

Formed in November 1990 by the equal merger of Sky Television and British Satellite Broadcasting, BSkyB became the UK's largest digital subscription television company. Following BSkyB's 2014 acquisition of Sky Italia and a majority 90.04% interest in Sky Deutschland in November 2014, its holding company British Sky Broadcasting Group plc changed its name to Sky plc. The United Kingdom operations also changed the company name from British Sky Broadcasting Limited to Sky UK Limited, still trading as Sky.

Following a lengthy legal battle with the European Commission, which deemed the exclusivity of the rights to be against the interests of competition and the consumer, BSkyB's monopoly came to an end from the 2007–08 season. In May 2006, the Irish broadcaster Setanta Sports was awarded two of the six Premier League packages that the English FA offered to broadcasters. Sky picked up the remaining four for £1.3bn. In February 2015, Sky bid £4.2bn for a package of 120 premier league games across the three seasons from 2016. This represented an increase of 70% on the previous contract and was said to be £1bn more than the company had expected to pay. The move has been followed by staff cuts, increased subscription prices (including 9% in Sky's family package) and the dropping of the 3D channel.

While BSkyB had been excluded from being a part of the ONdigital consortium, thereby making them a competitor by default, BSkyB was able to join ITV Digital's free-to-air replacement, Freeview, in which it holds an equal stake with the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and National Grid Wireless. Prior to October 2005, three BSkyB channels were available on this platform: Sky News, Sky Three, and Sky Sports News. Initially BSkyB provided Sky Travel to the service. However, this was replaced by Sky Three on 31 October 2005, which was itself later re-branded as 'Pick TV' in 2011.

BSkyB initially charged additional subscription fees for using a Sky+ PVR with their service; waiving the charge for subscribers whose package included two or more premium channels. This changed as from 1 July 2007, and now customers that have Sky+ and subscribe to any BSkyB subscription package get Sky+ included at no extra charge. Customers that do not subscribe to BSkyB's channels can still pay a monthly fee to enable Sky+ functions. In January 2010 BSkyB discontinued the Sky+ Box, limited the standard Sky Box to Multiroom upgrade only and started to issue the Sky+HD Box as standard, thus giving all new subscribers the functions of Sky+. In February 2011 BSkyB discontinued the non-HD variant of its Multiroom box, offering a smaller version of the SkyHD box without Sky+ functionality. In September 2007, Sky launched a new TV advertising campaign targeting Sky+ at women. As of 31 March 2008, Sky had 3,393,000 Sky+ users.

BSkyB utilises the VideoGuard pay-TV scrambling system owned by NDS, a Cisco Systems company. There are tight controls over use of VideoGuard decoders; they are not available as stand-alone DVB CAMs (conditional-access modules). BSkyB has design authority over all digital satellite receivers capable of receiving their service. The receivers, though designed and built by different manufacturers, must conform to the same user interface look-and-feel as all the others. This extends to the Personal video recorder (PVR) offering (branded Sky+).

In 2007, BSkyB and Virgin Media became involved in a dispute over the carriage of Sky channels on cable TV. The failure to renew the existing carriage agreements negotiated with NTL and Telewest resulted in Virgin Media removing the basic channels from the network on 1 March 2007. Virgin Media claimed that BSkyB had substantially increased the asking price for the channels, a claim which BSkyB denied, on the basis that their new deal offered "substantially more value" by including HD channels and Video On Demand content which was not previously carried by cable.

In July 2013, the English High Court of Justice found that Microsoft's use of the term "SkyDrive" infringed on Sky's right to the "Sky" trademark. On 31 July 2013, BSkyB and Microsoft announced their settlement, in which Microsoft will not appeal the ruling, and will rename its SkyDrive cloud storage service after an unspecified "reasonable period of time to allow for an orderly transition to a new brand,"

plus "financial and other terms, the details of which are confidential". On 27 January 2014, Microsoft announced "that SkyDrive will soon become OneDrive" and "SkyDrive Pro" becomes "OneDrive for Business".

