larger view of what is actually going on. It is clear that, with pan and scan editing, a lot is lost in the translation.

However, some people actually prefer this kind of “snappy” viewing and like the dramatic close-ups. This kind of editing technique has become such a hallmark of television, which some genres, such as soap operas, which feature pensive close-ups, seem to have imitated the pan and scan style. Some people prefer not to feel like they are in a cinema when viewing their favorite sit-com, and like their old-fashioned TV sets.

The answer seems to be a combination of the best of both worlds. Small TV sets are so inexpensive that it is usually worth it to combine both options for one’s home theater unit. This can solve the problem of “burn in” without having to shell out the money for high-tech panels; it is always possible to watch films and HDTV programs on a wide screen and to reserve your traditional viewing for a smaller TV. This way, you can still enjoy the full impact of action scenes on your wide screen, but at the same time, you can still experience the drama of close-ups for your traditional viewing.

While wide screen televisions seem to represent what is meant by the term “home theater” (i.e. recreating the theater experience in your home), smaller TVs are great for nostalgia and for traditional viewing. For those who feel odd about watching The Dick Van Dyke Show on a cinema-style screen, it is always possible to have a little table on the side for your old-fashioned TV. And don’t forget the TV table for your TV dinner!

Creating a home theater system can be a very basic project or a very detailed undertaking. Home theaters can consist of a TV, speakers and a VCR. But if you want to create a system that gets closer to your movie theater experience, one of the most important things to get is the right television. It is a must-have for a home theater. Now, you

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could use the television you've had since grade school, but what's the fun in that? These days, there are so many kinds of televisions to choose from. Terms like direct view, plasma screen, rear projection and front projection are very common when speaking of televisions. The goal is to get familiar with some of the most popular choices out there and select the best TV for your viewing pleasure.

Direct view televisions are the ones most of us grew up with and they contain what's called a cathode-ray tube. Even though these TVs worked fine in the past and displayed a decent picture, nowadays, most people are looking for something extra. Also, because of the curvature of some tubes, the image could get distorted in a direct view TV and produce a glare. To avoid this, try to find TVs with a flatter screen that prevent distortion and display a better picture. If you're looking for extremely oversized screens, a direct view TV is not for you.

If you want a larger-sized screen option, a rear projection TV may be what you're looking for. It's similar to a direct view TV because it involves a tube, but the picture is projected and reflected onto the screen from behind the screen. You can actually get monster-sized screens at a decent price. But with those huge screens come some flaws. Depending on where you're sitting, the picture may be dark and you can't always see what's happening. Fortunately, some newer models combat this problem by giving a wider viewing area.

Similar to the rear projectors are the front projectors, but the major difference is that a front projector is not inside of a TV. It's more like a film projector and can display movies on screens as big as 200 inches. This gives you more of a traditional movie theater feel. But you really need a specific room to watch movies and the room has to be dark.

On a different note is the plasma screen. These are really popular right now and rather expensive. Plasmas are really thin and light TVs that have pretty good picture quality. There are no tubes or any need for a projector. These are great for smaller home theaters because of their small size.

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Also, once you narrow down the type of TV you want, be sure to keep in mind a few things. Make sure you don't get a huge TV and then try to fit it into really small space. Lots of times people get engulfed in getting the biggest and best thing they can find only to realize it's way too big for the space and not practical. Also, if a TV is too big, it may not result in comfortable viewing. In addition, make sure you can get the TV home. Some TVs are so large that they won't fit into an average automobile. Keep this in mind when trying to transport you set. And the bottom line is to test TV before you buy. Make sure the picture is clear and crisp and meets your needs. Big doesn't always mean it's the best. Expensive doesn't guarantee satisfaction. If it's not what you want, it doesn't matter how expensive or great it is, don't get it.

Some other tips include the darkness of your TV screen; the darker the screen, the better, unless you're using a projector. If so, then the screen should be white. Also, you want good picture quality. Flat screens have the least amount of glare and won't distort the image.

These are just a few things to help with your search for the best TV for you. There are a lot of choices out there, but the only thing to keep in mind is finding the right set that makes you happy and satisfies your needs.

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Audio: A Key To Home Theater Systems

An often-neglected aspect of the typical home theater unit is the sound system. The speakers make the difference between the home theater experience and a simple television and VCR. When selecting your speakers, you should buy the best speakers available, so you will not have to replace them in a few years. Repair of speakers can be quite expensive, so it is best to invest in speakers that will not need a lot of maintenance.

