



YOUR GUIDE TO

# PLEX

THE AWESOME MEDIA CENTER

BY DAN PRICE



# Your Guide To Plex – The Awesome Media Center

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If you have a lot of locally-saved movies and TV shows, you need to install Plex. It's not open-source like Kodi and some of its some lesser-known competitors, but it's far easier to set up and use - especially if you want to enjoy your content on multiple devices or when you're away from home.

Plex really shines when used as a central hub for all your entertainment needs. You can **convert old home videos into digital format, rip your vast collection of DVDs**, and use Plex to manage and watch all of it.

Plex also boasts some additional features that add extra layers of enjoyment. These include third-party channels, live TV, and personalized news. We'll discuss them all in more detail later in the guide.

If you like the sound of Plex but haven't got a clue where to begin, keep reading. This is the only guide to setting up Plex that you'll ever need to read.

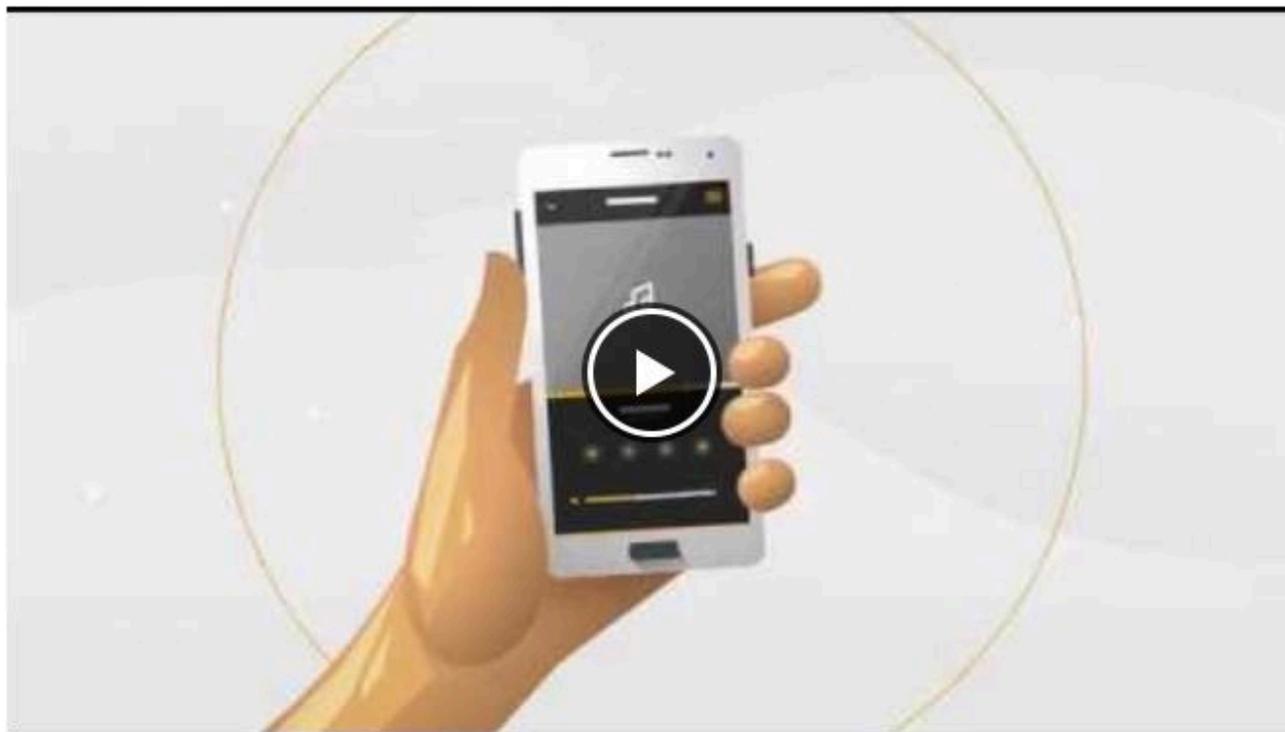
## Plex Media Server vs. Plex Media Player

Throughout this guide, we'll refer to two distinct parts of the Plex ecosystem: the server and the player. They have different functions and need to be installed separately.

### Plex Media Server

Any Plex setup needs at least one server. Technically, you can install as many servers as you want, but one is sufficient for most people.

The server acts as the central hub for your media collection, so you need to choose the device that you're going to run the server on wisely. If the server is not available (for example, if the computer hosting the server is turned off), you will not be able to watch your media on other devices.



Watch the Youtube video here: **[Plex: Beautiful, simple access to all your media!](#)**

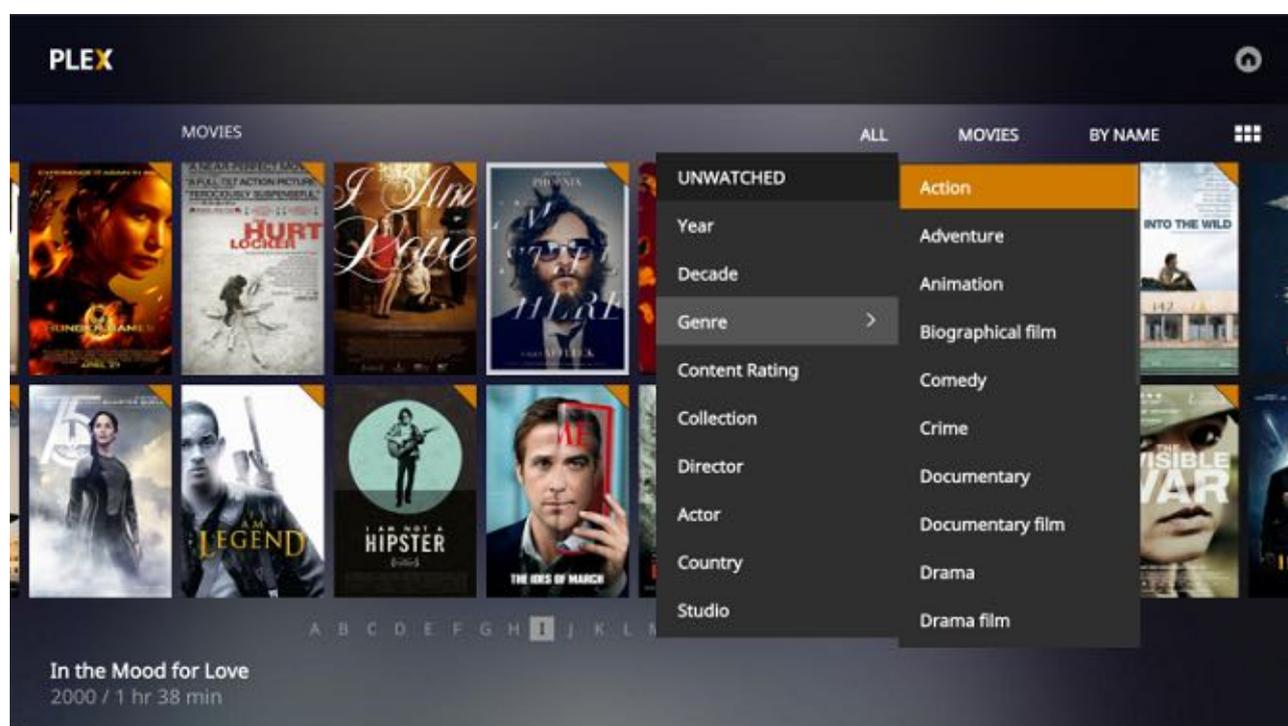
For simplicity, it's easiest to move all the media that you're planning to put on the server onto the same drive as the server itself, though network drives are supported if you know what you're doing.

