

Freeview HD content management

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1. Why 'content management' is relevant to those wanting to enjoy BBC television services

Television production is a major international business, with increasing numbers of TV channels all needing to fill their schedules in order to attract audiences. Good quality TV programmes – especially those made in HD (high definition) – are very valuable, especially when they are being broadcast for the first few times or sold on Blu-rays or DVDs.

TV producers and rights holders have a legitimate interest in protecting their content from unrestricted copying, sharing and distribution, as this limits their ability to generate income from secondary broadcast and Blu-ray sales. This income can be critical to keeping producers in business and enables them to make more programmes for audiences to enjoy.

As part of delivering value to UK licence fee payers, the BBC is committed to making a wide range of high quality TV programmes available across its TV channels. Although the BBC produces many of the programmes it shows, it also commissions content from independent producers as well as buying content from other rights holders. As a result, the BBC does not own all the programmes it broadcasts – and, when it secures content from elsewhere, it only has the right to broadcast these programmes on a certain number of occasions or over a limited period of time.

UK law provides consumers with certain rights to watch and enjoy broadcast content – for example, enabling them to record programmes to replay when convenient. However, digital storage technology and high speed internet connections have made it relatively easy to copy and distribute television programmes. Such copying often goes well beyond what is permitted under UK law – and, if this kind of copying became widespread, it could seriously undermine producers' ability to invest in content.

UK broadcasters like the BBC are committed to ensuring that audiences can enjoy the best possible range of content. However, TV producers and other rights holders have indicated that they may not be willing to supply their high-end content to the BBC if the way in which this content is broadcast results in their content being widely copied and shared by viewers (beyond the scope of the original rights agreements). So, in order to respect rights agreements, broadcasters sometimes have to manage the way in which viewers can use content after it is broadcast – i.e. there is occasionally a need to limit the way in which specific programmes can be copied. Accordingly, the BBC implements some content management systems across its channels.

2. What content management covers

The BBC uses the term content management to describe the range of systems and technologies which limit the uncontrolled copying of TV content after it has been broadcast. Content management is used by broadcasters throughout the world, with similar approaches also known as, for example: Digital Rights Management (DRM), copy protection, copy management, copy control and encryption.

The BBC's overall aim is to use content management solutions which minimise any restrictions on viewers while making sure that those who own high-value programmes can protect the rights associated with their content.

3. Where broadcasters implement content management

Freeview HD is the newest way in which UK viewers can watch HD content – and, being an HD service, it includes various high-value programmes.

Sky, Virgin Media and Freesat already implement content management restrictions across their HD output. By also implementing content management on Freeview HD, broadcasters are able to show HD content which might otherwise only be available elsewhere.

Content management on Freeview HD means that UK viewers can watch the full range of the BBC's HD output via Freeview as well as on Sky HD, Virgin Media HD and Freesat. The UK's other public service broadcasters – ITV, Channel Four and S4C – also implement content management across relevant HD programmes.

4. Content management on Freeview HD

Content management controls are implemented across all the Freeview HD channels [Footnote: As of June 2010, they are: BBC HD, ITV1 HD (STV HD in Scotland), and 4 HD (Clirlun in Wales). Please see the [Freeview HD website](#) for an up-to-date list of HD channels]. These controls do not block the recording and replay of any programmes broadcast on Freeview. Consumers can always record programmes for time-shifting purposes and there is no time limit on how long these recordings can be retained [Footnote: It is the responsibility of consumers to ensure recordings made for their own use do not infringe copyright].

- For most BBC programmes, the only restriction is to prevent viewers from sharing recordings via the internet.

- For certain high-value programmes (such as films), viewers will only be able to make a single Blu-ray copy (or other removable copy) of a recording.

The Freeview HD content management system also allows viewing of HD content on other compatible, networked devices in the home – such as PCs or network-connected display screens [Footnote: External recording functionality and in-home networking are optional features which the Freeview HD standard supports. It is up to individual manufacturers what level of functionality they provide in their Freeview HD products]. Again, the only limitation is that this viewing of content should remain within the home, rather than allowing the uploading of content to the internet.

All new Freeview HD-branded equipment (set-top boxes, integrated television sets and digital TV recorders) has the required content management technology built in. There are absolutely no restrictions on SD (standard definition) recordings, and all existing SD Freeview recorders are unaffected.

5. Protection of consumer rights

The Freeview HD content management system does not prevent citizens or consumers from using broadcast programmes in accordance with UK copyright law, for example recording content for time-shifting purposes, or making other legitimate use of recordings as provided for under the ‘fair dealing’ exceptions which are included in the relevant legislation. The BBC recognises that certain individuals and organisations may have legitimate requirements to record BBC broadcast content, for example in relation to specific educational uses, which may not always be possible using standard Freeview HD recording equipment. The BBC also commits to review its use of Freeview HD content management in the event there is a change to UK copyright law which affects the rights of citizens and consumers in respect of broadcast content. Any individual or organisation who considers that they have been prevented from exercising a legal right may [contact the BBC](#).

For the avoidance of doubt, the BBC is not able to support individuals or organisations seeking to make use of recording systems which circumvent the Freeview HD content management system or which place no restriction on the copying or onward redistribution of copyright material. The BBC is also not able to respond to enquiries about the level of content protection signalling applied to any particular programme.

6. What Freeview HD content management means for viewers

In summary:

- Content management on Freeview HD helps to ensure that Freeview HD viewers can watch the same BBC, ITV and C4 HD programmes as are available on Sky HD, Virgin Media HD and Freesat.
- Freeview HD viewers don't have to do anything: the content management technology is built into every Freeview HD-branded set-top box, integrated TV set or digital TV recorder they buy, and it operates automatically.
- There is virtually no impact on audiences' ability to enjoy Freeview HD content. Time-shifted viewing of recorded HD content is always possible using digital TV recorders. Blu-ray recorders will also be able to make at least one 'archive' HD copy for home use and, where supported by the products purchased, networked distribution and viewing of HD content on other compatible devices in the home is also possible.
- There is no impact on SD (standard definition) recording using existing Freeview or new Freeview HD recorders (although it is up to consumers to ensure that copyright is not infringed).
- The only technical restrictions prevent viewers from sharing Freeview HD recordings via the internet; and, for occasional high-value programmes (such as films), viewers will only be able to make a single Blu-ray copy (or other removable copy).