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Source: Thinkstock You probably already know that DVDs and Blu-ray discs are slowly but surely going the way of the VHS tape as people increasingly switch to online services to buy, rent and watch movies. While some may mourn the loss of the tangible in our everyday lives, online-based movie-watching eliminates problems with losing or damaging fragile discs and makes movies available on a variety of platforms so you can watch movies you own anywhere, anytime, without having to remember to grab your DVDs. Of course illegal download and streaming is very popular, but it deprives the many people who worked to make a movie of the compensation they deserve for their blood, sweat and tears. Plus the available options can often be low quality and you risk infecting your computer or mobile device with a virus if you don't know what you're doing. Here's a guide to the variety of legal ways to watch movies online for those familiar with the process who yearn to break free from scratched-DVD hell. Yes, it will cost you a little bit of money, but there are many advantages over both traditional DVDs and illegal downloading. Streaming services There are a wide range of options for viewing content online. One of the more popular methods is to use an online streaming service like Netflix, Hulu Plus, or Amazon's Prime Instant Video. These services charge either a monthly or annual fee and give you access to tons of content, although there's always a chance that a particular movie you're looking for won't be on whatever streaming service you have. The content these services have access to always changes when they make new offers, so you don't have the same options month after month. The aforementioned services are also great for TV watching and are starting to make their own original shows to compete in the TV market. Many of these shows, like Netflix's House of Cards and Orange is the New Black, have received glowing reviews. There are some limited options for streaming online that are both legal and free. Crackle is a website that offers movies and TV shows to stream for free, but it's ad-supported and you'll end up watching about as many commercials as you'd watch programming on cable. The amount of content Crackle offers are also slimmer pickings than subscription services, as the site doesn't have the financial muscle to make huge content purchases like the larger sites, so it can be harder to find your favorite movies. The downside of an online streaming service is that you are at the mercy of the content that the company has available. You can't just choose a movie under the sun and be guaranteed to be able to watch it. You don't own the movies either, so if Netflix gets rid of your favorite movie, you won't be able to watch it. Download a way to own movies and watch online is downloading them. Whether you're a Google or Apple fan, both iTunes and the Google Play Store offer movies that you can buy through the accounts that become yours. New releases cost about \$20: about the same price a DVD would cost even if a digital copy cannot be lost or damaged. Of course, buying individual titles to own is more expensive than paying the small fee for a streaming service and accessing oodles of content. Both iTunes and Google Play also offer movies for rent at a lower price. Rent allows you to watch the movie once in a 30-day period and 24 hours to finish it once you clicked play. These options are also great for switching between devices, as iTunes and Google Play will remember where you are in a movie if you get disconnected and want to switch from your TV to your tablet or smartphone. Amazon offers movies to buy or rent at similar price points like Apple and Google, and you don't need a Prime membership to access this service. Whether you prefer to own or stream movies, watching movies online is if you're tired of handling DVDs and Blu-ray discs. There are plenty of secure, legal options that don't cost too much and allow you to look at all your devices at your convenience. Check out the Entertainment Cheat Sheet on Facebook! More from the Entertainment Cheat Sheet: If you're someone who likes to watch movies online, but you don't want to pay for a streaming service you're unlikely to use, you're not alone. There are plenty of methods to watch free movies online, but not all of them are legal or safe. We've included a list below of the most trustworthy sites that allow you to watch movies online without spending a penny. Here's our list of the best places to go for a free (and secure) streaming fix. Further guides The big players Sony Crackle, Crackle, or Crackle Plus Once known simply as Crackle, this free streaming site has gone through almost as many name changes as P. Diddy. Originally controlled by Sony, it is now a joint-venture between Sony and Chicken Soup for Soul Entertainment (CSS). This partnership created a new device called Crackle Plus, and it was thought that this would also be the name of the streaming service. But a look at the site and it's clear that simplicity has won: It's just called Crackle. Whatever you call it, the service includes content from six ad-supported CSS streaming services (Popcornflix, Popcornflix Kids, Popcornflix Comedy, Frightpix, Españolflix, and Truli), as well as some Sony movies and TV shows. You'll find some quality low-budget hits like Choice, Bernie, Coneheads, and Train to Busan, and a generous little bit of obscure-but-interesting B-movies. Knitters are a great resource, although the constant interruptions from advertisers can get old pretty quickly, offered in 21 countries, but has closed its Canadian, Latin American and Australian offerings. IMDb TV Newer to this roundup is Amazon-owned IMDb TV (formerly known as Freeview). There are free, ad-supported TV shows and movies. In February 2020, the service acquired the rights to over 20 Disney-owned series, including Lost, Desperate Housewives, Malcolm in the Middle and My So-Called Life. It's also the only place that lets you stream Lost and Malcolm in the Middle for free. Other TV shows in its relatively small library include Psych, White Collar, 3rd Rock From the Sun and Schitt's Creek. It has a number of hit films including the Hunger Games series, Groundhog Day, Isle of Dogs, Big Fish, Rudy, Glory, and many more award winners and cult classics. You can watch IMDb TVs online, Amazon Fire devices and Apple