When selecting speakers, take into account the amount of money you are willing to spend. Although the most costly speakers are usually the best, you can sometimes find reasonably priced speakers that deliver fantastic sound. You will want to decide whether you prefer two large speakers that divide the sound into channels, or many small speakers to distribute throughout the room. You can even mount speakers on the wall in corners and there are colors available that can blend in to your walls.

Do some research on the mall, in catalogs or on the internet and find the best brands and prices. Reputable brand name companies are concerned enough about customer satisfaction that they produce quality goods. Some unknown brands can produce good speakers, but they should be tested thoroughly before purchasing them, and ensure that they come with a good warrantee.

It is a good idea to purchase speakers from a traditional store, so they can be tested before purchasing them. Don’t be embarrassed about cranking the volume to the highest level in the store for a few seconds; this is the only way to test your speakers’ full potential. You will want to take along your favorite CDs and tapes to compare the sound quality of the speakers to those already in your home. Make sure that your speakers have the watts you need, since it is difficult to upgrade your speakers once you have purchased them.

If you are willing to spend a bit more, it is worthwhile to invest in surround sound, which will deliver a cinematic sound quality to your home theater. In addition to delivering optimal sound, make sure that your speakers look good and that they match your stereo. However,

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you might want to buy smaller speakers in bold, fun colors, or more traditional style block speakers. Tower speakers do not need to be unattractive; you can find speakers embedded in a wooden case which can match your home entertainment shelf.

If you are planning to connect your speakers some distance from your home theater unit, make sure that your cables are sufficiently long to reach from your unit to the end of the room. Good cords can improve your sound quality dramatically, and copper cords deliver the best sound. You speaker system should have line in/out line, cords so your speakers can also be hooked up to a VCR, computer or playstation.

If you would like special features, you can find speakers with extra bass instead of purchasing an extra unit known as a subwoofer. You may also find speakers with equalizers or alarms. The best speakers have a good warrantee, to ensure that your speakers come with a guarantee.

You can choose from various styles of speakers. If you don't mind very large speakers, you can invest in tower speakers, which come in wood cases or in metallic, modern designs. The high-techest home theaters combine traditional speakers with an amplifier or a subwoofer. There are also very flat speakers available that match your flat panel television. You can purchase a home theater system that comes with five or six small speakers, which can be distributed throughout the room. There are many places you can place these small speakers that will not interfere or will even enhance the aesthetics of your room. This is especially true if you purchase a system with speakers that match the décor of your room. You can place small speakers on bookcases, in corners or in plant stands. Satellite speakers are very conveniently sized and shaped, and they combine style with optimum sound. These are often trendy, globe shaped speakers, and unlike traditional speakers, have an extra octave of bass available.

In addition to purchasing speakers, you might want to invest in subwoofers that increase the bass capabilities of your sound system. You can purchase subwoofers are part of your home theater unit or separate subwoofers that can accommodate your current system.

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One of the really exciting things about going to the movies is enjoying all the great surround sound. It makes you feel like you're really a part of the action and excitement. When you decide to bring the movie theater experience home, there many factors involved in creating a your personal home theater. A very important factor is the sound of your theater. In order to create the best possible surround sound for your theater, you need to consider location of your TV, the quality and placement of your speakers and the acoustics. But the biggest part of it all is the size of your room.

You may have big ideas, but not a lot of space. Not to worry, you can still experience the big impact surround brings movie theater excitement in a small room. You just have to know what to do in order to get the most out of your space.

There are many things involved when creating a home theater system in a small space. Since you want to maximize your space and still get a decent sound, a home theater in a box, may be what you're looking for. These systems come with just about everything you need, just add your TV. They are very practical and compact and will satisfy your needs if you have a small space and an even smaller budget.

If you want to upgrade your listening experience in your small space, consider investing in separate components. The first place to begin is with quality speakers. Speakers are extremely important when trying to get the best audio for you movie-watching experience. No matter the size of the room, the right speakers can make a huge difference between just okay and fantastic. This has a major effect on the impact you're going to get from your home theater.

In addition, you don't need large, overpowering speakers if you have a small room. For one, they take up too much space. Also you might think bigger is better right? Wrong. You can have too much of a good thing if you're working with limited space. Instead of getting the most out of your surround sound, you end up with loud mess. Small rooms, can use small, quality speakers just fine. No need to super-size them.

