



How Technology Transformed Television

Watching television, or TV, has changed radically for Americans over the past several years. We now have incredible access to a huge range of excellent shows that we can watch whenever and wherever we desire. But more than just the programming and variety have changed. And there is a dark side to the new world of TV watching, too.

A Family Affair

When television first became commonplace in the American home during the 1950s, families would gather around the television screen like a warm fireplace at a scheduled time in the evening. Together, families would experience the stories told by their favorite shows. When the shows ended, they'd turn off the TV and move to other activities. There were a limited number of channels and shows to choose from, so most

Americans watched the same programs.

As decades passed and TV became increasingly popular, more channels were added and more shows were created. With so many choices, there was always something interesting on television. So it's no surprise that the amount of TV watched by most Americans increased greatly. Still, shows ran on a schedule. If you wanted to see your favorite story, you'd have to tune in at the right time on the right evening. If you were not home to watch, you'd miss out. And enjoying a show together was still a common shared activity for American families.

The Television Revolution

In the early 2000s, newly adopted technology allowed Americans to start digitally recording shows to watch later. The digital video recorder, or DVR, made it all possible. People were no longer tethered to the schedules of their favorite programs. Now, people didn't even have to be home when their shows aired. They could easily choose to watch on demand, or whenever they wanted.

More recently, technology has transformed TV watching yet again. First, online streaming services like Netflix and Hulu provide Americans with another way to watch content on demand. Many people don't even pay for expensive cable TV anymore because they can easily stream video online at half the cost or less of traditional cable.



An American family gathers around the television, 1958.

Second, Americans now have a wide range of devices for viewing. No longer restricted by a big, clumsy television set, Americans can watch today's programming on their laptops, tablets, and smartphones. People now watch TV while they ride the bus or sit in an airport. People can watch TV from anywhere an internet connection is available.

Third, online services now often make entire seasons or multiple seasons of a show available on their websites. Sometimes online services like Netflix even release an entire season of a new show at once. This has led to the rise of binge watching, or watching many episodes of the same show back-to-back. Binge watching is like reading a novel, as you can flip to the next episode or chapter as soon as you are ready. This is very different from how people used to watch TV. In the past, people had to wait a week or more between new episodes, extending the experience.

Fourth, the quality of TV has changed. Because there are so many different channels and online streaming services, competition requires each platform to produce better content to keep viewers engaged. Shows are exploring deeper topics and the production quality and special effects have become more sophisticated. As a result, TV is considerably more respected as art form today.

TV Today

People around the world are watching more TV than ever before-- and often, they are doing it alone. TV has lost its prominent place as a family activity. Now people watch from their devices by themselves in their rooms. It is not uncommon for family members to each be in their own rooms watching entirely different shows from their laptops, devices, and sometimes TVs.

While new technology has made television better and more accessible, it has come at a price. Families and friends are spending less time together and more time on their screens. People are becoming more isolated, and too much of this is harmful to creating meaningful relationships and strong communities.

The Evolution of the Television

1950s



1970s

1990s



2000s

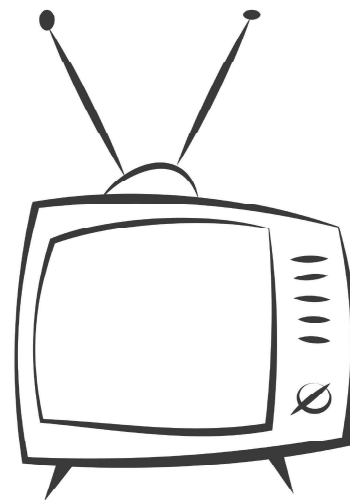
2010s



Comprehension Quiz

Choose the best answer according to the article.