Almost any computer can act as a server. Versions are available for Windows, Mac, Linux, and FreeBSD. You can also install the server on a Network Attached Storage (NAS) drive. Plex supports products from Synology, Netgear, QNAP, unRAID, Drobo, ASUSTOR, Thecus, Seagate, Western Digital, and Terramaster. It also works with Docker.

The server does not have its own graphical user interface. When using the server to manage your content, it will automatically fire up the Plex Web App.

## Plex Media Player

The Plex Media Player is just a player; it cannot be used to read local content or serve your content to other devices.



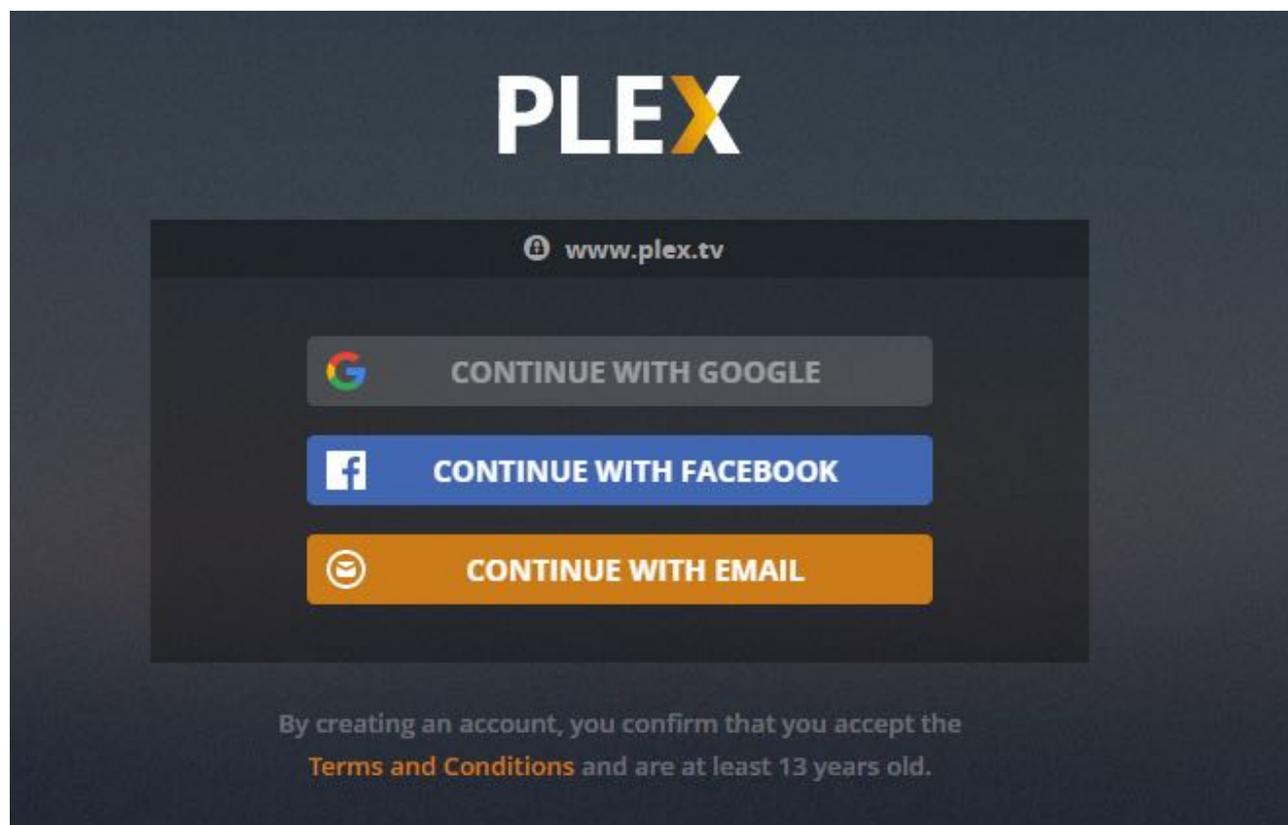
You should install a copy of Plex Media Player on every device you think you might want to use to watch content. It supports a vast number of devices and operating systems. These include Windows, Mac, Android, iOS, Amazon Alexa, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Apple TV, Kodi, PlayStation, Xbox, **Roku**, Nvidia Shield, and Sonos. Plex content is also Chromecast-compatible.

You can grab a copy of the Plex Media Server and the Plex Media Player **from the company's website**. You can then install both by simply following the on-screen instructions.

## Setting Up Plex for the First Time

Once you've successfully installed all of the necessary software, it's time to fire up Plex for the first time. You need to begin with the Plex Media Server.

The first time you run the program, Plex will prompt you to make a new account. It's impossible to use Plex effectively without an account, so go ahead and choose a username and password. You also need to accept the Terms of Service.



### The Setup Wizard

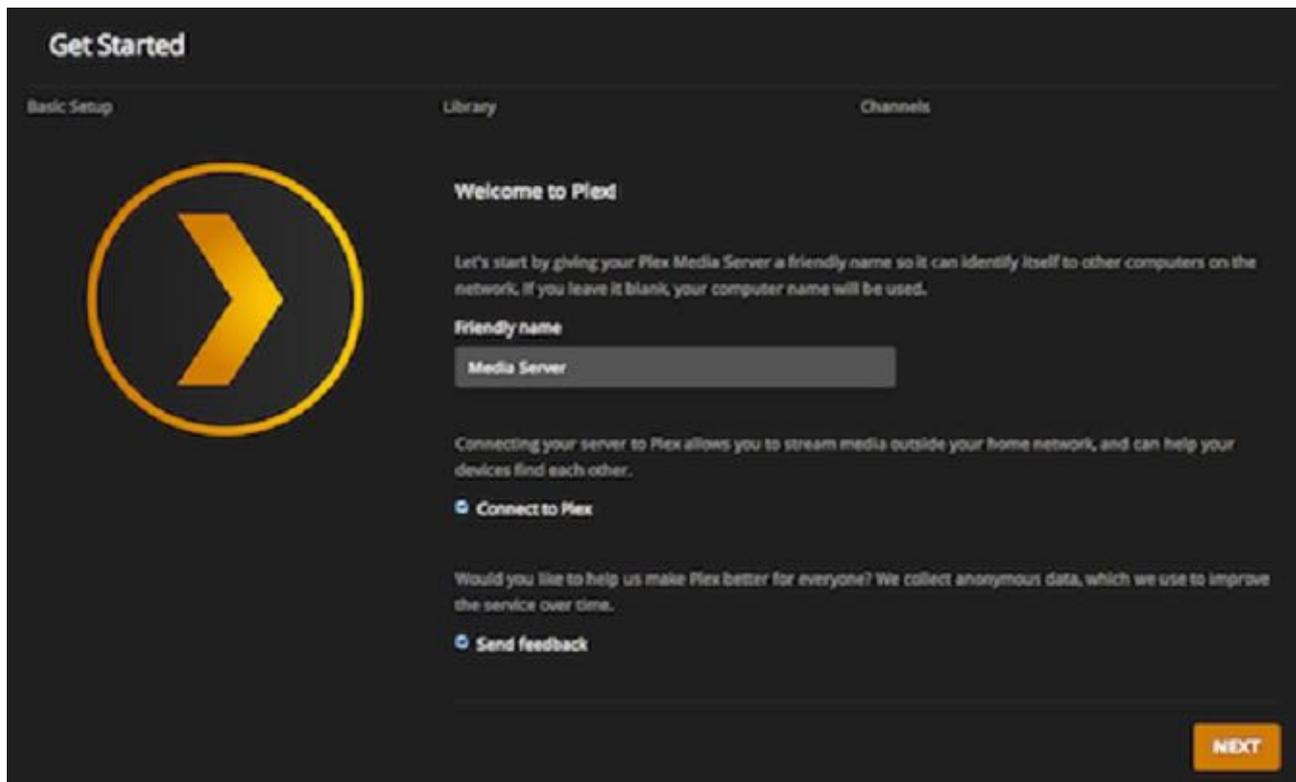
After you've created an account, the Setup Wizard will automatically launch.

