

SEO Description: Read the full breakdown of the most popular live streaming software (free & paid) + find out how to choose streaming software for your needs.

The Best Live Video Streaming Software Of 2019: Here's The Winner

One of the big hurdles for first-time streamers is the live streaming software. So many options... Can you use the free OBS or do you need a premium solution like Wirecast? What should you look for when choosing streaming video software?

We'll answer these questions, but first let's set some things straight.

What is streaming video software?

Your camera produces a raw video signal which has to be encoded in order to be broadcast over the web. The streaming software is responsible for the encoding of your live stream. After encoding, it will deliver your live video in one of two formats—[RTMP](#) (Real-Time Messaging Protocol) or [HLS](#) (HTTP Live Streaming).

Typically, RTMP allows for lower latency but HLS has adaptive bitrate streaming which means that it can adjust the video quality to accommodate any fluctuations in the viewer's internet connection.

Live Streaming Setup And Equipment

Before you start streaming your video content and before you even download that streaming software, you will need the right gear.

Computer Hardware

- **Computer:** Streaming live video isn't as power intensive as, say, playing games or developing software but you do need a computer that can keep up. For live streaming, we recommend a computer with 8GB of RAM or more. This amount of RAM should ensure that your computer won't slow down even when you have multiple programs open (as streamers often do).
- **Computer Accessories:** Your basic live streaming setup should also include an HD camera for high-quality videos and a microphone that will display crystal clear audio. The

[Logitech C992x](#) is one of the highest rated cameras for streaming (displays in 1080p HD), and the [Blue Yeti Nano](#) microphone is a highly rated USB microphone that can sit on your desk as you're talking into it.

Capture Card

The capture card is what gets the video signal from your camera (connected by HDMI) to your computer. It allows you to transmit the raw video content without sacrificing the quality of your live broadcast.

The [MiraBox Capture Card](#) is one of the most highly rated capture cards available, supporting all 1080p/720p devices including games consoles, set-top boxes, and DSLR cameras.

Best Free Streaming software

OBS

Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) was created back in 2012 by Hugh "Jim" Bailey. This lightweight and versatile video capture software is the go-to solution for many live streamers. Besides live streaming with a camera, you can also use it to stream your desktop, record a video game or record your computer screen as mp4.

- **Video and audio mixing.** You can switch between sources and mix your audio in real time to create a dynamic, professional-looking broadcast.
- **Multistreaming.** With OBS you can stream to multiple destinations at once—Twitch, Hitbox, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, and more. This is quite impressive, especially when you consider that OBS is free live streaming and encoding software.
- **Advanced streaming settings.** With OBS, you have full control over the video quality. You can adjust the frame rate and lower the resolution if you like. You can adjust the audio latency if the speed of your audio doesn't match the speed of the video. You can even use chroma key (the "green screen").
- **Transitions.** OBS features various scene transitions for post production such as "Fade", "Cut", "CloudWipe", and more.
- **Plugins.** In case you need to expand the functionality of OBS studio, you can head to their [plugin repository](#). There are dozens of plugins that will enable you to do anything from adding stream effects to using your smartphone as a remote.

The downside?

OBS is truly powerful streaming video software. It's on par with streaming video solutions that cost hundreds of dollars which means that it can be difficult to set up for a beginner. There are lots of menus and settings and, if you're new to live streaming, you can easily find all of this overwhelming. Also, since this is free software, you don't get access to round-the-clock tech support.

{ Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTk99mHDX_I }

OBS Studio System Requirements And Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7 or higher, macOS 10.10 or higher, and Ubuntu 14.04 or higher
CPU Requirements	Intel i3-2100 3.1GHz or higher
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes
Streaming to multiple destinations	Yes
Streaming with multiple cameras	Yes
Encoding formats	H.264 software encoder, NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoder, Intel Quick Sync hardware encoder, AMD VCE hardware encoder

Nvidia Shadowplay

If you have an Nvidia graphics card, you might be in luck. GTX 650 and higher desktop graphics adapters support Nvidia's proprietary streaming video capture software—ShadowPlay. ShadowPlay takes advantage of an H.264 hardware encoder (NVENC) that is integrated into the Kepler GPU. This technology supports live streaming in up 4K at 60 frames per second. Pretty impressive!