Also, location of the speakers is essential. To get good sound, the speakers have to be balanced. It doesn't make much sense to invest

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in quality speakers, then position them in a way that doesn't add to or accentuate performance. When setting up your surround sound speakers, make sure three of them span the front of the room—left, center and right. Then also get speakers for the rear and place them parallel to the listener, not directly behind. Also make sure they're above the ear.

Furthermore, the location of the TV in reference to your speakers and room size is really important to ensure you get a clear, crisp audio experience. It doesn't make sense to place the TV is a spot that knocks the speakers off balance and requires you to have the surround sound right next to your ear. No matter how wonderful your new home theater is, it'll be a waste if you've just gone deaf from listening to too much surround sound.

Last, but not least, the shape of your space and acoustics matter when trying to create the best listening experience. If possible, try to set your home theater up in a more rectangular room instead of a square box. Also, just about anything, such as carpet, curtains, furniture, etc., will affect the sound in your room. Furthermore, a carpeted room is going to enhance sound better than one with hardwoods. And just know that when you're purchasing speakers, sound may vary depending on the room your testing the speakers in.

Overall, no matter how small your room, you can still get quality sound. You just have to know how to get maximum satisfaction out of what you have to work with. A small room doesn't have to diminish your home theater experience. Just make sure to invest in the right components and most of all, get what fits your needs.

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Home Theater Installation And Setup

Creating a home theater system is a dream come true for lots of homeowners. There are no crowded theaters, overpriced food, or noisy distractions. Home theaters have become really popular and more and more people are incorporating them into their homes. Since just about everyone is doing it, it makes you wonder how hard can it really be? For the technically inclined, basic computer savvy, hands-on type of person, installation is probably not a problem. But if you don't know the difference between a wrench and a screwdriver, there may be problems. Installing a home theater system can be a piece of cake for some and an absolute, never ending nightmare for others. Depending on your skill level and knowledge you could either install everything yourself, or the smart choice may be to just hire a professional.

First, figuring out if you can create a home theater yourself shouldn't be too difficult. You already know if you have a way with gadgets. Or maybe you've hooked up your own stereo system or computer before. If so, this will probably be rather easy depending on your particular home theater system.

Also, if you're considering installing your own home theater system, you are probably knowledgeable when it comes to room size and how it relates to surround sound. What sounds great in a small family room won't sound the same in a large open room with cathedral ceilings.
When buying a variety of separate products for your home theater system, if you are installing it yourself, you are most likely clear on which components work well together. A technically inclined person can either figure out what works together or if shown, doesn't have any problem catching on quickly. If you're this type of person, you won't have any trouble hooking up your home theater system.

Having the right tools and knowing what to do with them is also important in hooking up your own home theater system. If you understand clearly what to do with certain tools when installing separate products is another reason why installing your own home theater system should be a snap.

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Are you always that person that needs help logging into your computer? If so, you're probably not the best person to install your home theater. Instead of taking a chance and having to spend money in the end to fix mistakes, hire a pro.

If you think all home theater parts are created equally, think again. Depending on what you want and what you can afford, parts can vary. If it diverts from any of the most basic parts, a professional may be your best bet. The idea of doing it yourself is great, but once you get home and have a floor covered in wires, cables, and various instruction sheets, it's time to call a professional.

Spending an enormous amount of money on a home theater system is a big deal. You want the biggest and the best. So why risk losing money by trying to install it yourself. If you don't keep a supply of tools, use them often and don't know which end is which; it's time to call for help. There's nothing wrong with knowing you need assistance. Actually, it's a smart idea. If you're going to spend the money for what you want, make sure it's installed correctly so that you get the most out of your investment.

Are you one of those people that like to figure things out as you go along? Bad idea when it comes to setting up your home theater. Knowing what you're doing from the beginning will prevent lots of stress. If you know you need help, that's the best time to get it. Don't wait until your knee deep in trouble and can't get out before you decide to call a pro.

Undertaking a home theater system project can bring much joy and pain. But if you're smart and educated about what you know and don't know, the process can go much more smoothly. Whether you have the most basic of home theater systems or the top of the line, be honest with yourself and admit when you need professional help with installation. You'll save yourself an enormous amount of wasted time and energy and you can be confident that you're getting the most out of your new home theater system.