On the first screen, you need to choose a name for your server. This name will be replicated across all your Plex apps, so select something sensible and identifiable.

You will also see two checkboxes. The first, **Connect to Plex**, lets you stream content outside of your home network and makes it easy for your individual Plex apps to find each other. You should enable it.

The second, **Send feedback**, let's Plex gather anonymous data on your usage. If you're protective of your privacy, you should disable this option.

Click **Next** and the wizard will prompt you to add your media. If you've already organized your content, you can add the folders. If you haven't, skip this section for now. We'll cover it in more detail shortly.



Finally, you can add third-party channels. Again, we'll cover these in more detail later in the guide, but feel free to add anything you like the look of.

That's it, the wizard is complete. You should now be looking at the main Plex screen.

## Setting Up Plex Media Players

If you have installed Plex apps on your smartphone, games consoles, or streaming devices, now is the time to fire them up.

In all cases, the app will prompt you for your Plex account credentials. Assuming you have followed the Setup Wizard guide detailed above, the Plex app should automatically find your Plex server once you've successfully entered your username and password.

Each Plex app works differently. Giving a detailed guide about how to use each app individually is beyond the scope of this article, but they're all fairly self-explanatory.

## Adding Media to Plex

If you've spent some time looking at Plex articles online, you'll have seen beautiful images showing endless libraries of content. The content all has cover art, plotlines, episode names, actor information, and more.

Plex can add all this metadata automatically, but you need to take the time to properly organize your content before adding it to the app.



## Using the Correct File Naming Structure

Plex is notoriously fussy when it comes to **naming files and folders in the correct way**.

Before going any further, make sure you have all your movies in a separate folder tree from all your TV shows.

Next, use the guidelines below to make sure Plex will be able to find all the correct metadata for your videos and music.

### Movies

Movies can either be saved as standalone files within the Movies folder, or each saved in their own sub-folder. The movie itself should be called **[Movie Name] (Year)**. For example, **Jurassic Park (1993)**.

Therefore, your folder tree should look like either **Movies/Jurassic Park (1993).mp4** or **Movies/Jurassic Park (1993)/Jurassic Park (1993).mp4**.

### TV Shows

TV series use a similar approach, but with a couple of tweaks. Using the example of *Friends*, your headline folder structure should be **TV Shows/Friends/Season XX/**.

Within each season, the individual episodes should be called **[Show Name] SXXEXX**. For example, a video called **Friends S04E12** would be Season four, Episode 12.

If the show you want to add doesn't follow the typical Season/Episode format, check **Plex's official guidelines** for more information.

### Music

If your music already has embedded metadata, you don't need to do anything; Plex can read it. If it doesn't, use this folder tree to organize your files: **Music/ArtistName - AlbumName/TrackNumber - TrackName.ext** (for example, **Music/The Killers - Hot Fuss/01 - Jenny Was a Friend of Mine.mp3**).

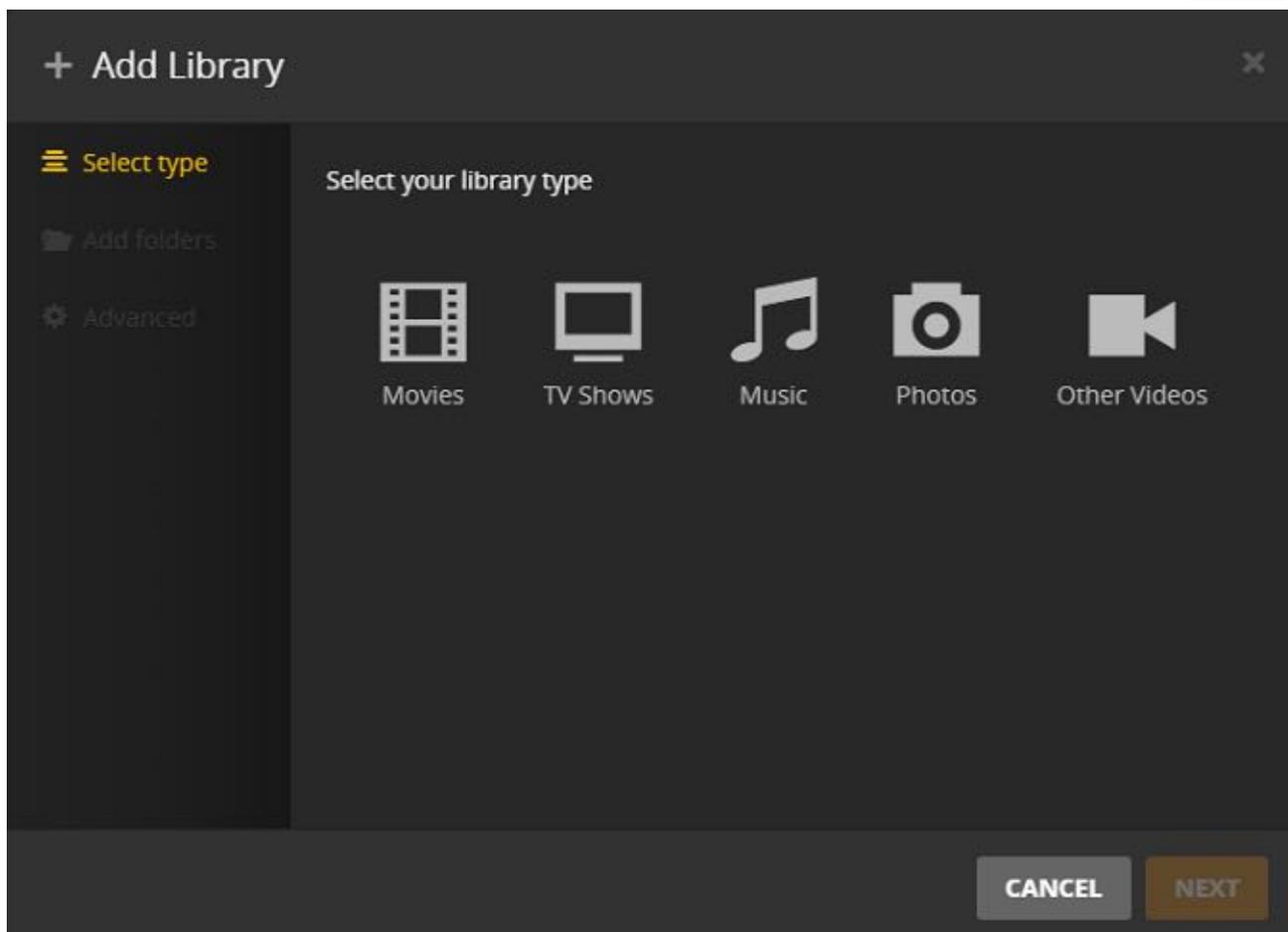
(**Note:** If you have thousands of files and renaming them all is impractical, check out **FileBot**. Although it's not free, the app will do most of the legwork for you.)

