

Sky Digital explained - part one - features and extras you may not be aware of!



Welcome back to RTN's series of monthly features about the world of British TV here on the northern Costa Blanca. Our aim is to update you with the latest news, products and developments in the field of digital TV. Each month we cover different items of interest to the local British-speaking expat community in a plain English, easy-to-read format. Last month we covered different TDT (Spanish terrestrial digital TV) options. Thanks to so many of you who wrote in or called with your comments and questions – keep up the good work! This month we look at the often unknown extra features of the standard Sky digibox which can make your viewing easier, especially if you are going away and wish to record shows on different channels whilst you're gone. These features are part of every genuine standard Sky box, no matter what age, make or model. Some features (like Favourites and RED button) also apply to Sky+ and Sky+HD boxes.

Favourite channels which you watch most often can be stored for easy access later on, by pressing **services, favourite channels** on your Sky remote control. You will be presented with a list of all available channels, and you can choose to save up to 50 favourites by pressing the **yellow** button on your remote next to your choices (a tick will appear to confirm your selection). Note the colour key at the bottom of the screen to help you navigate - these colours correspond to the coloured buttons on your remote control. When you've finished placing ticks, press **Select** to confirm your selection.

To access your chosen favourites whilst viewing TV, simply press the **blue** button to cycle through your stored choices, and **Select** to confirm.

The RED button is often mentioned by newscasters, especially on Sky News. Pressing this whilst watching TV will, on some channels, open a sub-menu of other choices. For example, on Sky News it will load Sky News Active, where you can easily and quickly see the parts of the news that YOU want, without waiting for the latest live update. You can watch headlines, sports, and financial updates, as well as view the latest weather maps and satellite photos by navigating with the directional arrow buttons on your remote control. On BBC News (channel 503) the red button often gives access to live BBC-covered sports events, even for small dish owners. When the menu appears on the right hand side after pressing **red**, key in **3001 select** to load the Sports menu. Wimbledon tennis lovers rejoice, as you will be able to choose which court you want to watch, live! Press the big blue **Sky** button on your remote to return to normal viewing at any time from any of these pages. Try pressing the red button on other channels, to see what happens! You can always press **BACKUP** to go back. *Some* red-button features, such as on-screen voting, ordering movies, etc. require a phone

connection, and won't work in Spain – but don't worry, you'll see what works and what doesn't soon enough!

The Sky Planner, in its simplest form, is an in-built system which flashes up a reminder message **one minute** before a show you've asked to be reminded about is due to start. You can set reminders easily by pressing **TV Guide** on your remote, and choosing **All Channels** to access the EPG (Electronic Programme Guide). Move the yellow highlight bar to the channel and time of your choice, and you will see the name of the show you wish to be reminded about (small dish owners can view the guide up to 5-6 hours ahead, big dish owners up to a week in advance!) Then press **Select** to set a reminder. You can do this as many times as you wish, and will be notified immediately about any clashes or overlaps. You can also set reminders easily from normal TV viewing mode, by pressing **Select** to pop up the 'now & next' banner, and either scrolling left/right for earlier/later shows on the current channel, or up/down for current shows on other channels – or a combination, to find a later show on another channel! Again, when the chosen show is visible, **Select** will set a reminder for that time, confirmed by a small green clock symbol. Press it again to cancel, or wait for the banner to disappear on its own.

Now, to take it a stage further. Once you have reminders set, you can access the **Personal Planner** screen by pressing **TV Guide, Green** on your remote control from normal viewing mode. If the show you have asked to be reminded about is part of an ongoing series, there will be an option at the bottom of the screen called **Series Link**. Pressing **green** to select this option will set an automatic reminder for **all** forthcoming episodes of that series! Great if you don't want to miss another show! The green symbol next to your choice will confirm the selection of Series Link, and you will then be reminded about all future episodes in that series.

Finally, we can take *full* advantage of the reminder system by choosing **Autoview** on the same screen (**red** button and red 'A' symbol) which will, at the end of the 1-minute warning, automatically switch channel for you, without the need to do anything further. This is *extremely* useful when setting multiple recordings on your VCR or HDD/DVD recorder for when you're away, as the Sky box will change to the correct channel for you! All you need to do is set the times and dates on your recorder – but make sure that the clock on your recorder is set to UK time, or you will miss all your recordings by an hour...

Next month in part two: we look at some other creative applications and accessories for the Sky Digital system in Spain, including wireless links to other rooms, box reset guides, and connecting Sky to your stereo cheaply and easily for superior sound quality. Over the summer: Sky+ and Sky+HD systems fully explained. Until then!

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