Even if you purchase the best home theater unit you can afford, you might find that cables are gathered up in bundles like snakes and you

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keep bumping into the unit on the way to the couch if you didn't also invest time in planning the installation of your home theater unit. A little bit of work ahead of time will save you the trouble of having to re-install an inconveniently arranged unit at a later date, and having to move furniture around a second time. The systematic approach to installing your home theater unit is best, and you can take advantage of all of your resources, including manuals and diagrams.

Even before your home theater unit has been delivered to your doorstep, it is definitely worth it to take the time and literally to map out the exact location of your unit. Without moving furniture in a trial and error fashion, you can determine whether it is better to place the unit on a wall next to a window or a door, and you can efficiently arrange your couch and other seating on paper first. It is easier to use your eraser than to use your elbow grease to move the recliner yet again.

Light is an important consideration when arranging your home theater unit. A high-density television does not do well in a room that is excessively sunny, so choose the room for your entertainment center with care. You might want to install Venetian blinds or drapes to deal with this problem. Too little light can also be an issue, so if your room does not have sufficient light, consider installing wall sconces or buy a floor lamp to improve your viewing.

Wiring can be the most challenging issue when installing your home theater. Poorly organized wiring is an eyesore, and poorly planned installation can lead to confusion concerning which cord belongs to what unit. Find a place for your wires that will not interfere with the aesthetics of your décor. Many home theater closets come with holes in the back where wires can be fed through and concealed. Do not try hiding wires underneath a throw rug, since they create unsightly lumps and can cause falls. A good idea is to bunch up your cords with a twist-tie (such as those used for garbage bags). You will also want to use colored stickers, which label the location of each cord, and keep a diagram of the way each unit is wired for future reference. Labeling your cords will save you headaches and panic later on.

Another major concern when installing your home theater unit is how you are going to store you equipment. One of the most efficient ways

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is to place the equipment on shelves that are built in to the wall. One problem with this arrangement is that it might be more difficult to get behind the unit for maintenance. You can purchase good-quality storage closets or basic shelves for your equipment. Don't skimp on quality when it comes to shelving; if your base is not strong enough to support your equipment, everything could come crashing down and be damaged permanently. Check how much weight your shelves can hold; they should be able to hold at least 15% more weight that than of your equipment.

Before you make the final decision on your home theater unit, it is important to know how much power your home can accommodate. Check circuit breakers to ensure that you equipment will not overwhelm you system. It is convenient to plug in all of the equipment into the same place, and you will want to purchase a power strip that will handle the number of plugs you will need. You will need to decide which units you want to be plugged in to other units, and which unit need to be plugged directly into the source. It is a good idea to plug your VCR directly into the source so it can record even if the rest of the unit is shut off. Make sure that a wall switch does not control your unit, or a flick of a switch will completely disrupt your system.

Once you have installed your home theater unit, be sure to keep all manuals, warrantees and a diagram of the wiring in a safe place. Usually these items are the first to get lost, and they are almost always needed at a later date.

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Child Proofing Your Home Theater System

Your little one may be every bit as fascinated with your home theater unit as you are. Of course, what toddler can resist the blinking lights, the swooshing sound of something rewinding or watching those automatic disk drives spit your CD's out? Many pieces of equipment have been ruined because a child has stuck a foreign object in a vulnerable spot. By the same token, children can be injured while playing with power strips or getting their hands on CD cleaning fluid. Just as it is important to childproof every other area of you home, it is also essential to childproof your home theater, because the potential damage your child can do to your equipment, and, more importantly the potential danger your equipment poses to your child, is significant.

The first thing to do is to explore your home theater as a one or a two year old would. What catches your attention? Where do you feel like sticking your fingers or putting something? Those areas are the places that need to be childproofed first. You probably know your child well enough to be able to predict what things he or she will find interesting. It is best not to limit your childproofing job to only these things, because, as children grow and develop, their interests change. It is best to assume anything and everything will interest him, and therefore, all things pose the same threat.

Of course, the best method of childproofing is to place your child in a playpen. However, by the age of about one, most children are able to crawl out of an average-sized playpen, so you will have to deal with actually protecting your equipment. You could, perhaps, invest in taller walls for the playpen, but you child might feel confined, and this will only delay the inevitable. Although your child may feel comfortable sitting in the playpen while watching his or her favorite program, eventually they will want to explore what makes Barney pop up on the screen.