TV, and through the Amazon Prime app, which you can find on many smart TVs, tablets and phones. IMDb TV is only US-only for now, although a European expansion is in the works. Vudu Walmart-owned Vudu may be better known for its subscription streaming service, but the platform also has an impressive and free ad-supported content section. Titles like Ella Enchanted, The Preacher's Wife and The Hungover Games are great examples of what you'll find. If you take a cruise through the site's selection of 4K/HDR titles, there are even one or two free-to-watch options. You still need a Vudu account, but you can create one for free. The Vudu app is already supported by lots of platforms including Roku, Apple TV, game consoles, and more. In addition, there is an app for most mobile devices. Vudu is only available in the United States. How is it for a bargain: Sign up for a credit card and get free downloads or streams of movies, with no ads at all. That's the deal when using Hoopla, a digital media streaming platform that has partnered with local libraries to let members access borrowed content online. It looks like Overdrive, but with more than just e-books and audiobooks. The availability of a given title will depend on your location and the number of copies available for download, but we found some surprisingly decent flicks when we checked in October 2020. Streaming works on any device with a browser, while downloads require the Hoopla app on a mobile device. Not every library currently supports Hoopla, so be sure to ask. So far, libraries in the United States and Canada have access to Hoopla. YouTube This one is a no-brainer. Everyone knows that YouTube is the largest video hosting service online and you probably already use the site for silly cat videos and footage of people getting hit with exercise balls. But YouTube has a significant collection of feature-length movies at its free level as well. Granted, most of these are B-list news, but there are a few quality flicks hiding in there. In addition to free, Google-curated movies, there are thousands of movies on the site that won't show up unless you search directly for them. If you're looking for a specific title, especially an older one, it's worth a quick search on YouTube to see if someone posted it. These aren't always uploaded by the film's rights holders, and many of them are divided into episodes and playlists, but as they say, beggars can't be voters. Finding free movies on YouTube has become more difficult lately, as more rights holders choose to offer their movies for rent through the service, and YouTube also has subscription levels like YouTube Premium and its live TV streaming service, YouTube TV. Still, you'll find plenty to see, especially if your standards aren't too high in terms of the quality of the stream. Vimeo YouTube may be the biggest video hosting site, but Vimeo is probably the best. Yes, they are fighting words, but Vimeo has the muscles to back them up. The site has a clean layout that is devoid of ads and benefits from an active user community that is widely considered more professional and constructive than YouTube's. From this community shows a lot of great original maps and feature-length movies. Vimeo also has an On-Demand section where users can buy full-length movies and TV shows. Most of these are independently produced by Vimeo users, but some offerings are produced by large studios as well. Either way, vimeo is a great place to find free, high quality movies. The Roku Channel When Roku originally launched its free, ad-supported Roku Channel, it was not technically eligible for this roundup because you had to have one of the company's streaming media devices to watch it. Roku units certainly won't break the bank, but they're not free. Now, however, Roku Channel is available to everyone, via the Internet, as well as through the company's free apps for iOS and Android. The service boasts more than 10,000 titles to choose from, including old favourites such as The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants and Donnie Darko, as well as a number of new and old TV series, from The Dick Van Dyke Show and Bewitched to The Bachelorette. You will need to create a free Roku account before you can see, but it is a quick and painless process. If you ever decide to expand your choices, the Roku channel is now home to several premium subscription options, including Showtime, Epix and Starz. The Roku channel is available in the United States and Canada. Plex-free movies and TV series Plex are best known as a versatile and easy way to manage and view your private collection of movies, music, photos and other media. But in 2019, the company launched its own ad-supported free streaming service with a collection of movies and TV series from studios such as MGM, Warner, Lionsgate and Legendary. It is available globally, the title selection will vary greatly by region. You can access the collection of movies and shows from a browser, or on one of the huge number of devices that support Plex client software, like Apple TV, Roku, smart TVs, etc. All you need is a free Plex account and you're ready to go. For those who already use Plex as their media server, the free ad-supported options can be added to existing server categories, making the experience seamless. Pluto TV Although it may not be as well known as the above services, Pluto TV is still deserving of your attention. Not only does it host free movies on demand, but it's also a free live TV streaming service, hosting content curated from around the web. While the channels vary wildly, we're focused here on movies. Pluto TV currently has several live movie channels, perfect if you want to see something but don't know what. There are two general purpose movie channels, while the rest are focused on specific genres or categories, including Action movies, Flicks of Fury, Horror 24/7, Classic Movies, Black Cinema, Graviditas Movies, and The Asylum. The service operates in the United States, as well as many international locations. Pluto TV's on-demand film library is relatively small and rotates frequently, but offers just as much variety as its live movie channels. It's also available on a host of devices beyond your computer, including Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Roku devices and more. To find out more about Pluto TV, see our full guide to the service. Tubi TV Another up-and-comer, Tubi