

## Chapter 1

# Shaking Hands with Apple TV

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the Content Connection
  - ▶ Identifying the major components of an Apple TV
  - ▶ Checking out the hidden stuff inside the Apple TV
  - ▶ Introducing the Apple Remote
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**A**re you considering purchasing an Apple TV unit? Or are you nervous about that unopened box lounging on your desk? I understand completely! After all, just what do all those tech terms mean, and what specifications are really important when deciding whether to upgrade your system? Questions like these can strike fear into the strongest of men and women.

Dear reader, I have good news: Don't despair because this chapter is your first step in becoming an Apple TV and streaming content expert! I can *guarantee* you that by the time you finish this short chapter, you'll know what the Apple TV unit looks like and what it does. You also become familiar with the specific connectors, and I introduce you to the Apple Remote that you use to control your Apple TV from the comfort of your living room couch.

Are you prepared to dive into the world of Apple TV? Come on in, the water's fine!

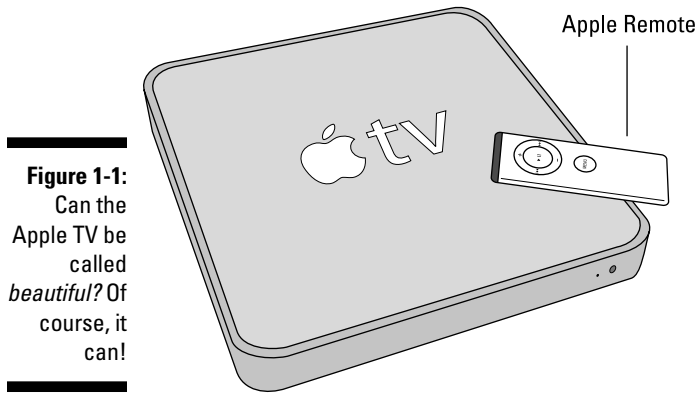
## *Starting with . . . a Definition, of Course!*

I owe my high school English teacher, Mrs. Stancil, a big vote of thanks. She used to say, "When confronted with explaining something that is potentially confusing, *always* begin your description with a definition. What is it made of? What does it look like? Is it edible?" That rule has never led me astray. She was a wonderful teacher!

In this section, I define your Apple TV and its lifelong mission of Content Connector. (Oh, and it's not edible, just in case you wondered.)

## What's an Apple TV?

Figure 1-1 illustrates the front of an Apple TV unit — if you're reminded of a silver plastic sandwich protector, you're spot-on (at least appearance-wise). At first glance, this thin box certainly doesn't look revolutionary. For those of us who've invested in digital media, however, an Apple TV is *the* link between your PC or Mac system and your home entertainment system.