To protect your equipment, you may want to purchase a large screen to place one foot in front of your home theater. The problem with this

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idea is that it may obstruct the view or at least interfere with your viewing pleasure. You may want to invest in a very large piece of plexiglass to fit tightly over the entire unit. Another option is to make your home theater literally on the “high end” and place your panel set on the upper part of your wall at an angle. You can install high shelves for your VCR and DVD player, and install your speakers on the wall. The problem with this idea is that you will have to climb on chairs and ladders to give your equipment the proper maintenance. However, the peace of mind knowing that your equipment is far away from your child might be well worth it.

You can purchase a wooden home entertainment armoire that opens and closes. You might want to put a lock on the handle of the armoire to ensure that your child cannot get to your equipment when you are not around. This is a very secure way of storing your home theater, but you may not want to keep your equipment under lock and key all the time, and as soon as the cabinet is opened, your child’s curiosity might be aroused.

You can purchase clear, plastic protectors that prevent you child from pressing buttons on your VCR or DVD player, but will still enable you to access through remote control. You can also find covers for you remote control, lest you child think that it is a fun toy. Another good idea is to place a protector on your disk drive to prevent your child from sticking his or her fingers or other objects inside. These are also plastic, and they close the unit off completely to prevent inappropriate access.

With all of the power that you will need for your home theater, exposed outlets are, of course, a major problem for children. Make sure that there are no open outlets and that they are plugged up with plastic plugs, if necessary. Children who already know how to plug and unplug from circuits, purchase a snap-on and off plastic power strip protector. It is impossible for a child to stick his or her fingers inside one of these covers, but at the same time, there is space to allow wires to feed through.

However you want to childproof your home theater, be sure and get started right away if there are little ones in your home. You will be

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able to enjoy your home theater unit with much more relaxation and ease knowing that your child and your equipment are well protected.

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Selecting An Entertainment Center

Just as “clothes make the man,” (or “person”) the cases or shelves you use to store your home theater can make the difference between a merely functional yet unattractive entertainment center or a home theater that is truly a showpiece. The best way to select accessories for your home theater is to think about the décor of the room that contains your home theater. Is it classic or contemporary? Are you interested in hardwood cases, or futuristic metallic design? It is also important to take into account the kind of equipment you have. Most panel televisions have a very contemporary look to them anyway, so they might or might not blend so well into a Victorian living room, for example. It is best to choose the entertainment center design that suits your décor and your equipment, and perhaps you should leave the Victorian furniture for the dining room!

You can purchase high-quality hardwood entertainment centers that hold every piece of your home entertainment unit and more. These components often look like large bookshelves, and the sides can be used to hold favorite books, your TV guides and your CD collection. You can find a hardwood cabinet that holds a wide screen TV with shelves at the bottom for your DVD Player and VCR. The speakers can be place on both ends of the cabinet (tower speakers with a wooden base are a good option to match a hardwood home entertainment cabinet). To protect your equipment, you might consider a home entertainment center that is actually a combination of hardwood and glass, with easy to open and close glass doors. You might decide to conceal your equipment completely in a home entertainment armoire with top and bottom sections that open and close. This is a good idea if you prefer a hardwood look to your room and if you feel that your home theater equipment might interfere with the general décor of your room. This is also a good option for those with small children who might want to poke their hands and fingers on buttons or inside DVD slots. These armoires can easily be locked so that your children cannot access your equipment. Many of these hardwood entertainment centers have holes in the back, so there is no need to feed unsightly wires around the front and sides. They are usually very easy to assemble with notches and pegs.

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For those who prefer a more streamlined, contemporary design for their home entertainment centers, there are very basic cabinets that emphasis you're equipment rather than their own design. A large, plasma TV panel can extend above small narrow or glass shelves, which can store your DVD Player, or VCR. These cabinets do not usually have sufficient storage areas for CDs, DVDs or speakers, so you will want to purchase separate units of these try placing your CDs on a chrome CD tower that can come in various geometric and novelty designs. You can choose speakers that match your television, and there are many speakers that are available with large rectangular, metallic heads and poles for bases. If you are looking for something a bit larger to hold everything you need, try a chrome and glass cabinet with easy to open doors. You can even place a lock on your cabinet, which will protect your equipment from children. Tinted glass is also a good choice for your entertainment center.