The service started on 1 September 1993 based on the idea from the then chief executive officer, Sam Chisholm and Rupert Murdoch, of converting the company business strategy to an entirely fee-based concept. The new package included four channels formerly available free-to-air, broadcasting on Astra's satellites, as well as introducing new channels. The service continued until the closure of BSkyB's analogue service on 27 September 2001, due to the launch and expansion of the Sky Digital platform. Some of the channels did broadcast either in the clear or soft encrypted (whereby a Videocrypt decoder was required to decode, without a subscription card) prior to their addition to the Sky Multichannels package. Within two months of the launch, BSkyB gained 400,000 new subscribers, with the majority taking at least one premium channel as well, which helped BSkyB reach 3.5 million households by mid-1994. Michael Grade criticized the operations in front of the Select Committee on National Heritage, mainly for the lack of original programming on many of the new channels.

Sky UK Limited (formerly British Sky Broadcasting or BSkyB) is a British telecommunications company which serves the United Kingdom. Sky provides television and broadband internet services and fixed line telephone services to consumers and businesses in the United Kingdom. It is the UK's largest pay-TV broadcaster with 11 million customers as of 2015. It was the UK's most popular digital TV service until it was overtaken by Freeview in April 2007. Its corporate headquarters are based in Isleworth.

On 18 November 2015, Sky announced Sky Q, a range of products and services to be available in 2016. The Sky Q range consists of three set top boxes (Sky Q, Sky Q Silver and Sky Q Mini), a broadband router (Sky Q Hub) and mobile applications. The Sky Q set top boxes introduce a new user interface, Wi-Fi hotspot functionality, Power-line and Bluetooth connectivity and a new touch-sensitive remote control. The Sky Q Mini set top boxes connect to the Sky Q Silver set top boxes with a Wi-Fi or Power-line connection rather than receive their own satellite feeds. This allows all set top boxes in a household to share recordings and other media. The Sky Q Silver set top box is capable of receiving and displaying UHD broadcasts, which Sky will introduce later in 2016.

BSkyB's standard definition broadcasts are in DVB-compliant MPEG-2, with the Sky Movies and Sky Box Office channels including optional Dolby Digital soundtracks for recent films, although these are only accessible with a Sky+ box. Sky+ HD material is broadcast using MPEG-4 and most of the HD material uses the DVB-S2 standard. Interactive services and 7-day EPG use the proprietary OpenTV system, with set-top boxes including modems for a return path. Sky News, amongst other channels, provides a pseudo-video on demand interactive service by broadcasting looping video streams.

When Sky Digital was launched in 1998 the new service used the Astra 2A satellite which was located at the 28.5°E orbital position, unlike the analogue service which was broadcast from 19.2°E. This was subsequently followed by more Astra satellites as well as Eutelsat's Eurobird 1 (now Eutelsat 33C) at 28.5°E), enabled the company to launch a new all-digital service, Sky, with the potential to carry hundreds of television and radio channels. The old position was shared with broadcasters from several European countries, while the new position at 28.5°E came to be used almost exclusively for channels that broadcast to the United Kingdom.

BSkyB launched its HDTV service, Sky+ HD, on 22 May 2006. Prior to its launch, BSkyB claimed that 40,000 people had registered to receive the HD service. In the week before the launch, rumours started to surface that BSkyB was having supply issues with its set top box (STB) from manufacturer Thomson. On Thursday 18 May 2006, and continuing through the weekend before launch, people were reporting that BSkyB had either cancelled or rescheduled its installation. Finally, the BBC reported that 17,000 customers had yet to receive the service due to failed deliveries. On 31 March 2012, Sky announced

the total number of homes with Sky+HD was 4,222,000.

On 8 February 2007, BSkyB announced its intention to replace its three free-to-air digital terrestrial channels with four subscription channels. It was proposed that these channels would offer a range of content from the BSkyB portfolio including sport (including English Premier League Football), films, entertainment and news. The announcement came a day after Setanta Sports confirmed that it would launch in March as a subscription service on the digital terrestrial platform, and on the same day that NTL's services re-branded as Virgin Media. However, industry sources believe BSkyB will be forced to shelve plans to withdraw its channels from Freeview and replace them with subscription channels, due to possible lost advertising revenue.

Provided is a universal Ku band LNB (9.75/10.600 GHz) which is fitted at the end of the dish and pointed at the correct satellite constellation; most digital receivers will receive the free to air channels. Some broadcasts are free-to-air and unencrypted, some are encrypted but do not require a monthly subscription (known as free-to-view), some are encrypted and require a monthly subscription, and some are pay-per-view services. To view the encrypted content a VideoGuard UK equipped receiver (all of which are dedicated to the Sky service, and cannot be used to decrypt other services) needs to be used. Unofficial CAMs are now available to view the service, although use of them breaks the user's contract with Sky and invalidates the user's rights to use the card.