1. Television first became commonplace in the American home during the ...
 - a. 1920s.
 - b. 1950s.
 - c. 1980s.
 - d. 2000s.
2. During this time, television was often watched...
 - a. on the weekends in public spaces.
 - b. in theatres with friends.
 - c. in the evenings with family members.
 - d. in the mornings alone.
3. What happened as television became more and more popular?
 - a. more channels were added
 - b. more shows were created
 - c. more television was watched
 - d. all of these
4. In television terms, DVR stands for...
 - a. devices for recording
 - b. digital video recorder
 - c. device replay recorder
 - d. differential video resource
5. DVRs changed television by allowing viewers to...
 - a. record live television for the first time ever.
 - b. watch programming on demand.
 - c. view all available programming at once.
 - d. all of these
6. Some examples of online streaming services include...
 - a. Hulu and Netflix.
 - b. DirecTV and Dish.
 - c. Roku and Apple TV.
 - d. all of these
7. What is binge watching?
 - a. Viewing your favorite shows at the same time each week.
 - b. Watching shows in syndication.
 - c. Watching several episodes of the same show back-to-back.
 - d. both a and c
8. Competition in programming has resulted in...
 - a. higher quality shows.
 - b. higher costs for viewers.
 - c. fewer movies released in theaters.
 - d. fewer channels.



Finding Text Evidence

Find each piece of text evidence in the article and highlight OR underline it with the color specified.

For items 1-3, you'll be citing textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly.

1. Find the sentence that tells when technology for digitally recording television became widely available. Highlight it in **blue**.
2. Find the sentence that explains why many families watched the same programs in the 1950s and highlight it in **green**.
3. Find the sentence that explains the meaning of binge watching and highlight it in **purple**.

For items 4-8, you'll be citing one piece or multiple pieces of textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.

4. Find two pieces of text evidence (in the first page of the article) that support the idea that people watched less TV in the 1950s than they do today. Highlight them in **gray**.
5. Find three pieces of evidence that support the idea that people do not have the same television viewing habits today as they did 65 years ago. Highlight it in **orange**.
6. Find one piece of evidence that **most strongly supports** the idea that television programming has improved. Highlight it in **yellow**.
7. Find one piece of text evidence that shows that subscribing to quality television is cheaper today than it used to be. Highlight it in **pink**.
8. Find two details from the article that support this statement:

The invention of the DVR made watching our favorite shows easier. Highlight them in **red**.

A. Analyze Author's Point of View

Read each text excerpt from the article in the left column. Then, read the inferences made about the author's point of view in the right column. Circle the two inferences for each excerpt that can be made about the author's point of view **based on the text excerpt in the left column only**.

Text From Article	Inferences Made About Author's POV
1. As decades passed and TV became increasingly popular, more channels were added and more shows were created. With so many choices, there was always something interesting on television. So it's no surprise that the amount of TV watched by most Americans increased greatly. Still, shows ran on a schedule. If you wanted to see your favorite story, you'd have to tune in at the right time on the right evening. If you were not home to watch, you'd miss out. And enjoying a show together was still a common shared activity for American families.	<p>A. During this time, television was still a family affair.</p> <p>B. Having more choices in television programming was a bad thing.</p> <p>C. The restriction of having to watch television on a schedule kept many Americans from watching too much TV.</p> <p>D. People could record their favorite programs with a VCR, but it wasn't easy.</p>
2. Third, online services now often make entire seasons or multiple seasons of a show available on their websites. Sometimes online services like Netflix even release an entire season of a new show at once. This has led to the rise of binge watching, or watching many episodes of the same show back-to-back. Binge watching is like reading a novel, as you can flip to the next episode or chapter as soon as you are ready. This is very different from how people used to watch TV. In the past, people had to wait a week or more between new episodes, extending the experience.	<p>A. People should spend more time reading books and less time watching television.</p> <p>B. People enjoy binge watching their favorite shows.</p> <p>C. The rise in on demand programming has caused binge watching to become popular.</p> <p>D. People would prefer waiting a week in between episodes of their favorite shows to make them last longer.</p>

3. Reread the text excerpt from #2 above and think again about the author's points of view that you identified in your answers. What is your opinion of the binge-watching phenomenon? How does your opinion differ from the opinion of the author?

B. Analyze Author's Purpose

Answer each question or provide the correct information in the graphic organizers.

4. The **author's main purpose** in the article is to _____.
- a. persuade b. entertain c. inform d. describe
5. What is the **author's purpose** for including the **photograph** on the first page of the article?

