

5 ways to use USB ports on Smart TV

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5. Play high quality local media files



There's something satisfying about having your own collection of music, movies, and shows ready to play. No caching, no internet issues - just instant access. Just load up a USB flash drive or external hard drive with your favorite content, plug it into your TV's USB port, and you can use the built-in media player to navigate and play your files.

Not all TVs support every file format, so you may want to check your TV's manual to see what formats are available. If the file doesn't play, you can use any free music converter or Windows video converter to reformat the file. Otherwise, you may see an "Unsupported File Format" error message.

If you're watching a foreign language movie, you can add the subtitle file (.SRT or .SUB) to the same folder as the video, with the same file name. Most smart TVs will automatically recognize them; if not, you can select the file manually.

4. Turn your Smart TV into a digital photo frame



If you have a USB drive containing a folder (or folders) of photos, you can plug it into your TV and start a slideshow. Some TVs allow you to adjust the settings - changing the transition effects or how long each photo appears on screen.

Instead of passing the phone, let the TV handle it. It will fill the room with memories. This works well outside the home, too. For example, in the waiting area of a business office, your TV slideshow can showcase your work, services, or anything else of note.

Some TVs even let you set a slideshow as a screensaver. When the screen goes dark, it cycles through your photos. It's simple, but it turns the screensaver into something useful.

3. Install the firmware update

Many TV brands allow you to manually download the latest firmware update from their official website, transfer it to a USB stick, and install it directly onto your TV. To do this, you need to navigate to the software update section in your TV settings and follow the on-screen instructions.

While most modern smart TVs handle firmware updates automatically over Wi-Fi, you may find yourself in a situation where a Direct USB update can save the day. Maybe your TV is struggling to download a major update over a poor connection, or you have an older model that's acting erratically. That's where this method comes in handy—you may even prefer it to an over-the-air update.

Note : Always use a reliable USB and do not remove the drive midway through the update. Interrupting the process can cause the TV to freeze, which is a major problem.

2. Connect peripheral devices



You may have struggled with the slow, clumsy process of navigating and typing on your TV remote—letter by letter. A wireless USB keyboard and mouse can make things a lot easier. Just plug the dongle combo into a USB port and navigating your favorite streaming apps or entering passwords becomes a breeze.

If your TV has a built-in gaming option (like Samsung models from 2020 or later), you can also plug in a USB game controller. With cloud gaming services like Xbox Game Pass or GeForce Now, your TV becomes a regular gaming setup. Most controllers work right out of the box, so all you have to do is plug them in.

However, not all USB devices are compatible. You should check your TV's manual or support page before buying anything. In my experience, basic peripherals like keyboards and mice tend to work best, while more complex devices may not be compatible.

1. Charge and power the device

Most TV USB ports aren't powerful sources of power. Many only deliver 5V at 500mA or 1A, which is enough to trickle charge smaller devices but not ideal for fast-charging your phone. Still, it's a great backup option, especially for charging overnight or keeping your accessories fully charged.

In addition to charging, your TV's USB port can also power popular streaming devices like the Roku Stick, Amazon Fire Stick, or Google Chromecast. While they usually come with an AC adapter, you can ditch the wall plug and power them directly from the TV. This frees up the outlet and allows the device to turn on and off with the TV, so it doesn't waste power in the background.



Another great use for the USB port on your TV is to power LED backlight strips. These lights not only add beauty to your setup, but can also reduce eye strain when watching TV in a dark room. Since they turn on and off with the TV, you don't have to worry about manually controlling them.



You can also connect a USB digital antenna (like the URIIU antenna pictured below) to expand your TV channel options. With this antenna, you can watch more free TV channels without the need for a large, bulky antenna or additional power cables. Just plug it in and scan for local channels around you.



You'll find it especially useful if you've stopped using cable or want more options without paying a subscription fee.

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