- **Hardware encoding.** This is a huge advantage because it generally means faster video streaming. However, ShadowPlay is optimized especially for game streaming. If that's your element, you'll easily fall in love with ShadowPlay.

- **Instant Replay.** Another feature that gamers will love. It automatically captures kills, match wins and other important gaming moments in the background. And even if there is no major event, the last 30 seconds of your gameplay are always saved. You can download the recording to your hard drive by pressing a button.
- **GIF creation.** Another nice-to-have feature for gamers is the ability to create GIFs. You can select a portion of a ShadowPlay video, edit it and share it on Facebook.

The downside?

ShadowPlay is designed for game streaming. You can also record your desktop and overlay your webcam but if you're looking to live stream an event or a church sermon, it won't do. Unless you're looking specifically for game streaming software, you might want to go for one of the other pieces of software on our list. By the way, if you do have one of the supported graphics cards, [you can set OBS to use Nvidia's hardware encoder, NVENC](#), and enjoy the same performance that ShadowPlay allows.

{Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gL81Xf2Wn84> }

Nvidia ShadowPlay System Requirements And Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7, 8, or 10
CPU Requirements	Intel i3-2100 3.1GHz or higher
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes, but only as an overlay
Streaming to multiple destinations	No
Streaming with multiple cameras	N/A
Encoding formats	NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoder

Streamlabs OBS

If you can't get your head around using OBS, then Streamlabs OBS (SLOBS) might be just what you need. It's a variation of OBS with a less steeper learning curve.

- **Easy to set up.** After installing Streamlabs OBS, the program will test your system and configure the live streaming settings for maximum performance. This is based on your computer hardware and internet speed.
- **Live streaming add-ons.** These are interactive elements that you can insert directly in your live stream. For example, the Alert Box displays a notification when someone subscribes to your channel while you're streaming. It's a nice way to personalize your live streams and welcome new subscribers.
- **Themed layouts.** Another reason to use Streamlabs OBS is that it comes with 340 themed layouts that help you make your live streams look professional. Besides the actual live stream, you can also display a "Be right back" animation and a "Stream starting soon" animation. Most of the themes are designed for game streaming but there are also other options like themes for sports streaming. Oh, and there is a mobile app that you can use to control your live stream remotely. Pretty cool!
- **Lightweight.** SLOBS is pretty awesome on the encoding side, too. This streaming and encoding software uses automation and machine learning to [optimize the live stream](#) for best performance.

The downside?

There is hardly any but, if we have to name one, it would be that SLOBS is not OBS. Although it is built on top of OBS, it's managed by a completely different team and, so, you can't hope to get the latest OBS updates on SLOBS. But you are getting quite a lot, as we can see, so it's probably not that much of a problem.

{Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba-UtVSaXjo&vl=en> }

Streamlabs OBS System Requirements And Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7 SP1 64 bit or higher
CPU Requirements	Intel Core i7 or equivalent
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes
Streaming to multiple destinations	Yes
Streaming with multiple cameras	Yes

Encoding formats	x264 software encoder, Intel Quick Sync hardware encoder, AMD VCE hardware encoder, NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoder,
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Best Professional Streaming Software

XSplrit

XSplrit is a live streaming and video-mixing application developed and maintained by [SplitmediaLabs](https://www.splitmedia.com/). It comes in two flavors—the free limited version called XSplrit Gamecaster and the premium version called XSplrit Broadcaster.