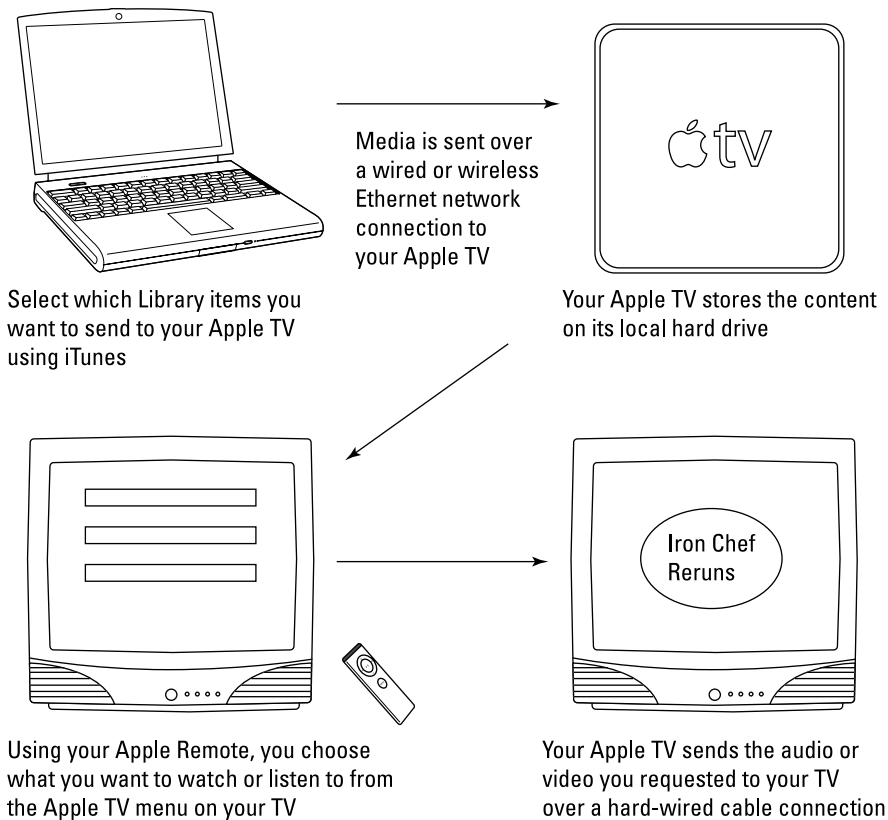


**Figure 1-1:**  
Can the  
Apple TV be  
called  
*beautiful*? Of  
course, it  
can!

Figure 1-2 provides the road map between those two systems and shows where the Apple TV fits in. Here's the syncing process, step-by-step:

1. You use iTunes to select which digital media (or *content*, which I discuss in the next section) is sent to your Apple TV.
2. The selected media is sent over a wired/wireless network connection by your Mac or PC to your Apple TV (a process called *streaming*).
3. Your Apple TV stores the content on its local hard drive.
4. You select what you want to play or view by using your Apple Remote and the Apple TV onscreen menu system.
5. The content is sent directly from your Apple TV through a hard-wired connection to your TV or A/V receiver.

Now, of course, your Apple TV does additional stuff and much more that you need to know about it . . . but essentially, that's the primary task for your new silver plastic sandwich protector!



**Figure 1-2:**  
The life  
cycle of an  
Apple TV.

## The Content Connection

So what exactly is this *content* I keep yammering about? Well, virtually any digital media you collect on your PC or Mac over the years can be enjoyed across your home or office. Content can include

- ✓ **Digital photographs** from your digital camera, scanner, or the Web
- ✓ **Music** ripped from your audio CDs or downloaded from the Web
- ✓ **Full-length movies** you buy from the iTunes Store, convert from DVDs, or download from the Web
- ✓ **Podcasts** downloaded from the iTunes Store
- ✓ **Audiobooks** downloaded from the iTunes Store

- ✓ **Movie trailers** downloaded automatically (by your Apple TV) from the Apple Web site
- ✓ **YouTube videos** downloaded from the YouTube Web site
- ✓ **Music videos** downloaded from the iTunes Store or the Web

Sure, you've been enjoying this stuff for years on your computer — perhaps you've invested in a widescreen computer monitor for your video or a great set of multimedia computer speakers for your music. Ah, but that's also the rub: In order to enjoy your stuff, you've been tied to your computer or your iPod, while that incredible 42-inch plasma big-screen TV and surround sound audio system in your living room have been sitting idle and helpless!



No matter what type of media you've been collecting on your computer, it's all sent wirelessly in the same manner — naturally, a 3MB MP3 song takes far less time to stream than a 1GB movie file, but they both travel through the same Content Connection. Your Apple TV works automatically in the background, synchronizing the stuff you want to watch and listen to between your Mac or PC and that local storage in your living room or conference room.