is very similar to Sony Crackle, in that it provides both free movies and TV episodes. No matter which device you're using, you're likely to watch Tubi as it's available on Android, iOS, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Sony Smart TV, PlayStation 4, Xbox One and the Internet. As with the vast majority of services on this list, you'll need to see a few advertisements, but that's what keeps the service free. Tubi has content from over 200 partners, including NBCUniversal and Warner Bros., which brings with it nearly 400 classic titles like Hell's Kitchen, Unsolved Mysteries, 3rd Rock From the Sun, and The Real McCoys, and the original version of 21 Jump Street. Hit movies like Kick-Ass, Fury, and 13 Going On 30 are there, as well as cult classics like 30 Days of Night, Donnie Darko, and The Boondock Saints. Cult classics like Assault on Precinct 13, Sleepaway Camp, and C.H.U.D., along with soon-to-be cult classics like 10 Cloverfield Lane and No Country for Old Men, can also be found in the growing catalog. If you use this service to supplement Netflix instead of replacing it, the Not on Netflix section helps you find new and interesting movies to watch. Independent and documentary Kanopy Like Hoopla, Kanopy Is Not Only Free to but it is also commercially-free if you have a credit card. Originally founded in 2008 in Australia as an educational tool, Kanopy now offers a library of over 30,000 films through its partnerships with more than 200 libraries. There's a big focus on independent free movies and documentaries (the company even has access to many recent films from the A24 catalog), but you'll find all sorts of movies available, and even more are on the way thanks to a deal that will see the entire catalog of filmmaker Fred Wiseman come to the service. Kanopy is available internationally, but content may vary from location to location. Top Documentary Love documentaries? So do we. You know what they say, the truth is stranger than fiction. The aptly titled Top Documentary is, hands down, the best place for documentaries. Not all choices are film-length, but a good documentary doesn't have to be long - some of the best are under the 60-minute mark. With a library of more than 3,000 movies, the site also has a simple and straightforward layout and categorizes all of its movies based on the subject, making it easy to find something you're interested in right away. The content is not hosted by the site, but rather curated and embedded from other sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Daily Motion, etc. It's available internationally, but not all content works everywhere. Sources of classic movies Archive.org chances are, you're reading this article because you're looking for a place to watch newly released movies online. While there's nothing wrong with it, you should definitely not ignore all the amazing older movies the internet has to offer. Archive.org offers a veritable treasure trove of old movies you've probably never heard of, as well as a handful that you'll recognize. The archive - which is also home to the famous Wayback Machine that shows you how the internet used to be - features silent films, black-and-white horror flicks, obscure sci-fi movies, and a selection of other movies. They may not have all the fancy CGI we've all gotten used to, but the occasional throwback is a great way to mix things up. Open Culture Open Culture is designed to be your one-stop shop for all things free and cultured. The site offers hundreds of free online classes to sign up, thousands of free ebooks to read, and hours after hours of lectures from prominent figures like Carl Sagan and Leonard Bernstein. A host of free movies are also available. Here you'll find everything from silent films and Hitchcock-helmed projects to westerns and film noir. The place even houses some early shorts of legends like Quentin Tarantino and Stanley Kubrick. Open culture can be hard to navigate, but with more than 1,000 free movies available, it's definitely worth the slog. Retrovision Retrovision is another public domain site that of classic films from several different eras. The word classic may be up for interpretation - there are some movies here that were made as recently as last year, and not all of Retrovision's films are of high quality - but there are still plenty of good things here. Retrovision is also a well-designed site that allows users to filter based on genre. It's not limited to feature-length movies, either, as there's a robust collection of classic TV shows to choose from. Shocker Internet Drive-In Shocker Internet Drive-In is a bit niche, and its website looks like it was made in the 90s, but it's a great resource. The site is updated weekly with featured horror classics, which are then made available for free download as WMV files on the website's Snack Bar. The site is a fun little blast from the past, with weekly displays framed in a digital drive-in. Users can also buy DVD copies of any movie on the website for a mere \$3. If you miss the old days on the internet when it was more like the Wild West and everything was less polished, this may be for you. The downside of so many different services that are available is that if you have a movie in mind but don't know where to see it, you have a lot of different catalogs to wade through in the hope of finding it. Fortunately, as long as you have a smartphone, you probably have access to a tool that can help you. Apple's TV app, which is available on iOS as well as several other platforms including Apple TV, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, plus LG and Samsung smart TVs, allows you to search across more than 50 different streaming services. For Android users, Google Play Film & TV app offers similar functionality, although the number of connected services is smaller. Roku devices now have a Featured Free section that offers a curated selection of the best free content on the platform, whether you have a particular channel installed or not. This is in addition to its existing cross-service search, although most of what you find will either be available for purchase or rental or will be on a service that requires a subscription. Either way, while these tools can't guarantee that you'll find a way to see what you're looking for for free, they can be a good place to start. Recommendations for editors

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