

Why do many people regret buying a soundbar?

Suddenly, some people realized that soundbars weren't the upgrade they were expecting. They were simply a cliché reminder that convenience often comes at the cost of quality.

When buying a flat-screen TV for a new apartment, many people naturally opt to purchase a soundbar and subwoofer as well. Having a better amplifier, a wider soundstage, and a neat, wireless solution that saves space for the audio equipment makes sense.

But then suddenly some people realized that the soundbar wasn't the upgrade they were expecting. It was simply a cliché reminder that convenience often comes at the cost of quality.

The sound and software tricks were disappointing.

The promise of loud sound in a small device is simply wishful thinking.

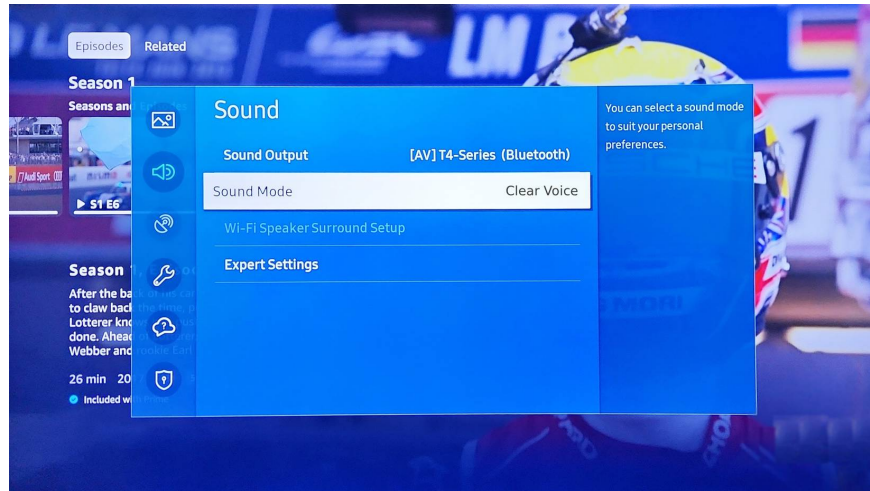


Soundbars deserve credit for being a much-needed upgrade to the small, built-in speakers of your home TV. Larger speakers can deliver sound at higher volume levels without distortion and handle low frequencies more effectively, and this is where soundbars (and ideally, their accompanying subwoofers) come into play. However, louder and deeper sound doesn't necessarily mean better quality. With midrange settings, low frequencies are muffled, voices lack warmth, spatial cues feel artificial, and music sounds less appealing.

Like many other soundbars, these speakers rely heavily on software tricks to create the illusion of surround sound. They achieve this by reflecting sound off walls, adjusting timing, and using acoustic psychology to deceive the listener's hearing. While all of this is a marvel of modern audio engineering, you can't overcome the physical barrier. You'll never achieve the level of precise sound separation that multiple speakers placed around a room achieve. The "surrounding" effect of soundbars interferes with dialogue, while, no matter how much you fine-tune the settings, the subwoofer still occupies most of the sound space.

Initial troubles and a fundamental problem

Compatibility, calibration, and superiority of true surround sound.



Soundbars aren't as simple as they seem. First of all, HDMI-ARC, the original single-cable solution, was considered quite complicated. It didn't automatically power on more than once, and many people experienced compatibility issues after firmware updates. They had to try several alternative solutions to improve the sound, and even then, they still had to adjust EQ settings to suit various media types.

Soundbars promote the idea that good sound can be plugged in and played. However, the best sound is spatial sound; it provides context and creates atmosphere. Cramping multiple channels into a single device is like trying to light an entire barn with a single light bulb. No matter how bright, multiple bulbs always create a fuller effect. This very perception has convinced many that soundbars will never replace AV receivers and multiple speakers with true 5.1 or higher surround sound.

Pros and cons of modern soundbars



It's true that some brands, such as Bose, Sonos, Sennheiser, and Klipsch, have made significant strides in soundbar development. The Sennheiser Ambeo, for example, can accurately simulate spatial sound using room calibration and a process called beamforming. Even with a more affordable setup, the difference from any TV speakers will be noticeable, and the lack of messy cables, compact size, and refined aesthetics are enough to sell a soundbar and subwoofer setup. The convenience factor is undeniable, and for casual viewers, their sound can be impressive enough.

However, even with high-end models, the fundamental problem remains. The illusion of surround sound—no matter how advanced the technology—is still just an illusion. You don't hear the sound behind you; you hear the sound bouncing towards you. These subtle differences, once heard, are impossible to ignore. Moreover, when exploring alternatives, you'll find you can buy a basic home theater system for the price of a mid-range soundbar, offering superior performance and easy upgradeability.

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