## Add Movies to Plex

When you've successfully organized all your media, you're finally ready to add it to Plex. The type of media you want to add determines the method. To start, let's look at movies.

In the left-hand panel of the Plex interface, hover your mouse over **Libraries** and click the **+** icon.

A new window will pop up. Choose **Movies**, hit **Next**, and click on **Browse for Media Folder** to point Plex at the folder containing your movie files. At this stage, do not click **Add Library**. Instead, choose **Advanced** in the left-hand panel.



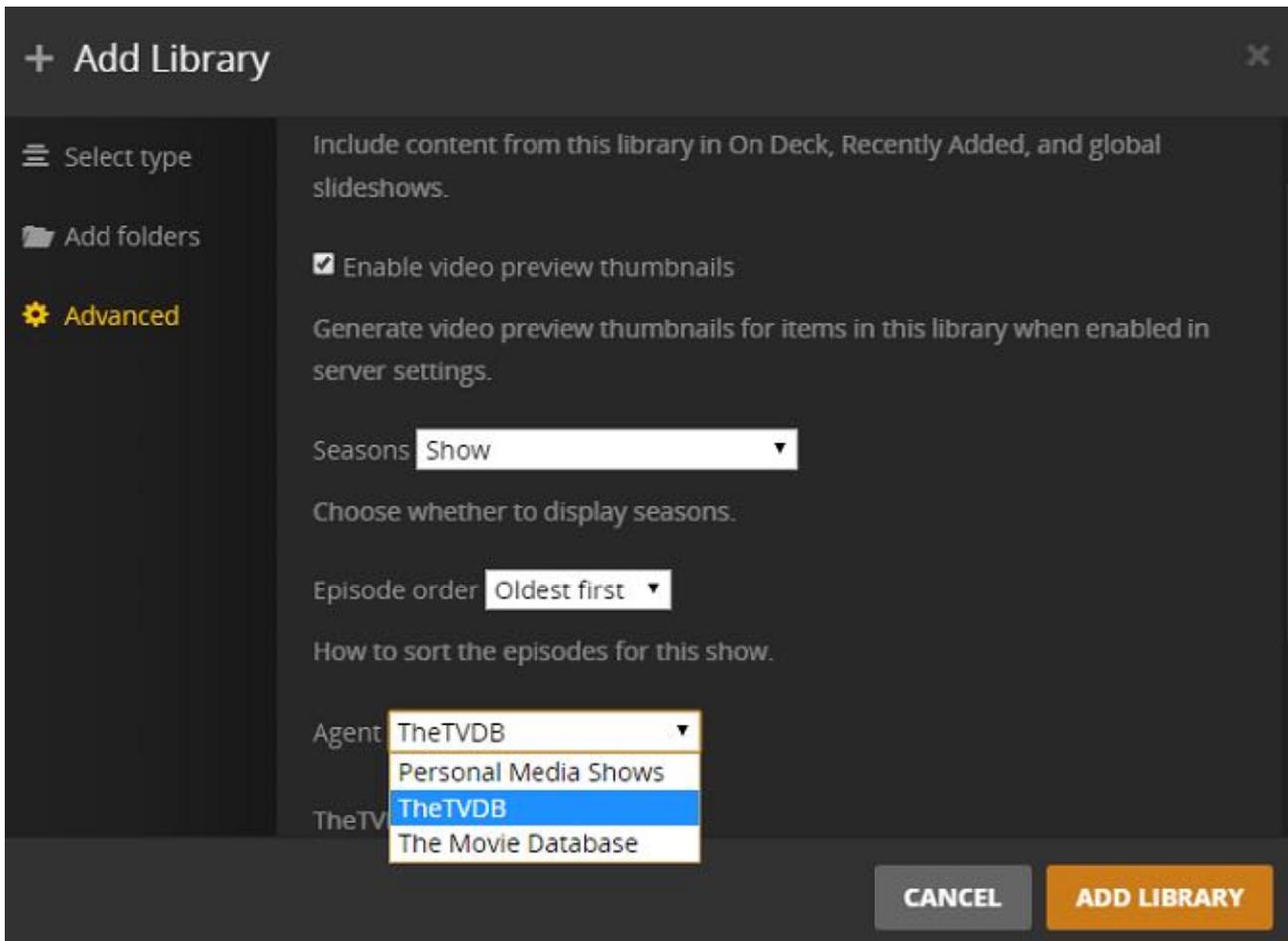
The Advanced options contain a few settings you need to pay attention to:

- **Cinema Trailers:** Do you want a movie theater-esque experience or do you want to jump straight into your content?
- **Country:** If your films have been released in multiple countries, which country's information do you want to use for your metadata?
- **Agent:** Make sure you select **The Movie Database**, otherwise some metadata might not import correctly.

## Add TV Shows to Plex

The methodology for adding TV shows is the same as for adding movies, just make sure you select **TV Shows** instead of **Movies** after hitting the **+** icon.

The **Advanced** options are slightly different. You won't see some movie-specific settings, and you need to make sure you select **TheTVDB** as the **Agent**.



## Add Music to Plex

When adding music, you will see an entry in the left-hand panel called **Options**.

If you have a Plex Pass, this screen lets you choose to create a **Premium Plex Music Library**. It will download artwork, artist bios, and album reviews. It will also allow you to create smart mixes based on a track or mood, and it adds music recognition tagging to help you organize your library.

If you know your music files have embedded metadata that's mostly correct, make sure you choose **Use embedded tags** in the **Advanced** menu.

## Add Other Videos to Plex

Finally, you might want to add other videos to Plex. Perhaps you've got home videos from years gone by, some footage you've downloaded from YouTube, or you just want a way to see all your smartphone videos on other devices around the home.

