SECTION 1: What connections do & how to find them

To send a signal that contains picture and sound (and sometimes other information) from one device to another, there are connections on each piece of your equipment. Hooking up equipment is one of the most frustrating and misunderstood parts of buying, setting up and using your home entertainment components. It makes more sense when you start at the beginning. First, you need to identify the connections available on each component before deciding how you will hook it up.

The ins and outs of terminals

"TERMINALS" or "**JACKS**", as device connections are called, are used to send signals from one piece of equipment to another. These are the portals from which and to which information (that is picture and sound) is sent and received. After the source of the picture does its work—it receives a broadcast signal or it reads media like VHS or DVD—it sends the picture and sound out, which is then received by the next component/device. Sometimes that device is the TV, and sometimes it hooks into another component before going on to the TV. A Cable TV or Satellite box may send the information to a VCR or DVR or DVD recorder for you to record and view at a later time. But ultimately the TV will accept and display the picture from all other devices/components.

Whether it is a single jack that accepts both picture and sound, like an RF antenna Cable TV, or HDMI, or a group of separate audio and video jacks for a single component, each grouping is either an "Input" or "Output." The first step in hooking up is identifying the connections on your equipment.

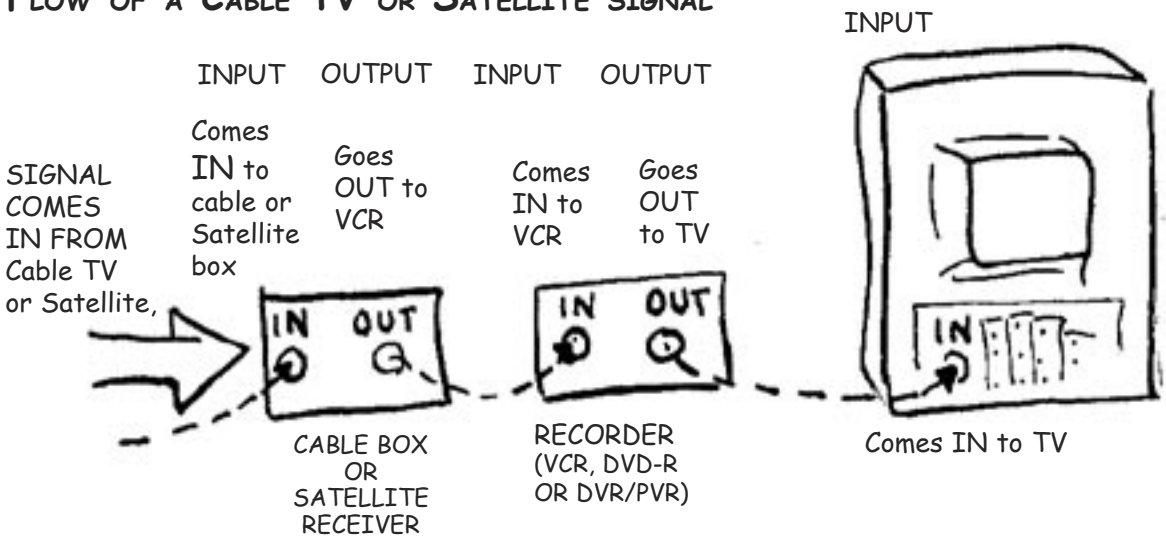
Turn your equipment around and get familiar with the connections.

The source sends out its information. It does this via an OUTPUT jack. It runs OUT the cable to the next device (or TV) which accepts that information IN through its INPUT jack. That device will then either record it or display it.

Here is an example of how it works:

You may have digital Satellite or Cable TV, or a premium Cable TV channel coming into your house from the wall connection. The signal travels through a cable IN to the Satellite or Cable TV box. The box then does its decoding and/or converting and sends the resulting picture and sound OUT through the cables connected to its output jack. The recorder (VHS, DVD, hard disc recorder), then accepts the picture and sound IN through its INPUT jacks. When you want to play what it has recorded, it will send the picture and sound OUT through the OUTPUT jacks and IN to the TV through one of the TV's INPUTS. The recorder can also pass the picture and sound straight through. (See Chapter 1 VCR passthrough.) ("Input"–Have you ever seen that word on a remote control or the back of your TV?) Inputs can also be labeled "video 1, 2, 3 etc."

Flow of a Cable TV or Satellite signal



Discovering and identifying connections

You are an EXPLORER. Your job is to identify what you see on your equipment. You will note what types of jacks you discover and what they are named or labeled on your equipment. The Hookup guide form in Chapter 5 will give you a place to note your findings (be sure to read through the worksheet directions before you start writing). Record what types of connections you find, how many of each type of input and output you find on each device (RCA, s-video, component video, etc.)and how they are labeled on the device. There are real world examples at the end of this chapter. This will give you practice in discovering the terminals and how they might be set up or labeled. The number of inputs a TV or receiver has will determine how you will hook up your equipment.

You don't have to make any choices right now. Just note what you find.

Cables come with different shaped connectors which fit into different shaped terminals. Use this chapter as a reference to recognize the shapes and colors of the connections to identify them.

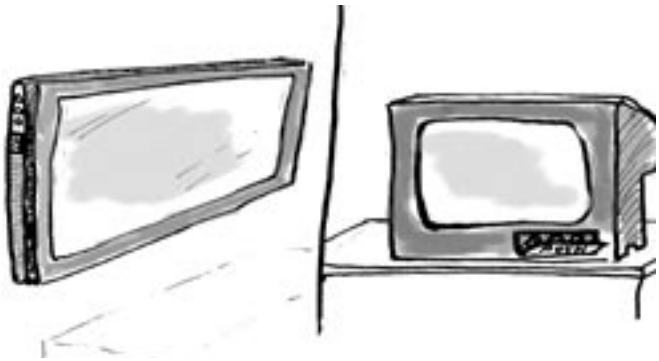
There are single connectors like RCA phono, f-pin screw on and push on, and the professional screw on "BNC"

DVI, HDMI and other pin type connectors have individual pins or a row of flat pins

Most jacks will be found on the rear panel of your equipment. On some flat panel TVs, there are jacks on the side. Because some jacks can be found on ledges and lips surrounding the "**JACK PANEL**," if you find a label and no jack, be sure to look around near the label. On **A/V RECEIVERS** you might find "**ASSIGNABLE.**" This means that although it may be labeled as a "DVD in" (for example), it can be assigned for use with another device.

For the convenience of hooking up a temporary device like a camcorder or video game, some TVs also have jacks on the front or under a spring-loaded door on the front of the TV. Be sure to look everywhere.

Flat panel TVs often have connections on the side for easy access when laying flat against the wall.



Though you will want to count front jacks, you will probably only use them for devices that you hook up temporarily like a camcorder, video game, digital camera, laptop, etc.

Be sure to look for hidden doors on the front and sides of your TV or other device.