

The King's English

MINI-NEWSLETTER

A Publication of English Towers Condo Association

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May 2019

Welcome to Streaming Television!

We now have streaming television in English Towers!

Some Technical Particulars

Our Internet connection is provided through Eastern Shore Communications (ESC). ESC is in the business of providing communication interfaces and in particular interfaces to the Internet. In our case, they provide fiber optics to the building. Fiber optics is not only a popular communications medium, but it provides scalability and a path to future upgrades, and this is a key point.

Most commercial entertainment equipment such as televisions or computers do not have direct user interfaces to fiber optics, so the signals must be converted or “bridged” to provide signals we can use, which for us is Ethernet (hard wiring) or WiFi. Note that we upgraded our WiFi access at the time we brought ESC in as our access provider. We have since upgraded the bandwidth when we decided to stream television service.

For the most part, and even when we upgraded from Comcast, we tried to make the most use of existing infrastructure and wire routing. We were able to make use of the existing building routing and used this to the extent possible. These feeds are brought to each unit and terminate to an Ethernet / WiFi router (single or dual-band) within your unit. Your router provides the source of the drops and the individual feeds for each unit and each streaming device.

What's It Mean To Me?

It means you have some choices to make (if you haven't already).

These are some of the things you need to think about (and the areas they influence):

- How many devices do you want to support? (This will influence the number of drops, and/or the use of a single or dual-band router type)
- Will you be using multiple devices at the same time? (This will influence the number of drops, and/or the use of single or dual-band router type)
- What kind of entertainment do you want? (A wider or narrower choice of streaming service provider depending on what shows you prefer)

- Price sensitivity? (There are a variety of choices for Smart TV, streaming device, streaming service provider)
- Do you have all Smart TVs or a mix? (Smart TV purchase and/or streaming device)
- What sort of Internet access speed do you want (This will influence the number of drops and/or the use of or WiFi and single or dual-band router)
- Does your Smart TV have sufficient Apps (Smart TV applications) and / or can you download them? (Smart TV purchase and/or streaming device)
- Will you be using the services seasonally or year around? (choice of monthly vs. yearly streaming service provider and terms of service)
- Do you want to provide services to a renter? (choice of streaming service provider terms of service) Also, see examples at the end of the newsletter.

You have a smorgasbord of options and that is the tough part! Hopefully by now you have thought about the kind of service you want. If you still aren't sure, take a guess on what you think you might want (and the cost). If you guess wrong, your choice is not "locked in stone".

At the basic level, you will need for **each** television:

- Smart TV or a television with an interface to a hardware streaming device product such as Roku, Amazon Fire Stick, Google Chrome, etc.
- A means to connect to the Internet.
 - One direct (e.g., Ethernet drop) to either television or streaming device product
 - WiFi connection to either the television or streaming device product
- One or more Streaming App[lication] subscription
 - Services and plans vary a lot!
 - Some are free
 - Some can be shared among televisions

FAQ

Q.1. I liked what we had. Why did we make any changes?

A.1. The Amtech-provided DirecTV was unreliable and DirecTV has stated publicly that satellite television was not a major business area they saw going forward. In other words, support from DirecTV could be expected to decline. Amtech was providing service that could barely stand up to normal local weather conditions, but under stressing weather conditions, service proved to be challenging and quite often errors were mis-attributed to Amtech outages.

Q.2. I thought this was going to be cheaper, but what I want costs me more.

A.2. Depending upon what services you need and select, streaming service can be either less expensive or more expensive. Note that (currently) typical streaming providers provide monthly subscriptions, as opposed to annual subscriptions only. Some are even pay-per-view. This means that if you only need service for a portion of a year, you should subscribe only for that portion that you need. Please keep in mind that cost inflation is something that affects most things, including technology.

Q.3. I have a streaming service provider at home. Can I use it here?

A.3. In many cases you can. One simple way to enjoy your home service is to physically bring your device(s) with you to the condo (these are the small devices connected directly to your television: FireStick, Roku, Apple+, etc.). Another option is that some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will allow you to connect other devices using your home credentials. You may be able to access them through an Internet-only connection through a computer, since some do not allow direct connection to televisions; in this case, you would connect to a computer and use your television as a monitor, or second monitor.

Q.4. There are too many choices! Can you recommend something suitable for me, so I won't have to do anything?

A.4. Unfortunately, there is not one solution suitable for everyone. Each user has their own tastes, internal wiring, television setup and viewing profile (e.g., seasonal versus year-round). Please refer to several of the emails that Russ has provided, or the handout from the Homeowners' Meeting for guidance.

Q.5. I have a Smart TV. Why am I having trouble hooking it up?

A.5. Not all Smart TVs are created equal. For example, some older Smart TVs do not support dual band WiFi routers (be sure to check if you are buying a new television). Also, some Smart TVs limit the applications they support. This is unfortunate, but we are seeing some with built in limitations. Also, be sure to update the software on your Smart TV; often patches, bug fixes and enhanced support will be provided with the updates.

Q.6. I have a Smart TV, but the "brightness" control does not make it smarter. Is there an "intelligence" control?

A.6. Ok, this is a bad joke. ☺ Unfortunately, the capability of your Smart TV is limited to the software capability the manufacturer has installed and the robustness of the software updates. Generally, the larger mainstream television providers provide more capability and regularly update their software/firmware. Be sure to check for updates often.

Q.7. I am perfectly capable of installing my own router. Why do I have to be limited to only the routers that ESC provides?