6. What is the **author's purpose** for including the **photograph** on the second page of the article?

7. In the introduction, the author states, "And there is a dark side to the new world of TV watching, too." What did the author mean by this statement? Back up your answer with evidence from the article.

Integrate Information

View the video clip, "How Netflix Changed TV" and answer these questions. You may need to view the video more than once.

1. The article mentions Netflix and another online streaming service, _____. What service does the video mention (at the beginning) that the article does not? _____.
2. Netflix was founded in _____. Netflix began as a _____ service.
3. Ten years later, Netflix expanded into _____.
4. The next big change from Netflix involved not just streaming TV but _____.
5. Read the points of view below and decide which point of view those in charge of the company Netflix most likely agree with, based on what you learned in this video clip.
 - a. Although television has changed somewhat over the past several decades, the basics of television will never change.
 - b. Any company that wants to remain successful in the constantly-evolving television industry must continue to be innovative.
 - c. Other streaming services will never be as big or successful as Netflix because Netflix was the first of its kind.
6. Defend the point of view you chose in the previous question with evidence from the video clip.

Skills Test

Choose the best answer. Use the article to help you answer the questions.

1. The **author's main purpose** in this article is to...
 - a. show the reader how far technology has come in the past 70 years.
 - b. explain to the reader how technology has changed the television industry and the viewing habits of Americans.

2. Read the text excerpt below and answer the question.

Third, online services now often make entire seasons or multiple seasons of a show available on their websites. Sometimes online services like Netflix even release an entire season of a new show at once. This has led to the rise of binge watching, or watching many episodes of the same show back-to-back. Binge watching is like reading a novel, as you can flip to the next episode or chapter as soon as you are ready. This is very different from how people used to watch TV. In the past, people had to wait a week or more between new episodes, extending the experience.

Which of these inferences about the author's point of view is best supported by the excerpt above?

 - a. The author believes that the ability to watch television almost anywhere has made binge watching possible.
 - b. The author believes that binge watching has increased the popularity of companies like Netflix.

3. Which excerpt from the article **most strongly supports** your answer to the previous question?
 - a. This has led to the rise of binge watching, or watching many episodes of the same show back-to-back.
 - b. Online services now often make entire seasons or multiple seasons of a show available on their websites.

4. Why did the author include the subsection, A Family Affair, in the article?
 - a. to describe the television habits of Americans in the past
 - b. to prove to the reader that people had fewer choices in televisions in the past

5. Which paragraph was included to inform the reader about the negative aspects of television today?
 - a. paragraph 8
 - b. paragraph 10

6. Which point of view below about the positive aspects of television today is the author most likely to agree with?
 - a. With the quality and variety today, there's something for everyone on TV.
 - b. Having to wait a week between episodes creates anticipation for your favorite shows.

7. Read the text excerpt from the article in the left column. Then, read the inferences made about the author's point of view in the right column. Circle the two inferences that can be made about the author's point of view based solely on the text excerpt in the left column.

Text From Article	Inferences Made About Author's POV
<p>More recently, technology has transformed TV watching yet again. First, online streaming services like Netflix and Hulu provide Americans with another way to watch content on demand. Many people don't even pay for expensive cable TV anymore because they can easily stream video online at half the cost or less of traditional cable.</p> <p>Second, Americans now have a wide range of devices for viewing. No longer restricted by a big, clumsy television set, Americans can watch today's programming on their laptops, tablets, and smartphones. People now watch TV while they ride the bus or sit in an airport. People can watch TV from anywhere an internet connection is available.</p>	<p>A. The ability to save money is a motivating factor for convincing people to change the way they access television programming.</p> <p>B. One reason Americans are watching more TV programming these days is that they can access their favorite shows virtually anywhere.</p> <p>C. People prefer free access to network channels over paid access to cable channels.</p> <p>D. People are willing to pay more for premium content.</p>

8. In 2-3 sentences, make a new inference (one not previously discussed on this test) about the author's point of view, and cite a line from the text to support your thinking.