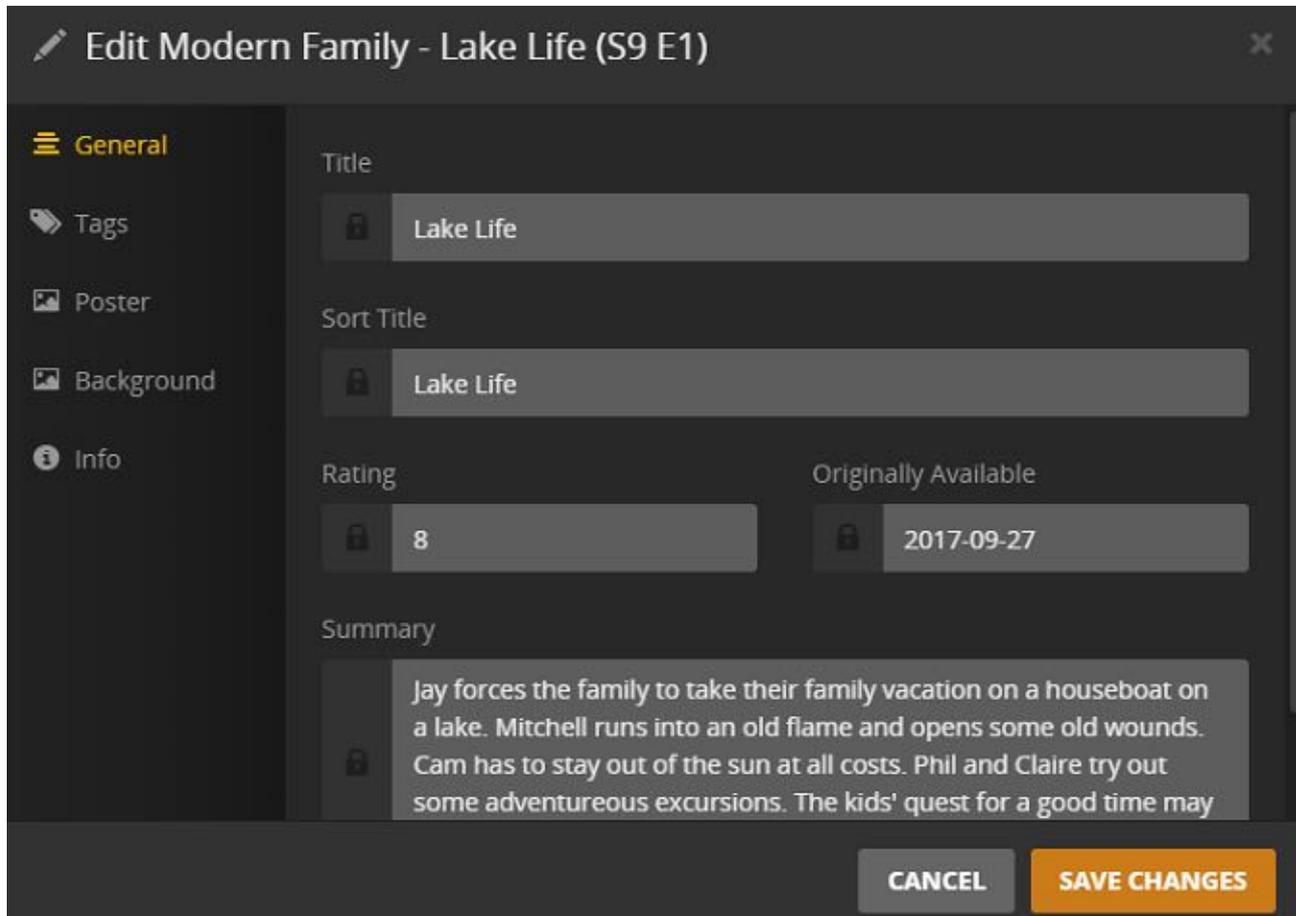
In these cases, you need to choose **Other Videos**. Importantly, in the Advanced menu, make sure the **Agent** is set to **Personal Media**.

You also need to ensure you've given your file a recognizable name; it's the name Plex will use in the app.

## Fix Incorrect Metadata

Even if you've followed all the file naming conventions correctly and chosen the right agent for each library you've added, sometimes the metadata can still go awry. Luckily, you can fix it easily.

Use the Plex interface to navigate to the TV episode of movie you want to edit, hover your mouse over the video's thumbnail, and click on the pen icon. It will open the metadata window.



Using the panel on the left-hand side of the window, you can edit everything from the title and the plotline to the poster artwork and the cast list.

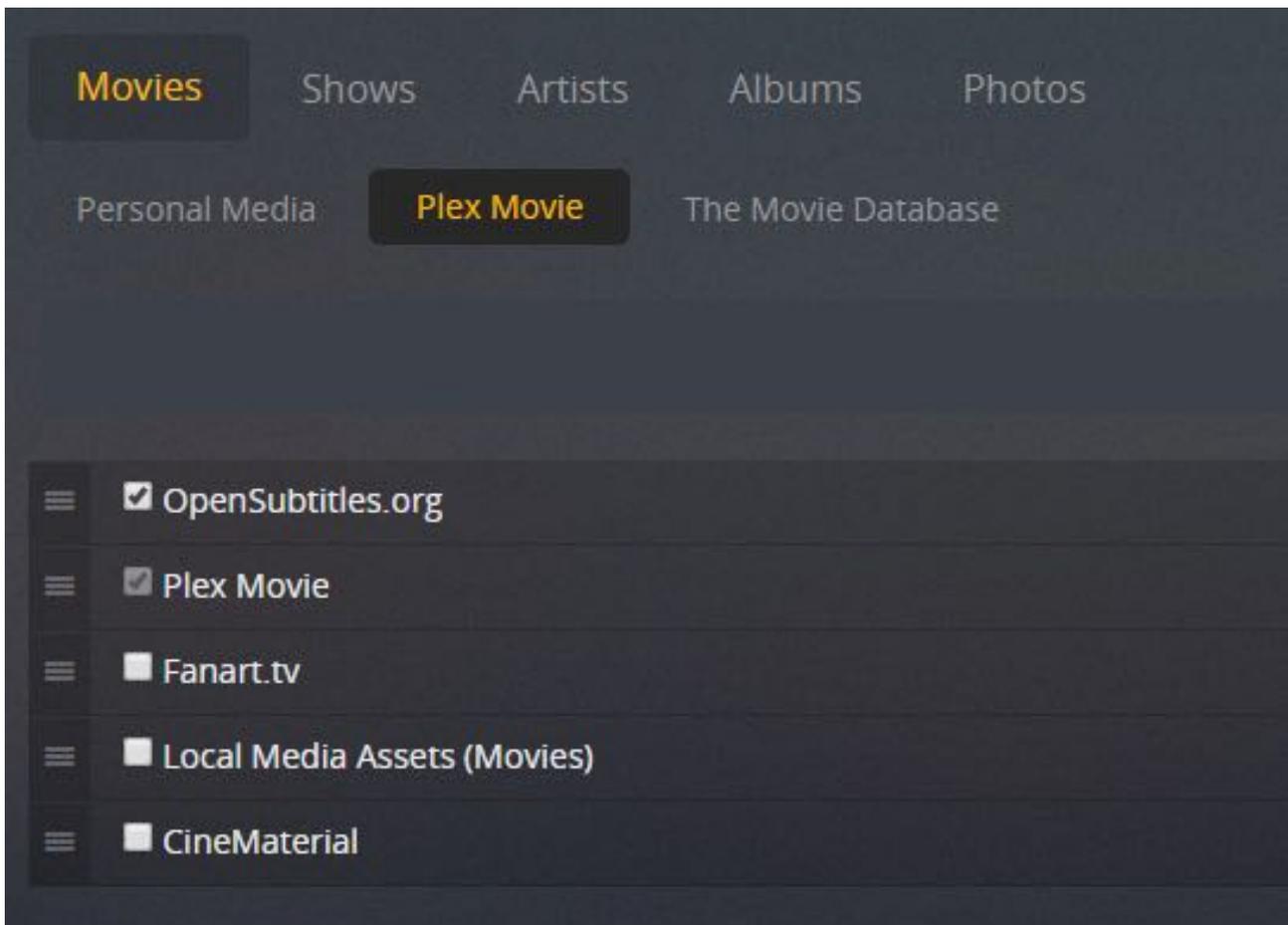
Click **Save Changes** when you're ready to proceed.