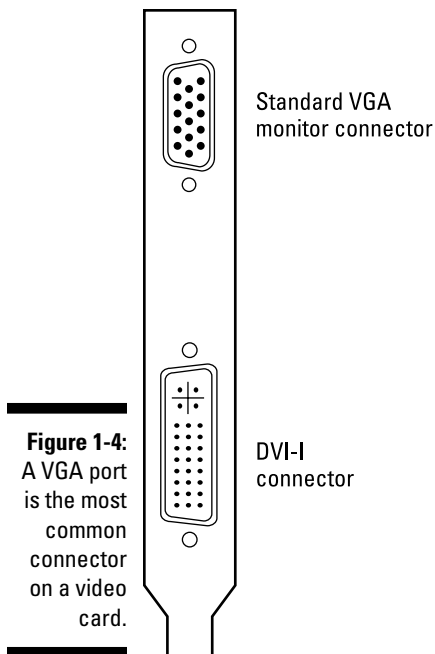
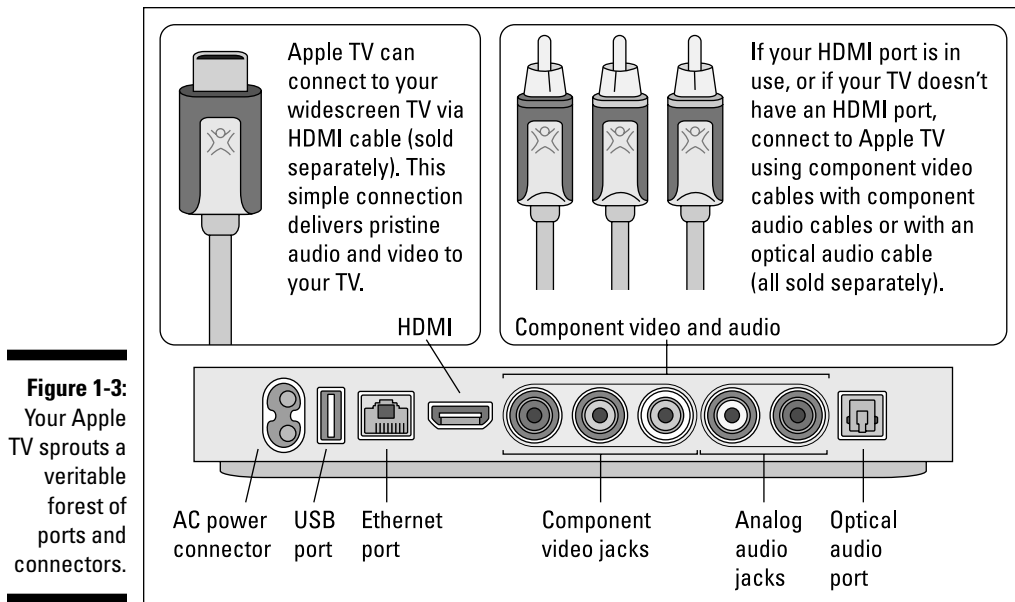
In upcoming chapters, I show you how to buy content from the iTunes Store, as well as how to download and convert content from the Web, and how to create your own content with Mac applications and PC programs.

## *The Major Stuff Sprouting from the Box*

Ready for the grand tour? It's time to identify and explain the components that make up the Apple TV. Figure 1-3 illustrates the connectors along the back of the unit.

Most of us are used to one of two different kinds of computer video connectors, both of which are shown in Figure 1-4 (as they appear on a PC video adapter card):

- ✓ **The analog VGA (Video Graphics Array) port:** The cable from a traditional analog CRT monitor — those clunky monitors that remind you of an old-style heavy TV set — was plugged into this port.
- ✓ **A speedy digital DVI-I (Digital Video Interface-Integrated) connector:** For use with the latest flat panel LCD computer monitors. (Many Mac and PC owners also use a DVI-I to HDMI adapter cable to display graphics on their televisions.)



Your Apple TV is designed for use with televisions; however, you find different ports in play. In this section, I describe each port, moving from left to right along the back of your Apple TV. I describe most of these connectors in detail in Chapter 7 — for now, I provide just an introduction.