A.7. We are trying to minimize the complexity of the building's network and would like to keep it as stable as possible until all owners have unimpeded access. Unlike some installations in which adjacent routers don't affect other routers, our routers are physically located very close to each other. If they interfere with each other, the result is degraded performance for each. Getting the network mapped and working is the current priority. Use of similar routers is one less variable. Once the building network is stable, we will entertain inclusion of other routers.

Q.8. I am a "Power User" and want more bandwidth (currently about 15 MB per unit) to my unit. How can I get more bandwidth?

A.8. The president of ESC, Ronald van Geijn took an action at the last homeowners meeting to provide us a list of implications associated with either single units, or the whole building. We will provide that information as soon as it is available.

Some Background

Several years back we made the decision to break from our Internet Service Provider (ISP), Comcast. Their prices continued to rise and it seemed like the service was getting worse. Along with Comcast, we had DirecTV service that “rode” on the Internet and was decoded in each unit. These services were related, but not contractually joined.

As part of moving away from our ISP, we decided to continue with our DirecTV, and do a serious upgrade to our Internet bandwidth. This significant upgrade was through Fiber Optics to our building. After a lot of review, analysis and discussions, we chose Eastern Shore Communications (ESC), but they had to actually lay the fiber to our building, requiring trenching and permits to dig up Coastal Highway. We decided to do that anyway, since all other choices were inherently limited in the speed we could ever get, and fiber optics provided a pathway to almost any foreseeable bandwidth upgrade needs.

This left us with a contract with Amtech, who provided us DirecTV through a microwave link receiver on the roof. Many of you may remember, but we would get weather-related (snow, rain and even wind) outages. The first error message was usually one that indicated that there was a DirecTV problem, which was most often incorrect and this happened often. When the contract term with Amtech expired this March, we still needed to provide television service, but they had proven to be unsatisfying, and really had nothing better to offer for cost or service.

Through fortunate circumstances, we had an option at this time to leap into the technology of streaming video. We researched our options, and the technology trends and feel that as long as we needed to make a significant change, this was a fortuitous option. The Board recommended and the Homeowners agreed that we would move to streaming television.

Since that initial decision, the options of providers and services have exploded, with no sign of letting up. We are at the very beginning of a technology trend and even though there may be some rough spots, the Board stands behind its recommendation.

If You Have Guests or Rent Your Unit

Many owners may find it useful to provide a copy of written instructions for renters, visitors, or for even yourself, if you only visit once in a while.

Here are some semi-plagiarized (by me) examples, from other units to provide information to his family visitors and renters. The last one is a generic example, less personalized, but functional. We encourage you to modify the text as appropriate for your unit and leave a copy both in your unit and optionally with the ETCA staff (in case simple questions come up and you are unavailable).

Example #1

Welcome to ET. The ET community has upgraded TV service and we have chosen Roku to stream live TV. Roku plugs into the TV using an HDMI cable, connected from the TV to the Roku device. The Roku is then connected to the Internet via a wired connection to the master modem in the English Towers secret closet. Roku works by downloading video from the Internet. You then watch on the TV or listen to music via “Pandora.”

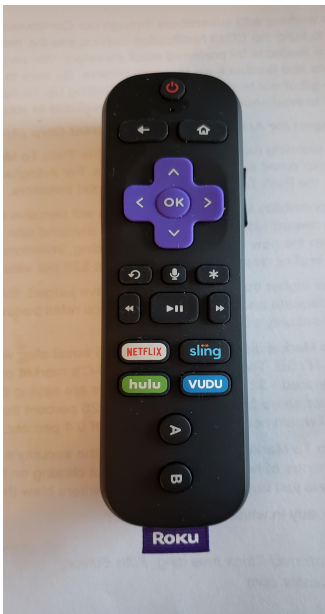
The following steps can help guide you to Live Streaming:

Step 1) Power the TV on with upper **RED** button. The first screen is the Home Screen.

Step 2) We have elected to stream TV via **hulu**. Use the purple arrow to the right to highlight **hulu** then press OK. This takes you to an Application Selection Screen on “Hulu Picks.”

Step 3) Navigating on this screen can be accomplished several ways, but the preference is

- a. Press the up-purple arrow twice to HOME
- b. Then right-purple arrow to LIVE TV
- c. Followed by the down-purple arrow to view the list of “Recent Channels” available, “All Channels,” “News,” “Sports,” “Kids,” and “Movies.”



Example #2

Welcome to our beach home. We have transitioned from DirecTV to streaming via the internet. Our unit is connected to a fiber optic cable connection via a dual-band router. The router brings connectivity to the TV. Here's how it works.

- 1) The TV remote turns the television on and controls the volume.
- 2) The Roku remote (purple tag) brings in streaming TV and our selected streaming service – **hulu** (press **hulu** button).
- 3) Use purple pad to navigate the “white line” cursor and make selections. If you want to back up, press the Home button in the upper right-hand corner.

Generic Example

INTERNET AND TV SERVICE AT ENGLISH TOWERS – UNIT ____

We have ____ televisions that use ____ as a streaming service!

Each one is slightly different, but the instructions are the same.

Instructions

1. Turn the TV on (and off) by using the remote control.
2. Navigate to select the streaming applications (slightly different on each TV). On some sets this will be through the ____ and by using the separate _____ remote control.
3. Our unit has a subscription to _____. You can access _____ by selecting it on your remote control or selecting it on the _____ home page. _____ offers many viewing options such as, cable news, TV series, movies etc. For other options, scroll through the list of available services; there are lots of free channels for your viewing pleasure. You will also find Netflix, Prime Video, Redbox and more. Additionally, feel free to sign in and use your home paid memberships.

Please note: If you use your own account information, you must remember to sign out. We are not liable for any charges that end up on your account due to your failure to sign out.