## Add Subtitles to Videos

You can add subtitles to both movies and TV shows. Plex uses a free subtitles database to download them and attach them to your video.

To download subtitles, go to Settings > Server > Agents > Movies > Plex Movie and drag the OpenSubtitles.org agent to the top of the list.

Repeat the process in Settings > Server > Agents > Shows > TheTVDB.



Next, click on the **gear** icon. Using the drop-down menus at the bottom of the new window, choose the languages you want to download. You can select up to three.

Unfortunately, your new settings will only be applied to any new content you add. To add subtitles to videos that are already in your library, click on the three horizontal dots next to the library name in the left-hand panel of the Plex interface, then choose **Refresh All Metadata**.

For a more detailed look at [using subtitles in Plex](#), check out our guide elsewhere on the site.

## Become a Plex Power User

If you've been following along, you should now have a functional Plex setup. All your videos and music will be added to your Plex Media Server, and you'll be able to access those files on other devices using the Plex Media Player.

But dig a little deeper, and you will find that Plex is packed with extra features that make it even more full-featured. Here are some features and tools that will help you become a Plex power user.

### Plex Pass

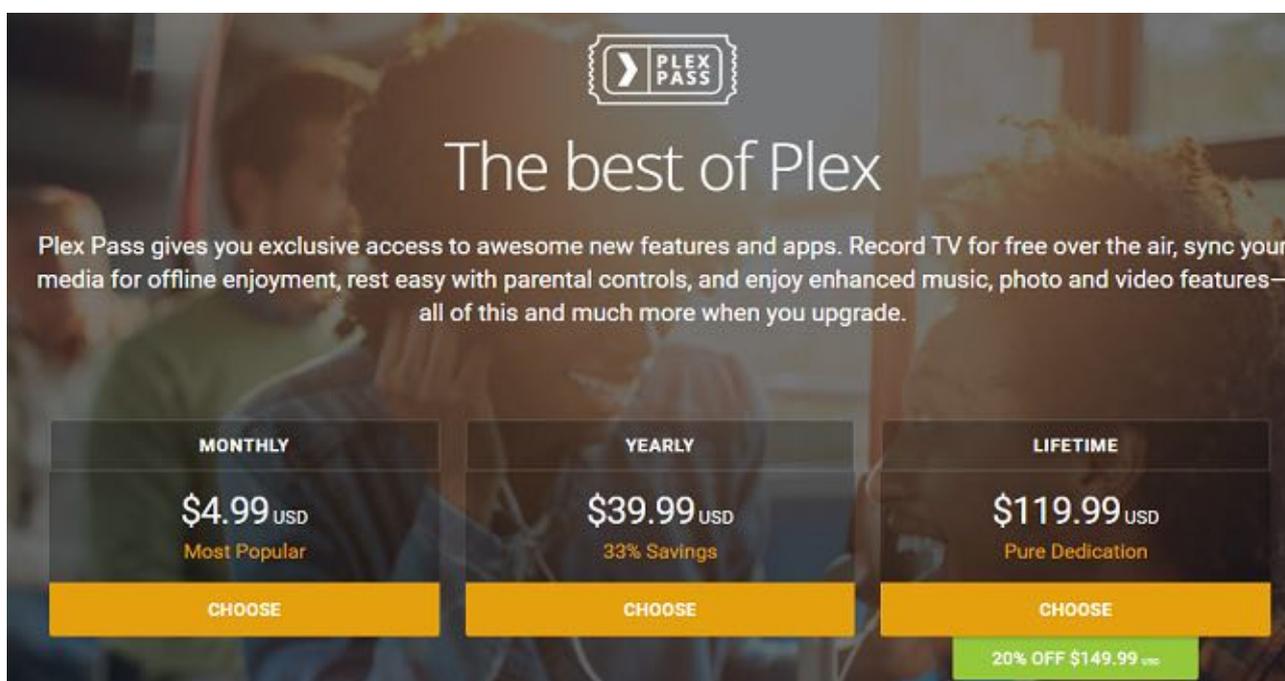
Plex is free to use, but the company does offer a subscription package as well. The package is called Plex Pass.

A **Plex Pass isn't for everyone**, but it does unlock lots of extra features. Some of which we will discuss more in this section.

The extra features include:

- Automatic photo-tagging for scene and place recognition
- Live TV
- DVR capabilities so you can record live TV
- Access to Plex Cloud (removes the need for an always-on server)
- Mobile sync for offline viewing
- Parental controls
- Music lyrics
- Support for multiple users
- And much more

You can **buy a Plex Pass** for \$4.99/month, \$39.99/year, or \$119.99 for a lifetime subscription.



The best of Plex

Plex Pass gives you exclusive access to awesome new features and apps. Record TV for free over the air, sync your media for offline enjoyment, rest easy with parental controls, and enjoy enhanced music, photo and video features— all of this and much more when you upgrade.

MONTHLY	YEARLY	LIFETIME
\$4.99 <sup>USD</sup> Most Popular	\$39.99 <sup>USD</sup> 33% Savings	\$119.99 <sup>USD</sup> Pure Dedication
CHOOSE	CHOOSE	CHOOSE

20% OFF \$149.99<sup>USD</sup>

## Live TV

Since the summer of 2017, **Plex has supported live TV**. As noted in the previous section, you need a Plex Pass to enjoy the feature. You can use it to **watch any free over-the-air channels** in your area.

You can watch live TV using the Plex app for Amazon Fire TV, Android, Android TV, Apple TV, iOS, and **Roku**. It's also supported by the web app.

