

A CALL TO STANDARDIZE THE MODERN TV REMOTE

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In an era where technology has streamlined nearly every aspect of our daily lives, the humble television remote remains a relic of unnecessary complexity and inconsistency. Whether you've bought a brand-new smart TV, upgraded your sound system, or simply switched streaming devices, chances are you've found yourself surrounded by a cluttered collection of remotes - each with its own unique (and often confusing) layout.

It's time we ask an important question: why hasn't the modern TV remote been standardized?

Unlike smartphones, which have largely converged toward a familiar and intuitive interface, television remotes remain chaotic. Each manufacturer seems intent on reinventing the wheel, creating button-heavy devices that often require a lot of guesswork.

Some common frustrations include:

- Overloaded Buttons - Rows of tiny, rarely-used buttons (like "CC," "SAP," or "Zoom") make navigation cumbersome.
- Brand Lock-In - Many remotes are optimized only for a manufacturer's proprietary ecosystem, leaving consumers juggling multiple controllers for one entertainment setup.
- Inconsistent Layouts - Power, volume, and input buttons may shift positions depending on the brand, forcing users to relearn basic functions.
- The result? A user experience that feels outdated, frustrating, and at odds with the sleek, intuitive design of modern entertainment systems.

The case for standardized remotes is the same case that once drove the adoption of universal charging cables, keyboard layouts, and traffic symbols: efficiency, consistency, and user-friendliness.

- Ease of Use - Standard button placement (power, volume, input, navigation, and home) would eliminate confusion, making remotes universally familiar.
- Reduced Waste - Instead of throwing away multiple remotes when upgrading hardware, consumers could reuse a single universal standard.
- Accessibility - Standardized designs could include guidelines for ergonomics, readability, and tactile recognition, helping children, seniors, and people with visual impairments.
- Sustainability - A universal standard would curb electronic waste by reducing the

need for duplicate or proprietary controllers.

In essence, standardization would transform remotes from clunky relics into intuitive, universally understood tools.

A modern, standardized TV remote doesn't need to be minimalist to the point of uselessness, but it should reflect today's entertainment habits. Key features might include:

- Core Buttons Only

Power, volume, channel up/down, input/source, directional pad, home, back, and select.

- Dedicated Streaming Controls

Universal buttons for "play/pause," "fast forward," and "rewind," usable across all streaming platforms.

- App-Based Shortcuts

Instead of hardcoding Netflix or Prime Video, allow programmable buttons that users can assign to their preferred apps.

- Universal Compatibility

Built-in standards (like HDMI-CEC and Bluetooth) that let the remote work across TVs, soundbars, and other streaming devices.

- Accessible Design

Larger, clearly labeled buttons; optional voice input; tactile markers for navigation; and backlighting for low-light viewing.

Think of it as the "QWERTY keyboard" of remotes: universally familiar, reliable, and intuitive.

The challenge, of course, is that manufacturers benefit from proprietary designs that keep users tied to their ecosystems. A Samsung remote won't seamlessly control a Sony soundbar, and an LG remote isn't designed for Roku navigation.

This is where industry standards, or even government regulations - can play a crucial role, much like they did with USB-C charging in the European Union. A standardized TV remote protocol would ensure interoperability, while still leaving room for manufacturers to innovate around advanced features like gesture control or haptic feedback.

While the remote remains central today, voice assistants, smartphone apps, and even AI-driven automation are reshaping how we interact with TVs. However, until these technologies fully replace physical remotes, standardization is the best step forward. A universal standard would bridge the gap between old habits and new innovations, creating a smoother transition toward the entertainment interfaces of the future.

For too long, consumers have tolerated a confusing, fragmented landscape of TV

remotes. In a world where technology promises simplicity, the remote remains a stubborn holdout of clutter and frustration.

The solution is clear: we need a standardized modern TV remote. Not one brand's vision, but a universal design that prioritizes usability, accessibility, and sustainability. Because in the end, watching TV should be effortless, not a scavenger hunt.