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MANUFACTURERS ARE NOW seeing sense and equipping their TVs with more than one HDMI input. Just as well, given that there's an ever-increasing quantity of source gear with this 'digital Scart' connector. But even those with recent HDMI-friendlier sets should be aware that the typical complement of two inputs may not be enough.

The obvious course of action is to swap around cables. Not ideal, and equipment can actually be damaged if HDMI cables are connected or disconnected when it's all plugged in and powered up. A better solution is to purchase a switchbox like the TechLink HD4110. It has four rear-panel HDMI inputs alongside a single output for your display. It's HDMI 1.2 compliant, will transfer HDCP information intact and is ready for 1080p sources.

On the front panel (and remote control) are four buttons for manually selecting the required input. There's also an auto mode, which will switch to the connected HDMI source that was powered up most recently. The HD4110 will also switch equipment with a DVI output, provided a DVI-to-HDMI adaptor is employed. Please note, however, that DVI does not – unlike HDMI – cater for audio signals.

We tried the HD4110 with a variety of SD and HD sources, including a Helios media streamer, Samsung Blu-ray player, Panasonic DVD recorder and Yamaha DVD player. The unit worked exceptionally well, and reliably switched between sources with no obvious degradation to the signal – our TV tests also successfully demonstrated that compatible audio soundtracks are preserved intact. Our only reservation is the price. Why are switchboxes so darned expensive?

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Verdict ★★★★★
Approx price **£150**

FREEVIEW TV RECEIVER

August DVB-T201



THE THEORY BEHIND August's USB Freeview TV receiver is an enticing one – TV on your laptop, wherever you are. Unfortunately, the reality is something of a disappointment.

Getting going is straightforward enough: a set-up disc is provided, although the installation didn't start straight away on our PC, meaning that we had to look through a few of the folders to fire it up. After that the installation of the drivers and software (BlazeVideo HDTV Player) was simple, but we reached a bit of a dead-end when it came to scanning for channels. Despite several attempts to position the small aerial that's provided, the display still read 'No signal'. So, it seems that unless your Freeview signal is of a certain strength, it won't work.

After plugging the device into a rooftop aerial feed (rather than the supplied antenna), we got the chance to see how the DVB-T201 is supposed to work. It only took about a minute to scan through all of the available Freeview channels, including digital radio stations. A detailed EPG lets you know what's on and set reminders or schedule a recording. You can also use the one-touch recording facility if you decide to record something at the last minute. Recorded material can then be browsed as a series of handy thumbnail images, and the software also lets you capture stills and store them on your computer.

Pictures are crisp and clear, although obviously this will be influenced by the quality of your computer monitor and the same must be said for the audio, which is only as good as your PC speakers.

Overall, the DVB-T201 works well when you can get a strong enough Freeview signal, otherwise you'll be left disappointed.

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Verdict ★★★★★
Approx price **£25**

What the FAQ? HDMI switcher

Although HDMI inputs are more common than they were, most HD screens usually only offer a brace. If you're receiving SkyHD broadcasts, own an HD games console and intend to buy a Blu-ray or HD DVD player in the near future, you're almost certainly going to run out of inputs. This means that unless you invest in a separate switch box into which all of your sources can be plugged, you will have to undergo the painful process of unplugging one source to make room for another.