If you are dealing with limited space, you may want to consider installing shelves for your equipment rather than investing in cabinets for your home theater. Make sure that the shelves can hold 15% more weight than you need. You wide screen television will need a very sturdy shelf, or alternatively, try a panel that you can mount on the wall at an angle. You speakers can be installed on the top corners of the walls, and you can place your DVD and VCR on shelves below the television. Purchase a stylish storage tower for you CDs and DVDs, and you have successfully set up your entertainment center for a small room.

Whether you prefer to place your equipment in elaborately designed cabinets or simple do-it-yourself shelves, you can create an entertainment center that reflects your décor, you needs and your personality!

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Choosing Furniture To Compliment Your System

Perhaps you have already purchased a state-of-the-art DVD player, VCR and speakers. When you watch movies or even ordinary television shows, you enjoy the best quality video and sound that you could ask for. However, those high-backed Victorian chairs don't seem to suit the mood of your home theater room. Perhaps you are ready to concentrate more on the aesthetic side of putting together your home theater, and maybe the right chairs can give any room a home theater feel. Or perhaps you want to design your home theater room around a specific theme or add a few novelty items. The main things to keep in mind when selecting furniture to match your home theater are comfort and fun!

The most relaxing way to enjoy entertainment as a group is to invest in leather sectional sofas, which cover a wall or two walls. This enables the entire family to sit or recline while watching favorite programs, laughing over the video of the end of the school play, or listening to music and reading. Leather sectionals come in a variety of colors. Bold reds and blues are quite popular, as well as cream and black. You might want to try a combination of colors, or stick to one particular pattern. Leather sectionals do not need a lot of maintenance, but make sure you cover the surfaces with a waterproofing spray that will resist damage from spills and that you wipe the surfaces down once in a while with a cloth.

For a more classic look, try leather recliners, which, like the sectionals, are available in many shades and styles. You may want to purchase a group of four recliners and place them in a row for more comfortable version of cinema seating. Many recliners are available with cup holders and other accessories. You can find the best quality, 100% top grain leather recliners, or imitation leather versions with micro fiber or leatherbacks. Many leather recliners are relatively easy to assemble by placing slots in the holes of the frame. You can also find matching Ottomans and other accessories.

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You might consider installing a bar next to your home theater, if you prefer to sip your favorite cocktail while watching the newest DVD. You can choose a bar depending on the size of the room and on which area you wish to be the focal point of the room. A large, wooden bar with old-fashioned counters and closets for your bottles is a good choice if the bar is the main part of the room and if the home theater is a peripheral interest. Or, transform your home theater into your favorite sports bar by putting the large screen behind the counter so you can sit at the bar with you buddies and watch the game at home. If you'd prefer the bar to be on the periphery, there are smaller bars you can purchase with a miniature fridge and small, swivel stools. You and your guests can choose to sit at the bar or recline on the sofa.

You might want to choose a theme for your home theater, whether it is a tribute to ESPN or your favorite movie stars. Feel free to fill the walls with photographs of your sports favorites (autographed pictures are, of course, preferable). Make a shelf for your trophies and souvenirs, and place a stationary bike or treadmill in the corner so you can ride or run along with your favorite athletes. Try putting in a pool table if you have room, or install a computer for you fantasy football/baseball/basketball sessions. Your sports home theater room should also be a great place to wind down and watch your team in action.

Your home theater center can be devoted to the movie stars of yesteryear. Photographs or posters from classic films can be placed around the room, along with souvenirs or items that evoke cinematic nostalgia. You can find many furniture novelty items connected with the movies. A good conversation piece is a glass-topped table which has an actual film reel at the base, or small side tables that are shaped like film strips. Retro-furniture representing the era of your favorite films is usually easy to find at an antique store, and details like throw rugs, blankets, pillows and drapes complete the effect.

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Bringing The Home Theater Experience To The Bedroom

Home theater systems have become the hottest new edition to most homes. Some homeowners designate a room specifically for the home theater. Builders are even including them in new home floor plans. Jumping on the home theater bandwagon is in everyone's reach even if you don't have the space to give up a room for the home theater. These days, lots of people just want to come, relax and watch a good movie. What better way to do this than in the bedroom? Think your bedroom is incapable of providing that dramatic, fun theater experience? Think again. Today, home theaters are available to everyone no matter your budget or space limitations. Also, you can enjoy home theaters in a room, such as a bedroom, with out taking up space with bulky speakers and large compartments.