- **User friendly.** If you are a complete beginner at live streaming, perhaps you'll find XSplrit Broadcaster a bit confusing and overwhelming. However, compared to OBS, it is much more user friendly while giving you full control over your live streams.
- **Video mixing.** XSplrit Broadcaster has the ability to broadcast from various sources (video mixing). These sources are known as “Scenes” and allow you to switch between your desktop, a browser window, your webcam or even a Skype conversation.
- **Multistreaming to social media.** You can quickly connect your Facebook, YouTube and Twitter account and even broadcast to multiple destinations simultaneously (multi-streaming).
- **Advanced encoding settings.** Since this is professional streaming and encoding software, you have full control over the encoding and rendering options. XSplrit Broadcaster allows for streaming in up to 4k UHD @ 60fps. You can also record the system audio and your microphone on separate tracks for more flexibility when editing.

Price

In terms of pricing, XSplrit Broadcaster is on the low end. You can get a 3-month license at \$8.32/mo, a 12-month license at \$5/mo and a lifetime license at \$199. We think that's quite a fair price for premium video mixing and broadcasting software that comes with 24/7 support.

The downside?

Some users report that XSplrit slows their machines down. Also, it is not available for Mac.

{Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Epe8bmUaaP8>}

XSplrit Broadcaster System Requirements And Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7 SP1 64 bit or higher
CPU Requirements	2nd Generation Core i5 CPU or equivalent.
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes
Streaming to multiple destinations	Yes
Streaming with multiple cameras	Yes
Encoding formats	x264 software encoder, Intel Quick Sync hardware encoder, AMD VCE hardware encoder, NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoder, AVermedia H.264 hardware encoder

vMix

vMix is powerhouse live streaming encoder software. If you are looking for a high-end video mixer and switcher that's capable of almost any video production task, this is it. The interface actually looks like one of those advanced audio/video mixing consoles that are used at news broadcasting companies.

- **Broadcast in 4k UHD.** With vMix you can broadcast in up to 4k UHD using all types of video capture devices like webcams, video cameras, data storage cards, and more.
- **Remote video production.** You can even bring "guests" and give them the rights to mix your video and audio remotely. In other words, you can have a remote video production team working with this software. Crazy!
- **Effects and templates.** Besides the ability to mix media content from various sources, vMix also offers transition effects such as flip, rotate, fade, cross zoom, color correction. You can also customize the appearance of your live stream with the pre-designed templates. Having this sort of flexibility allows you to produce live broadcasts that can easily rival shows with million-dollar budgets.
- **Multistreaming.** Like XSplrit Broadcaster, vMix also allows for streaming to multiple platforms at the same time. You can broadcast to Facebook Live, Ustream, YouTube

Live, Twitch etc.

- **Advanced video production.** When it comes to the advanced features, vMix has all of them and then some. You can set a green screen with Chroma Key, use color correction and start or stop your live stream at specific geographic locations. The multi view feature enables you to use multiple camera positions to show different angles of your broadcast.

Price

vMix comes in 6 different packages - Basic, Basic HD, SD, HD, 4K and Pro. The Basic version is free to use. The package prices vary between \$60 - \$1,200 depending on the features.

The downside?

vMix is professional live streaming and video mixing software which is why it has a rather steep learning curve. If you are just getting into live streaming and you have no idea how to use advanced features like chroma key, then vMix will probably be biting off more than you can chew. Our recommendation in that case would be to start small.

{ Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=al22c4ilyfQ> }

vMix System Requirements & Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7 or newer
CPU Requirements	Quad Core 3.4 Ghz
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes
Streaming to multiple destinations	Yes
Streaming with multiple cameras	Yes
Encoding formats	H.264 software encoder, NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoder, Intel Quick Sync hardware encoder

Wirecast

Wirecast is live video streaming production software by Telestream. It is a software video switcher and mixer that allows you to dynamically mix media from various sources like audio files, video files, cameras, microphones, and so on.

