

# Best TVs of 2018

Consumer Reports tests hundreds of televisions each year. These 4K sets rise to the top.

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Last updated: December 6, 2018

With holiday sales now underway and more movies and TV series being presented in 4K and high dynamic range (HDR), you may be getting ready to buy a new 4K TV. We've been testing 2018 TVs since the spring, so we're in a good position to highlight some of the top performers in Consumer Reports' TV ratings.

For the purposes of this article, we focused on 65-inch sets, but many of the TVs are available in 55-inch or smaller screen sizes, which cost less.

Below, you'll find some of the best TVs of the year in several categories, including two sets that are battling it out for the top spot in our ratings. (There's also a pair of jumbo-sized TVs that are so close in the scoring it's hard to call one a clear winner.)

While many of the best TVs are pricey, we also picked out a great 65-inch 4K set that you can buy for less than \$1,000.

This year, consumers are choosing between two basic TV display technologies: LCDs—also called LED TVs due to the LED backlights that illuminate the screen—and OLED sets, where each pixel generates its own light.

There are far fewer OLED TVs on the market and they tend to be expensive. So far, only two brands—LG and Sony—make them. But the sets can deliver a truly stunning picture, in part because they do a great job of displaying the blackest parts of an image. The deepest shadows can really look black, as in real life, rather than gray. The TVs also have unlimited viewing angles, so the picture still looks great if you view it from the side of the room.

The huge majority of TVs being sold are LCD sets. You can find some highly rated LCD sets for less than \$1,000, even in the largest screen sizes. (Premium LCDs can cost several times that.)

LCD-based sets generally can't deliver OLED-like blacks, but they get better every year, especially models that use full-array backlights, where the LEDs are spread across the entire rear panel instead of just along the edges. These models also include a feature called local dimming, which divides the backlights into zones that can be separately dimmed or illuminated, depending on the scene. This, too, can help improve black levels.

Most TVs, though, are edge-lit, meaning the LEDs are positioned on the sides of the screen. Some of them also include local dimming, though this feature tends to be less effective on these sets than with those that use full-array backlights. In

general, LCD TVs tend to be brighter than OLEDs, making them a good choice in well-lit rooms.

Each year we test about 250 individual TVs, from major brands such as LG, Samsung, Sony, and Vizio, as well as emerging TV companies such as Hisense and TCL. All of the sets in our ratings go through a battery of objective measurements and subjective evaluations designed to push them to their limits.

In our ratings, you'll see separate scores for high-definition picture quality, ultra high definition performance (for 4K models), viewing angle, motion blur, sound quality, and versatility. And we now have a separate score for high dynamic range, or HDR, performance. When done well, HDR can produce enhanced contrast—brighter whites and deeper blacks—and more vibrant, lifelike colors.

Like all the products that Consumer Reports tests, every TV we evaluate is purchased at retail. We don't accept freebies or handpicked models from manufacturers, so every tested model is just like the one you might take home.

## Best TV Overall

### LG OLED65B8PUA

As in past years, an LG OLED TV tops our ratings in 2018, though this year it pushes ahead by just a hair in our ratings. (See "Best TV, Part II" below for the runner-up.)

Though it's not inexpensive by any stretch of the imagination, the 65-inch LG OLED65B8PUA is LG's least expensive OLED model for 2018, and it provides top-notch performance as shown in our scores. You get Excellent high-definition picture, Excellent UHD performance, and very effective HDR, something not true of all HDR-compatible TVs. (LG 4K TVs support several HDR formats used by content creators: HDR10, Dolby Vision, HLG, and Advanced HDR by Technicolor.)

Like all OLED TVs, this model has an almost unlimited viewing angle, and the sound is also excellent. (As a bonus, it supports Dolby Atmos audio, which can give a soundtrack a three-dimensional effect.) LG's updated smart TV platform includes its own voice-enabled ThinQ artificial intelligence platform as well as built-in support for the Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa digital voice assistants.

## Best TV Overall, Part II

### **Sony XBR-65A8F**

LG OLED TVs have dominated our TV ratings for the past several years, but in 2018 Sony's newest OLED TV gives even LG's best OLED sets a run for the money.

It's pretty much a toss-up whether to choose the 65-inch Sony XBR-65A8F or the LG above—which slots in ahead of it in our ratings. The Sony has nearly identical performance: excellent HD picture quality, excellent UHD performance, and very effective HDR, among the best of any tested sets. (The Sony supports the HDR10 and HLG HDR formats; the company says Dolby Vision capability will be added via an update soon.)

This set also has Sony's unique "Acoustic Surface" audio technology, which uses vibrating actuators that turn the entire panel into a speaker and delivers Excellent sound quality. Sony 4K TVs use Google's Android TV smart TV platform, which offers access to Google Cast for streaming from mobile devices. It also includes built-in Google Assistant and is compatible with the Amazon Alexa digital voice assistant.

## Best TVs That Aren't OLEDs

### **LG 65SK9500PUA**

### **Samsung QN65Q9FN**

This year two flagship 65-inch LCD TVs battle it out to almost a draw.

Both of these models offer top ratings: excellent HD picture quality, excellent UHD performance, and excellent sound quality.

In addition, they have full-array LED backlights with local dimming, where the tiny LEDs are grouped into zones that can be controlled individually. With local dimming, parts of the screen go truly dark during nighttime or indoor scenes.

But there are some differences. For example, the LG 65SK9500PUA—the top model in LG's "Super UHD" LCD series for 2018—has a significantly lower price and a wider viewing angle. The LG supports Dolby Atmos and the updated smart TV platform includes LG's own ThinQ AI platform, plus the Google Assistant

and Amazon Alexa digital voice assistants.

The Samsung QN65Q9FN, the company's top QLED TV for 2018, delivers better HDR performance than the LG, on a par with the best sets we've tested. Samsung's smart TV platform has Bixby, the company's own digital voice assistant that works with other Bixby and SmartThings-enabled devices. There's also a new Ambient Mode that mimics the color and pattern of the wall behind the TV when the set is off so it can blend into its surroundings. The feature is pretty cool when you see it in action. The set can also play music and display information about the news, weather, and traffic.

## Best Super-Sized TV

### **Sony XBR-70X830F**

### **LG 70UK6570PUB**

When it comes to the jumbo-sized TVs in our ratings, it was a toss-up between the Sony XBR-70X830F and the LG 70UK6570PUB, which had nearly identical scores. Both had excellent high-def picture quality, very good UHD performance, and comparable viewing-angle scores. Although the LG did sound a little bit better, we're giving the Sony set the nod as our top pick because it had slight edge in HDR performance and reducing motion blur. But the LG set is about \$600 cheaper right now, so there's a strong argument for that being the better deal.

## Best TV for Under \$1,000

### **TCL 65R615**

Despite its comparatively low price, this 65-inch 4K set, a Roku TV model, delivers the goods with Excellent scores for HD and UHD picture quality, and very effective HDR performance—something not usually found at this price. The one big drawback is the Fair sound. But the set could be a great choice for those thinking of using an external sound system, such as a sound bar speaker.

Note that TCL's R615 models are exclusive to Best Buy, but they're almost identical to the R617 sets sold elsewhere. The difference? The R617 sets come with a voice-enabled Roku remote and cost a bit more.