For the budget conscious, a home theater in box may be all you need to turn your bedroom into a home theater. Because of the compact size, home theaters in a box get the job done without taking up a lot a of space. Since most bedrooms already contain a TV and possibly and entertainment center, adding speakers, a DVD player and a receiver won't clutter your room too much. Most of the components of a home theater in a box are placed in a central location, leaving more space in your bedroom for you to kick your feet up. And with the easy instructions and simple diagrams, installing it is a breeze and you'll be well on your way to enjoying your new bedroom theater.

If you have a little more money to play with, try purchasing separate components that will give you more of a quality sound, specifically good speakers. Speakers make or break your theater experience. The luxury of going to a movie theater is experiencing not only all the sights, but the sounds. Movie theater surround sound is responsible for giving you that edge-of-your-seat feeling.

You can have it at home in your bedroom, without overpowering your room. These days, the speakers required for surround sound can be small and lightweight. There's no need for huge, bulky speakers of yesterday. Today, you can get about 4 to 5 speakers and mount them

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on the walls, bookcases, etc. Therefore your room is filled less with clutter and more with rich, exciting sounds coming from the new DVD movie you just popped in.

Now if you're ready to really get fancy, a plasma screen may be just the thing you're looking for. Though more expensive than some regular TVs, plasmas are so thin and compact, you can't help but to love all the space they save. Also, they are very pleasing to look at and use less power than some conventional televisions. No matter where you're sitting in your bedroom, a plasma screen is easy to view at just about any angle.

Now that you know that creating home theater in your bedroom is more than doable, how about adding to the enjoyment? Some people already have extra seating in their bedrooms. Instead of keeping that old, worn out chair, add a couple of soft, comfortable recliners. What better way to enjoy that movie theater experience in the comfort of your bedroom? You can lie in the bed or take a seat in your recliner. The choice is yours.

Lighting is also an important feature in any home theater. Many homes already have dimming switches in the house. To really replicate the movie theater fun, play around with dimming the lights in your bedroom. Before you know it, you'll forget you're at home and get so engulfed with your movie. But the best thing is that you can have all the fun you want without any distractions. While you're at it, you can close the shades to make another big impact on your bedroom theater experience.

So if you want all the luxuries of a home theater but think you don't have the space, try converting your bedroom. You can create the home theater of your dreams, with a little imagination and creativity. Also, you save space in your home and get more out of less.

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Building An Outdoor Home Theater

These days, when you think of a home theater system, images of darkened rooms, fancy lighting, zillions of speakers and an over the top TV may pop into your head. Home theaters are becoming so popular that builders are including them in floor plans for new home buyers. But why should all the fun be kept inside? Outdoor home theaters systems may not be logical as a permanent location, simply due to the effects of nature and weather. Water and electronics do not mix. But maybe you want to try something new for a special occasion, or maybe shock all the neighbors with an unforgettable movie experience. While everyone's caught up in the home theaters for inside the home, why not surprise them by doing something different and setting up a theater in your own backyard? Well, at first thought, it may seem like an enormous challenge. Fortunately, a little imagination, creativity and knowing some of the essentials of creating an outdoor theater will help speed your project along.

A screen is the first big essential for an outdoor theater. Now before you think of the price and quit before starting, you don't have to get to fancy. A couple of crisp, white bed sheets sewn together should do the trick just fine. Better yet, you can use just one. You'll have a smaller screen, but a screen no doubt. Once you have your screen, you can hang it on the fence or back side of the house, just as long as you tape or tack it down. Here's where you can use your creativity. The point is to keep the sheet, uh, screen, smooth so that it doesn't wrinkle in the wind. If this is too much for your right brain, you can skip it and purchase a portable outdoor screen.

The next thing you'll need is a video projector and a DVD player. Though not cheap, you might want to invest in a good projector if you plan to make this outdoor home theater idea a staple in your home. Some of the less expensive costs for projectors start at about $400 and up. As far as something to play movies, a DVD player is recommended. It may be worth buying one specific for the backyard theater, that way, you eliminate the need to unhook your in-house DVD players. Purchasing one shouldn't be a problem since you can get one nowadays for less than $100.

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Now come the power sources for seeing and hearing the movie outside. First you need a receiver, and instead of trying to unhook something you have for the inside theater, it may just be easy to purchase a basic two-channel stereo receiver. And speaking of stereos, you probably have a couple of monster-sized speakers you've kept from the 1980s, so why not pull them out of the attic and dust them off for your outdoor theater? Using the basics will get you to the end result without going broke.