To get up and running, you need a DVR tuner and an antenna. Plex supports many DVR tuners, including models from HDHomeRun, Hauppauge, AVerMedia, and DVBLLogic. Most Plex enthusiasts favor HDHomeRun.

Plex will work with any antenna, but quality can vary dramatically between manufacturers. Two of the most popular are Mohu Leaf and HD Frequency.

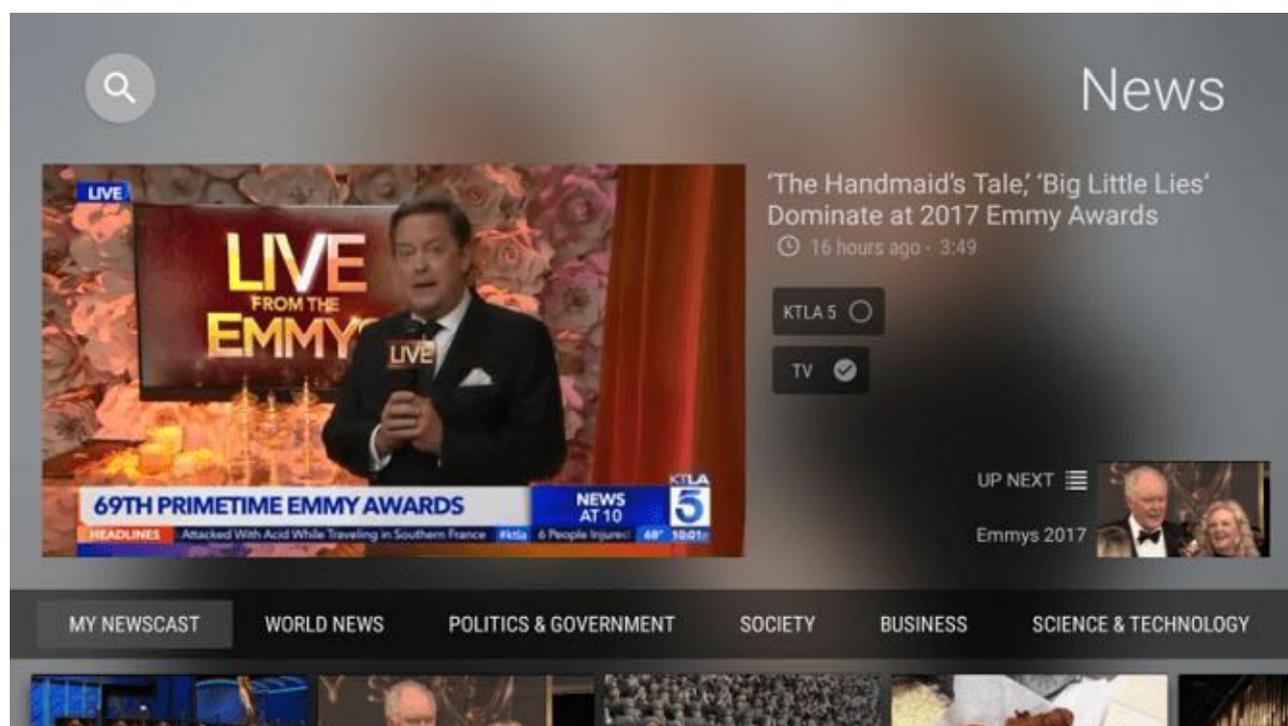
To set up live TV, go to **Settings > Server > Live TV & DVR** and select **DVR Setup**. The wizard will scan your network for the DVR receiver. Next, choose **Scan Channels** to see what's available in your area. Lastly, enter your ZIP code to download the appropriate Electronic Program Guide (EPG).

You should see a link to the program guide under **Manage** in the left-hand panel of the primary Plex interface.

## Personalized News

In the fall of 2017, Plex followed up its live TV announcement with the **introduction of a personalized news feature**. The feature is available on the Plex Media Player for Amazon Fire TV, Android, Android TV, Apple TV, iOS, and Roku.

Content is available from several world-renowned news companies, including Sky News, DW, the Financial Times, Euronews, and IGN.



You will see a link called **News** in the main library list. Click on the button, and a video will start playing. You can browse news categories using the scrolling bar below the video.

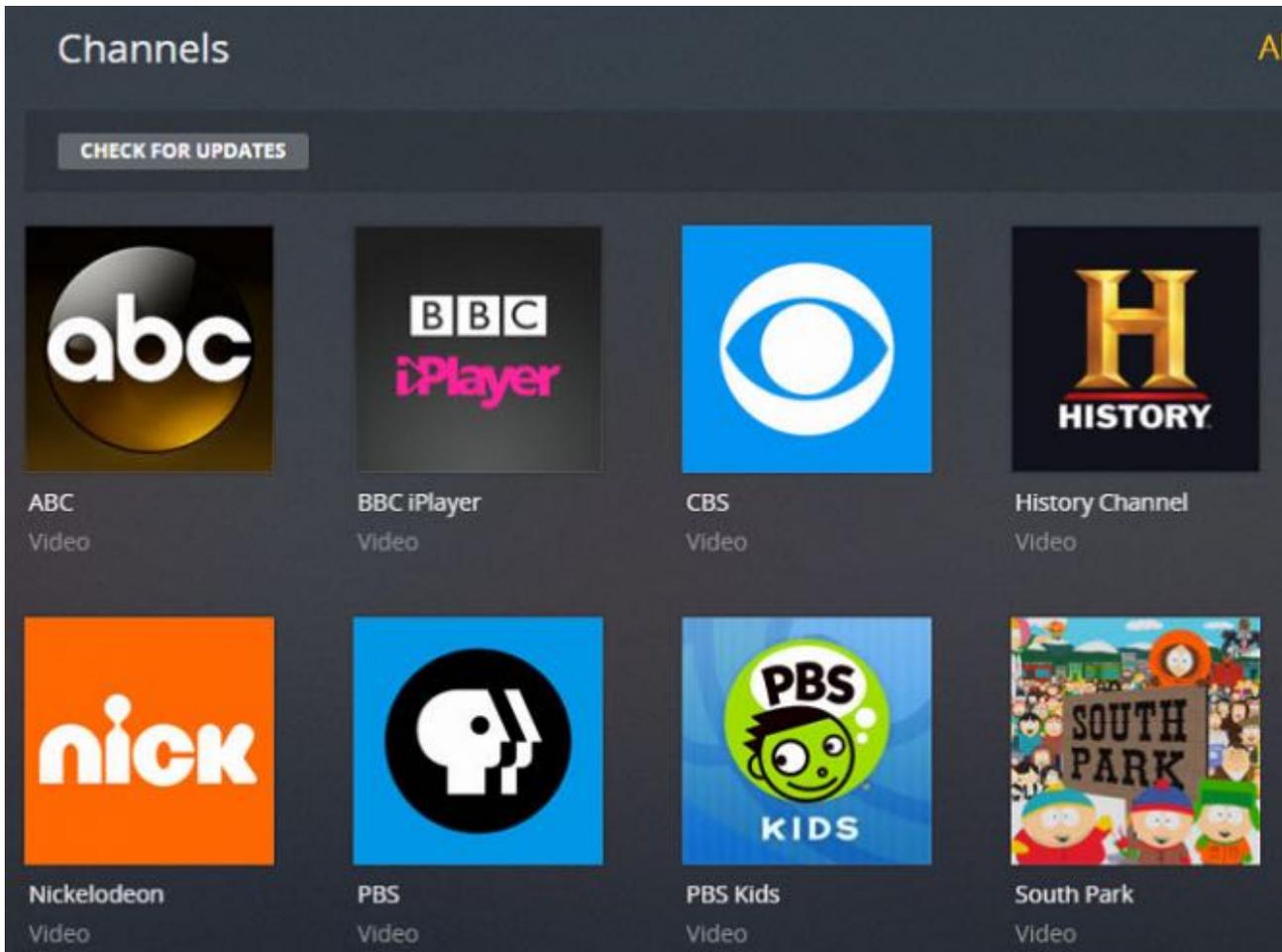
For each video, you can **Follow** or **Mute** both the channel and the topic. If you use these buttons frequently, you can quickly teach Plex about the type of content that interests you.

