



Digital Radio

Radio broadcasters around the country are now simultaneously broadcasting both traditional analog signals and digital signals that can be picked up with a digital radio receiver. The digital signals offer better sound quality than analog, and, unlike satellite radio services, are free-of-charge.

What is digital radio?

Digital radio is the transmission and reception of sound processed into patterns of numbers, or "digits" – hence the term "digital radio." In contrast, traditional analog radios process sounds into patterns of electrical signals that resemble sound waves.

Digital radio reception is more resistant to interference and eliminates many imperfections of analog radio transmission and reception. There may be some interference to digital radio signals, however, in areas that are distant from a station's transmitter. FM digital radio can provide clear sound comparable in quality to CDs, and AM digital radio can provide sound quality equivalent to that of standard analog FM.

Data services

In addition to audio broadcasts, digital radio offers simultaneous data services to listeners. For example, information about music may be displayed on the receiver's screen when the music is playing. You could program your digital radio receiver to display weather updates, traffic reports and other news.

Do I need a new radio to receive digital signals?

Yes, a digital receiver is required in order to receive digital signals. However, all radios capable of tuning in to a digital signal also will be able to receive analog signals.

Where can I get a digital radio receiver?

A lot of electronics retailers sell digital radio receivers, and many automakers offer digital radio receivers in their new cars and trucks (some models come with digital radio standard.)

How do I find digital radio stations?

In the United States, digital radio is broadcast using in-band on-channel (IBOC) technology. This enables radio stations to broadcast their regular FM or AM signal and their digital signal at the same frequency. So a station at 88.7 on the FM dial would have a digital signal at 88.7 on a digital radio.

For more information

For more information about digital radio, visit the FCC's Media Bureau website on digital radio at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/iboc-digital-radio-broadcasting-am-and-fm-radio-broadcast-stations.



Contact the FCC

- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)
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Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
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