



# know it all

by Scott Wilkinson

## Scope Out Your Room

Look around and consider where you're going to put that new TV. You don't want to put it in front of a window—besides blocking the view outside, the light streaming in will compete with the TV picture, making it hard to see. Also, avoid locations that are directly across from a window or sliding glass door. Unless you have draperies or blinds that can control the light, you'll likely wind up



with distracting reflections on the TV screen during the day.

## The Perfect Spot

Ideally, the TV should be at the long end of the room, preferably centered on the wall. This allows more viewers to be close to the central "viewing axis" (the imaginary line extending

fireplace, please! The big issue here is craning your neck, not heat (assuming the wall above your fireplace is properly insulated). With the screen that high, you're going to get mighty uncomfortable before the movie's end credits roll. The idea is to make sure the center of the screen is about the same height as your eyes when you're seated.

The bedroom is one place where you might be able to get away with mounting a flat panel high on the wall since you'll presumably be watching TV while lying in bed. In that case, you'll be able to use a pillow (or two) to orient your head so you can see the screen without straining your neck. Companies such as Omnimount make

special wall mounts that let you tilt the TV down, which might be helpful in some cases.

## 5 Dealing with Daylight

Do you watch much TV during the day? If so, do you have drapes or blinds that do a decent job of darkening the room? If not—or if you're going to be watching TV with the lights on (say, while the kids are playing in another part of the room)—LCD flat panels and rear-projection TVs are generally the best choices because of their high brightness. (Plasma TVs can tolerate some ambient light, though reflections from the screen can be a problem.) If you're able to darken the room, you can expand your list of choices to include plasmas and two-piece front-projection setups (an expensive option that typically includes a ceiling-mounted projector and a separate screen that can range in size from 6 to 10 feet across and even more).

## 6 How Big a Screen?

Now that you've decided where you can (and can't) put the TV, it's time to figure out what size screen to shop for. Bigger is generally

better—especially if you like watching movies—but how big depends on how far your seating is from the screen. (Having a screen that's too big can be overwhelming—sort of like sitting in the first few rows of a movie theater.)

Start by measuring the distance between your main seating area and

where you plan to put the TV. The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) recommends a screen size (measured diagonally) that is 0.6 times your seating distance.

THX advocates a diagonal screen size that is 0.75 times the distance, with a minimum size no less than half the seating distance.

These calculations suggest larger screens than most people expect. For example, at a seating distance of 8 feet, the ideal screen size ranges from

numbers these formulas provide.

Using the 8-foot example, there are plenty of TVs to choose from with screens between 55 and 70 inches. Once you get beyond 70 inches or so, you move into front-projection territory, since there are very few self-contained TVs with screens that large (the exception being some very expensive flat panels, such as Panasonic's 103-inch plasma and Sharp's 108-inch LCD). Of course, you can go with a smaller screen, but the picture (and overall experience) won't be as involving.

Choosing between a flat panel and rear-projection TV depends on your budget and the size of the room. Inch for inch, rear-pros are generally less expensive than flat panels, but they take up more floor space, which may rule them out in places like a studio apartment.

## 7 Hit the Stores

Okay, you've narrowed the choices so it's time to hit the stores and start looking at TVs that will work in your room. So put away the aspirin and get out the checkbook—a whole new world awaits. **TPV**

**Screen Sizes for Different Seating Distances**

Seating Distance (ft.)	SMPTE Recommended *	THX Recommended *	THX Minimum *
5	36	45	30
6	43	54	36
7	50	63	42
8	58	72	48
9	65	81	54
10	72	90	60
11	80	99	66
12	86	108	72
13	94	117	78
14	101	126	84
15	108	135	90

\* Inches Diagonal

58 to 72 inches (THX's minimum screen size would be 48 inches). Of course, these are general guidelines, so you don't need to worry about finding a screen that perfectly matches the