

The NFL Is Back—and It's Never Cost More to Watch

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By Andrew Beaton and Rosie Ettenheim
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When the Philadelphia Eagles and Green Bay Packers play their NFL season opener on Friday night, the game will kick off in two different and far-flung places.

The first is São Paulo, Brazil, where the league is playing its inaugural regular-season game as part of its expanding international series. The second is the place where the game is airing for most people back home: on a streaming service.

That makes it a marquee event for NBCUniversal's Peacock, but something that isn't exactly an anomaly on the NFL calendar this year. Being a football nut in 2024 means having to shell out for a bevy of streaming platforms that until recently have never had exclusive rights to games.

In total, four different streamers will exclusively air games this year.



The Kansas City Chiefs and Miami Dolphins played a game in Frankfurt, Germany, in 2023. kirby lee/Reuters

Amazon's Prime Video will continue to have the biggest chunk, headlined by Thursday Night Football, which it began airing in 2022. This year, Amazon has added to its roster with a playoff game, one year after debuting a Black Friday matchup. Also new in 2024: Netflix got its first NFL games when it bought the rights to the league's Christmas action, a pair of high-profile Wednesday showdowns: the reigning champion Kansas City Chiefs against the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Baltimore Ravens taking on the Houston Texans.

Additionally, ESPN+ will have a Los Angeles Chargers-Arizona Cardinals game as part of a Monday night double-header in October.

Paying for all four services can run you nearly \$50 a month. Even with annual plans that offer discounted rates, that can add up to more than \$500 for the year. For the complete die-hards, adding the out-of-market Sunday games through Sunday Ticket on YouTube TV would add another \$479 to the bill.

All of which means that an NFL fan who wants access to every snap could wind up paying over \$1,000 including monthly cable bills.

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How to watch regular season NFL games

Network Cable Streaming

	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Week 1 Sept. 4-10		NBC	Peacock		CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 2 Sept. 11-17		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 3 Sept. 18-24		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 4 Sept. 25-Oct. 1		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 5 Oct. 2-8		Prime			NFLN CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 6 Oct. 9-15		Prime			NFLN CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 7 Oct. 16-22		Prime			NFLN CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ESPN+
Week 8 Oct. 23-29		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 9 Oct. 30-Nov. 5		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 10 Nov. 6-12		Prime			NFLN CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 11 Nov. 13-19		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 12 Nov. 20-26		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 13 Nov. 27-Dec. 3		CBS FOX NBC	Prime		CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 14 Dec. 4-10		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 15 Dec. 11-17		Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 16 Dec. 18-24		Prime		NBC FOX	CBS FOX NBC	ESPN
Week 17 Dec. 25-31	Netflix	Prime			CBS FOX NBC	ESPN ABC
Week 18 Jan. 1-7, 2025					CBS FOX NBC	

Source: NFL

"The NFL's media strategy, highlighted by the fact that 100% of all NFL games are broadcast on free over-the-air television in the markets of the participating teams in addition to distribution on new and growing digital platforms where our fans are increasingly spending their time, is by far the most fan friendly distribution model in all of sports and entertainment," said Hans Schroeder, the NFL's executive vice president of media distribution. "We look forward to continuing to serve our millions of fans as we head into the excitement of the 2024 season."

While the games are increasingly spread out across various platforms, the ones on streaming services only represent a small percentage of the NFL's overall inventory. Only 20 of the league's 272 regular-season games this season, or 7.4%, will air exclusively on the four streamers nationally. Those games, like all nationally televised ones, are also available on free networks in local markets, such as the Philadelphia and Green Bay areas for Friday's game.

The vast majority of matchups are still on CBS and Fox, and with additional Sunday night and Monday night games on NBC and ABC, respectively, 85.3% of the action will air on network television. That's a far higher percentage than other major American sports leagues, which often rely on regional sports networks or cable channels for their nationally televised games.

Still, even the small chunk that has shifted to streaming services represents a major shift for America's most popular sport. When Amazon struck its deal for Thursday night football, it became the first streamer to get an exclusive package and signaled how the NFL, like other major leagues, was pivoting in response to a rapidly changing media landscape.

Nonetheless, fans continue to watch in droves—even if some are miffed about all the upheaval. Last season's playoff game on Peacock, a Chiefs win over the Miami Dolphins, set streaming records and drew in 23 million viewers. Amazon's Thursday night ratings went up in 2023, though they're still down from when the package was on Fox.

And for anyone confused about what games are airing where and when, the NFL has an answer for that. These days, there are enough games on enough different channels and platforms that the league has created its own website to instruct fans on how to watch every game based on where they live.

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