If you're on a TV-based app, you can head to **Personalization** to further customize your experience. You can add a ZIP code to get local news and edit the categories you want to watch.

## Third-Party Channels

Plex also supports a vast library of third-party channels. Some can be installed through the main Plex client; others rely on the Unsupported App Store.

To install a third-party channel, go to **Online Content > Channels** in the panel on the left-hand side of the Plex interface.



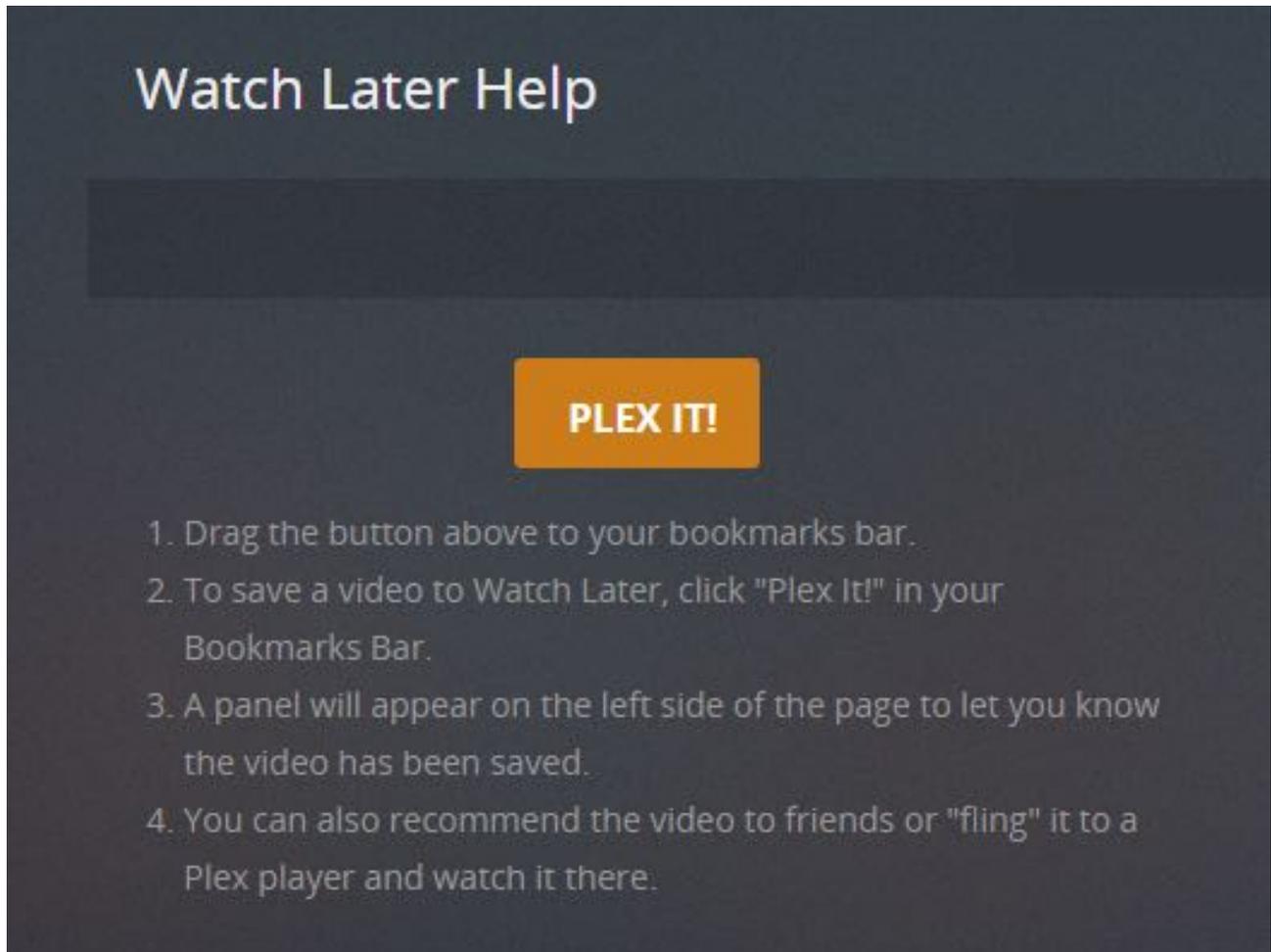
Next, in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, choose **Install Channels**. You can use the categories on the left to browse what is available. Click on a channel's thumbnail and select **Install** to add a channel to your Plex setup.

We've covered some of [the best Plex channels](#), along with instructions on how to install the Unsupported App Store, in an article elsewhere on the site.

## Plex It!

The Plex It! bookmarklet lets you grab videos off other websites and add them to your Plex account's Watch Later list. You can watch the added videos from within Plex; you don't need to go back to the original site.

The bookmarklet also lets you "fling" a video from a site to a Plex app and recommend a video to other Plex users on your account.



The screenshot shows a dark-themed help page titled "Watch Later Help". At the top, there is a large orange button with the text "PLEX IT!". Below the button, there is a list of four numbered instructions:

1. Drag the button above to your bookmarks bar.
2. To save a video to Watch Later, click "Plex It!" in your Bookmarks Bar.
3. A panel will appear on the left side of the page to let you know the video has been saved.
4. You can also recommend the video to friends or "fling" it to a Plex player and watch it there.

To install Plex It!, go to **Watch Later > ?** and follow the on-screen instructions. The process differs slightly depending on the browser and operating system you are using.



## What Else Do You Need to Know?

If you have followed this guide closely, you should now have a good understanding of what Plex is, how it can help you, and how to set it up.

Of course, there are many more tools, features, and **tricks we haven't covered**. Some of them are only valuable to expert users, and some will only be useful if you're running a Plex server for several users.

**Nonetheless, we're to help you if you do encounter any difficulties. So, if you're struggling with a particular aspect of Plex, please reach out **in the comments section**. And remember to let us know what you think of Plex. How do you rate it? And would you recommend it to your friends?**

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