In order to get everything installed, you need the right wires and cables. Basically, you should connect your component video cables from your DVD player to your projector and then connect the two analog cables from your DVD player to your receiver. Then connect the wires from your speakers to your receiver. To get everything up and running, you'll also need a really good extension cord and a power strip with extra outlets to plug in all your components.

Other things that you may want to consider when creating an outdoor theater is a central unit to place all your components. The grass may be okay, but you could cut down on confusion if you have a book case or some type of shelf to put everything on. Also, to make your outdoor theater more comfortable, grab some chairs suitable for the outdoors. After all your work, you want to be able to relax and enjoy the movie in a comfortable chair.

The bottom line is that home theaters are not just for inside the home anymore. You can create a great theater while enjoying the backyard. Just be sure to be careful when working outside, check with your homeowner's association to be certain that you aren't breaking any rules regarding noise and remember to have fun!

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Notes On Home Theater Maintenance

You can purchase the best quality home theater unit, but if it isn't maintained properly, it will not deliver the optimum audio and video that you paid for. Caring for you DVD Player, VCR, television screen, disks and speakers need not be expensive or time consuming. Your home theater salesperson can provide you with maintenance equipment, or you can purchase these items online. Wherever you wish to purchase cleaning equipment, the main principle to keep in mind is that proper home theater maintenance is essential to consistent performance, as a bit of dust here and there can affect sound and visual quality.

Caring for your DVDs and CD-ROMS is relatively easy, and there are many devices on the market that cleanse disks of smudges and dirt and also remove scratches. You can find a battery-operated device which will actually remove scratches from CDs you might have thought were beyond repair. These small machines use radial wheel technology to make your CDs like new, and they can repair up to 50 disks before the inner wheel needs to be replaced. Regular disk cleansing is also very important, and for this task, you can purchase a machine or special spray and cloths to remove smudges and fingerprints which can obscure the sound quality of your CDs. A motorized cleaner will cleanse your disks quickly and easily, or if you prefer to care for you disks by hand, you can use a spray and a cloth specially designed for disk maintenance. Simple water does not do the job, and never use glass cleaner on your CDs or a cloth which might scratch. It is a good idea to invest a few dollars for sprays and cloths especially designed for CDs.

Your screen is the window of your home theater unit, so it is essential to keep it clean at all times. Many people use glass cleaner for their computer and television screens, but this is a mistake, since the alcohol and ammonia found in glass cleaners is not appropriate for screens. You can purchase alcohol and ammonia free screen cleaners that come with special cloths that prevent scratches and streaks. You will notice the difference in the visual quality of your home theater unit when you clean your screen with the right

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materials. For regular dusting, invest in a small screen brush to remove particles and dust from your screen. These can be purchased from a home theater salesperson.

It is also easy to find special CDs or tapes, which clean your DVD Player and VCR. These are inserted in the slot and “played” like any tape or CD. The best CD and VCR cleaners use a ten-brush system that removes all traces of dust and dramatically improves the visual and sound quality of your player. These cleaners work on the lens surface and also check other parts of your home theater unit. As it is cleaning, a DVD or VCR cleanser checks that your speakers are plugged in properly and if they are performing well. It also checks the color bar and ensures that the lenses are in good working condition. It is recommended that your DVD or VCR player be cleaned after every ten hours of use.

The best speakers should need little maintenance, but there is a problem known as speaker foam rot which people often spend a good deal of money to repair. You can purchase special kits that will instruct you on how to replace your speaker foam yourself, and can potentially save you hundreds of dollars. These kits usually come with 2-foam surround adhesive, calibration alignment shims, replacement dust caps and other supplies. It is worthwhile to wait the short amount of time it will take to order these repair kits if they are not readily available at your store rather than hire someone else to repair your speakers. However, if you have invested a lot of money on your speakers and are nervous about doing the job yourself, by all means, you should consider hiring a professional.

When you buy your home theater equipment, ensure that each item comes with a warrantee and that it can be serviced easily. Keep these documents in a safe place along with your owner’s manuals.

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Conclusion

You've now been armed with all the information you need to get started on your own home theater system. No matter if you are the do-it-yourself type or would rather hire someone to do the job for you, having your own home theater system will be a real joy to you and your family for many years to come!

To your health and happiness!

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