In the autumn of 1991, talks were held for the broadcast rights for Premier League for a five-year period, from the 1992 season. ITV were the current rights holders, and fought hard to retain the new rights. ITV had increased its offer from £18m to £34m per year to keep control of the rights. BSkyB joined forces with the BBC to make a counter bid. The BBC was given the highlights of most of the matches, while BSkyB paying £304m for the Premier League rights, would give them a monopoly of all live matches, up to 60 per year from the 1992 season. Murdoch described sport as a "battering ram" for pay-television, providing a strong customer base. A few weeks after the deal, ITV went to the High Court to get an injunction as it believed their bid details had been leaked before the decision was taken. ITV also asked the Office of Fair Trading to investigate since it believed Rupert Murdoch's media empire via its newspapers had influenced the deal. A few days later neither action took effect, ITV believed BSkyB was telephoned and informed of its £262m bid, and Premier League advised BSkyB to increase its counter bid.

BSkyB has no veto over the presence of channels on their EPG, with open access being an enforced part of their operating licence from Ofcom. Any channel which can get carriage on a suitable beam of a satellite at 28° East is entitled to access to BSkyB's EPG for a fee, ranging from £15–100,000. Third-party channels which opt for encryption receive discounts ranging from reduced price to free EPG entries, free carriage on a BSkyB leased transponder, or actual payment for being carried. However, even in this case, BSkyB does not carry any control over the channel's content or carriage issues such as picture quality.

BSkyB's digital service was officially launched on 1 October 1998 under the name Sky Digital, although small-scale tests were carried out before then. At this time the use of the Sky Digital brand made an important distinction between the new service and Sky's analogue services. Key selling points were the improvement in picture and sound quality, increased number of channels and an interactive service branded Open.... now called Sky Active, BSkyB competed with the ONdigital (later ITV Digital) terrestrial offering and cable services. Within 30 days, over 100,000 digiboxes had been sold, which help bolstered BSkyB's decision to give away free digiboxes and minidishes from May 1999.

Virgin Media (re-branded in 2007 from NTL:Telewest) started to offer a high-definition television (HDTV) capable set top box, although from 30 November 2006 until 30 July 2009 it only carried one linear HD channel, BBC HD, after the conclusion of the ITV HD trial. Virgin Media has claimed that other HD channels were "locked up" or otherwise withheld from their platform, although Virgin Media

did in fact have an option to carry Channel 4 HD in the future. Nonetheless, the linear channels were not offered, Virgin Media instead concentrating on its Video On Demand service to carry a modest selection of HD content. Virgin Media has nevertheless made a number of statements over the years, suggesting that more linear HD channels are on the way.

BSkyB's direct-to-home satellite service became available in 10 million homes in 2010, Europe's first pay-TV platform in to achieve that milestone. Confirming it had reached its target, the broadcaster said its reach into 36% of households in the UK represented an audience of more than 25m people. The target was first announced in August 2004, since then an additional 2.4m customers had subscribed to BSkyB's direct-to-home service. Media commentators had debated whether the figure could be reached as the growth in subscriber numbers elsewhere in Europe flattened.

The Daily Mail newspaper reported in 2012 that the UK government's benefits agency was checking claimants' "Sky TV bills to establish if a woman in receipt of benefits as a single mother is wrongly claiming to be living alone" – as, it claimed, subscription to sports channels would betray a man's presence in the household. In December, the UK's parliament heard a claim that a subscription to BSkyB was 'often damaging', along with alcohol, tobacco and gambling. Conservative MP Alec Shelbrooke was proposing the payments of benefits and tax credits on a "Welfare Cash Card", in the style of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, that could be used to buy only "essentials".

The agreements include fixed annual carriage fees of £30m for the channels with both channel suppliers able to secure additional capped payments if their channels meet certain performance-related targets. Currently there is no indication as to whether the new deal includes the additional Video On Demand and High Definition content which had previously been offered by BSkyB. As part of the agreements, both BSkyB and Virgin Media agreed to terminate all High Court proceedings against each other relating to the carriage of their respective basic channels.