## *The AC power connector*

Of course, your Apple TV needs power to do its job, and the cable from a nearby AC plug connects here. Apple provides the power cord with the unit . . . and no, there's no ugly-looking transformer brick because the unit has internal power hardware.

## *The USB port*

You're probably already familiar with USB peripherals, and your Apple TV sports a USB 2.0 port for software upgrades and servicing. (At the time of this writing, there's no support for connecting any external peripherals to your unit's USB port; however, that could certainly change in the future if additional functionality is added to your Apple TV's firmware.)

## *The Ethernet port*

"Wait just a doggone minute, Mark — I thought you said that my Apple TV uses a wireless connection to my computer!" Indeed I did, good reader, but what if your PC or Mac doesn't have wireless hardware installed? You can either install a wireless network card, or you can run a standard 10/100BASE-T Ethernet cable from your Ethernet switch or router to your Apple TV. Kudos to Apple for providing both wired and wireless connectivity for the Apple TV.



As you might imagine, a wireless Ethernet connection is far more convenient than running Ethernet cabling from your office or computer room to your TV. However, many houses these days are wired already for Ethernet hardware in every room, and most offices have been Ethernet-ready for years. Plus, there's one very important advantage to making a wired network connection to your Apple TV: You get faster transfer speeds than most wireless connections can provide, with no worries about distance from your computer/wireless base station and no interference from sources, like your microwave oven or wireless phone.

## *The HDMI port*

Oh, yes . . . if you're familiar with today's latest home entertainment hardware, you already know this puppy. Virtually all high-definition TVs and A/V receivers have an *HDMI port*, which carries both the video and audio signals to today's state-of-the-art home entertainment components.



Always use an HDMI connection to your Apple TV whenever possible.

'Nuff said — at least until Chapter 7.

## *The component video jacks*

If your TV or A/V receiver doesn't have HDMI, you still can connect your Apple TV by using the component video connectors (sometimes called *RGB*, for the red/green/blue colors used to identify each signal). Although a component video signal doesn't offer quite the quality of an HDMI connection, most of us are hard-pressed to tell the difference.

## *The analog audio jacks*

Most folks call these old favorites *RCA stereo* jacks — one cable for the left channel, one for the right. Analog audio is truly a common denominator, offered on just about anything from your super-powerful A/V receiver to your family's \$50 boombox.

## *The optical audio port*

Today's best audio systems rely on optical audio cabling — actually fiber optic — to transmit Dolby Surround and Dolby Digital signals between your A/V receiver (or your Apple TV) and your high-end sound system. This cable is often called a TOSLINK cable.

The front of your Apple TV is considerably less crowded: You find the I/R sensor for the Apple Remote as well as a power indicator/status light.

## *What's Inside the Box, Anyway?*

It's a mystery. No one knows.

Sorry, I couldn't resist. Here's the real skinny on the major components inside your Apple TV's svelte exterior.

### *The hard drive*

Your Apple TV stores the content that it receives from your computer on its own internal hard drive so that your photos, video, and audio are ready on demand. At the time of this writing, the Apple TV's hard drive stores about 40GB, which is about 50 hours of video or 9,000 songs stuffed into that little box.

### *The Intel CPU*

Yep, Intel is inside your Apple TV. Like the latest Macs, the Apple TV unit has its own processor for handling your content requests, as well as overseeing the streaming and syncing between the unit and your computer.

### *The wireless hardware*

Your Apple TV includes the same 802.11n super-fast wireless hardware that's used in today's Macs so that it can join just about any wireless network you set up.

## *And Here's Your Apple Remote*

If you're an owner of a recent Mac computer, you've likely been introduced already to the unique Apple Remote. Like the Front Row menu software that allows you to control your Mac from several feet away, the Apple TV unit has a menu system that you use with the Apple Remote.

I discuss the Apple Remote in detail in Chapter 9 — for now, just avoid getting it mixed up with a pack of gum (or a first-generation iPod Shuffle).