- **Video and audio mixing.** Wirecast's video and audio mixing capabilities are quite impressive. You can switch between up to 8 audio tracks and include footage from external sources such as Skype. You have fine-grained mixing control, e.g. set a video file to start from a certain point or make it loop when it's finished playing.
- **Pre-made graphics.** To make your broadcasts look polished, you can take advantage of over 200+ pre-built graphics that you can insert directly into your live streaming videos. Whether you need a "Starting Soon" screen or a "Live Stream Offline" screen, chances are that Wirecast's graphics library has the solution you need.
- **Easy to use.** Wirecast is focused on streamlining the video mixing and production process. Although there are many advanced features, the software doesn't overwhelm you. For example, you can record the live stream to your hard drive with a few clicks.
- **Restreaming.** The Wirecast live video streaming software creates a single stream that can be broadcast to multiple social sites like YouTube Live, Facebook Live, Twitch.TV, Periscope or to a [live streaming platform such as StreamingVideoProvider](#) (to publish the live stream to your website).
- **Streaming Hardware.** Besides streaming software, the company also offers a complete live video production system called Wirecast Gear. Wirecast Gear removes the need to purchase a computer configuration or a streaming box. It's got everything that's necessary to start broadcasting and it is pre-loaded with the latest version of their streaming software. You just have to plug in your cameras and microphones and you can start streaming.

Price

Wirecast has two different price packages—the Basic version at \$495 and the advanced version costs \$995. The company also offers premium support at \$99/year.

The downside?

Just like vMix, Wirecast is professional streaming software with hundreds of menus and options which could be confusing for a beginner. Compared to vMix, the interface is a bit more user

friendly so it's relatively easy to get up to speed and start using this live streaming software. The price is a bit steep and, if we have to be honest, OBS offers many of Wirecast's advanced video streaming features for free.

{ Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0vFaBMhNSI> }

Wirecast System Requirements And Specs

OS compatibility	Windows 7 or higher, Mac OS Sierra or higher
CPU Requirements	i7 quad-core @ 2.8GHz+
Ability to capture desktop	Yes
Ability to capture webcam	Yes
Streaming to multiple destinations	Yes
Streaming with multiple cameras	Yes
Encoding formats	H.264 software encoding, Intel Quick Sync Video hardware encoding, NVIDIA NVENC hardware encoding, Apple Hardware Accelerated H.264

Cheat Sheet: How to choose live video streaming software

Twitch/game streaming software	XSplit Gamecaster , SLOBS
Live streaming software for beginners	Nvidia Shadowplay , SLOBS , XSplit Broadcaster
Professional, user-friendly streaming software for Mac and PC with 24/7 customer support	Wirecast
Powerful streaming software for PC	vMix , OBS
YouTube live streaming software	OBS , SLOBS , XSplit Broadcaster

Free streaming software for Mac	OBS
Free streaming software for PC	OBS , SLOBS
Facebook live streaming software	OBS , SLOBS , XSplit Broadcaster
Low CPU usage streaming software	OBS , SLOBS , Nvidia Shadowplay
Webcam streaming software	OBS , SLOBS

The Verdict - What is the best live streaming software?

Our favorite is OBS studio because it's free open-source video streaming software that's in the same class as paid video streaming software like Wirecast and vMix. You can do just about anything with OBS studio, including advanced video and audio mixing, using chroma key (the "green screen"), streaming to multiple platforms, and more. OBS studio uses relatively few system resources which means that you won't need to invest in an extremely expensive computer in order to run it. There are dozens of plugins that are developed by the community and allow you to add all sorts of additional functionality.

Further Reading & Resources

- [Nvidia Shadowplay](#)
- [OBS reviews](#)
- [XSplit vs OBS](#)
- [OBS vs Wirecast](#)
- [Comparison of OBS, XSplit, Wirecast and vMix](#)
- [How To Monetize Your YouTube Videos \(Without Sharing The Revenue\)](#)
- [How To Monetize Live Streaming Videos With PPV](#)
- [The Ultimate Guide To Church Live Streaming](#)