

# LIVESTREAMING EQUIPMENT

Equipment options to upgrade your livestreaming setup

## WHAT DO I NEED TO GET GOING?

You can livestream with just a smartphone, tablet or computer. However, there are a number of additional pieces of equipment we'd recommend considering that will raise the quality of your broadcast for your online audience.

This resource is split into two sections, 'Smartphone or Tablet' and 'Laptop or Computer' as equipment recommendations differ depending on your streaming setup.

### Will I need to buy lots of new equipment?

Not necessarily. You may only need a few items of camera or audio equipment and it could be that you or somebody in your group already own these and they can be repurposed for use in your livestream setup.

## SMARTPHONE OR TABLET

Livestreaming accessories for your smartphone or tablet device

### Tripod

Cut down on those shaky shots in your livestream with a smartphone or tablet-specific tripod. This is also beneficial if you want to just walk away from the device once you've gone 'live' - so great for solo streamers.

Tabletop and full sized tripods are both available with prices starting at £10.

### Microphone

You can increase the quality of your livestream by connecting an external microphone to your device to give clearer, better quality audio.

Many microphone brands now create specific models for these devices that connect via the headphone socket on your phone or tablet, or via an adapter if you do not have a socket. The microphone itself will clip onto your device or tripod and often comes with a fluffy windshield, which is highly recommended if you're likely to be using this setup outdoors. When buying, do be sure to check that the microphone you choose is compatible with your device.

Prices start from £30

## Lighting

It's possible to buy a small piece of camera lighting equipment made specifically for those filming and streaming with a mobile or tablet device. These are especially good if the subject is relatively close to the camera.

They often come in two styles:

- a 'Ring Light' which is a circular light that evenly distributes light toward the subject
- an LED lighting block, which is a small version of a light you may see on a film set

With both options, the best models will come with fixings to attach the lamp to your device or tripod and with controls to change the intensity of the light.

Prices start at £20

## Device bundle

All the equipment listed above is extremely popular with livestreamers and therefore some retailers sell a 'Smartphone Video Bundle' including a tripod (usually tabletop), microphone and light. This can work out cheaper than buying individually and comes with the advantage that all the elements easily connect together on the tripod.

Prices start at £35

# LAPTOP OR COMPUTER

Livestreaming accessories for your laptop or desktop computer

## USB Microphone

The first thing we'd recommend upgrading in your livestreaming setup (especially when broadcasting music) is your microphone. The inbuilt microphone on a laptop will not do a good job in capturing your voice or instrument and will result in a poor experience for your audience.

The simplest solution is to buy a USB condenser microphone. These sensitive microphones will often come with a tabletop stand and usually a gain/microphone level adjuster on the microphone itself.

Prices start from £30

## USB Webcam

It's likely that your computer will have an inbuilt webcam that you can use for your livestream, however we would recommend adding a second webcam to your setup. The advantages in doing this are:

- You can switch between the two cameras in your broadcast
- The streaming computer can be operated without the person at the computer being seen on screen
- USB webcams are often higher quality than a built in webcam, We'd recommend a model with a resolution of 1080p

Prices for a 1080p webcam start at £20

## Lighting

As well as making use of natural and standard electric lighting it may be worth also using some specialist camera lighting.

There are plenty of variables with small ring lights and LED lights (see Smartphone and Tablet section) that are aimed at smartphone streamers being an option if your subject is fairly close to the camera(s). Or for a bigger setup there are pop-up lighting rigs aimed at videographers which could light a small group. Please note if you are using larger pieces of lighting equipment, these will need mains power and come with extra health and safety risks (trip hazards, fire risks etc).

Prices start at £20 for small ring lights

Prices start at £90 for budget studio lighting

## Audio interface

Another option to increase your audio quality is to use an audio interface. This is a unit that enables you to plug professional microphones directly into it and then connect to your computer via USB or Firewire cables.

Although usually associated with recording music, most audio interfaces can also be used for livestreaming.

This option is perfect if you already have microphones or sound equipment for live use and wish to use those in your livestream. Depending on the model you use, a single microphone can be plugged directly into the audio interface, several microphones could be plugged in simultaneously or you could connect your interface up to a larger mixing desk that's running the sound if streaming from a music venue.

There are lots of models, so when selecting consider:

- How many inputs do I need?  
This is how many simultaneous microphones or inputs you can plug in
- What input sockets do I need?  
Commonly XLR for microphones and 1/4 inch jacks for a cable from a mixing desk
- Do I need phantom power?  
If you are using a condenser microphone, your audio interface will need to generate phantom power which is +48v of power sent to the microphone via the XLR cable

Lots of musicians and composers use audio interfaces to record music at home, so it's always worth checking to see if anyone in your group has one for you to try with your setup before committing to buy one.

Prices start at £40 for a single input model (with phantom power and the option to use either a XLR or 1/4inch input cable)

## What is phantom power?

Some microphones require a small amount of power for them to work, this is very common with condenser microphones often associated with studio recording that you may wish to use within your livestreaming setup.

The +48v of power is delivered via your microphone's XLR cable and you will need to use an audio interface with a phantom power feature. In most cases this involves a small switch on the interface with the phrase 'Phantom Power' or '+48v' which you will need to switch on when using that microphone.

In the case that you're using a USB microphone there's no need to worry about phantom power as any necessary power will automatically be delivered via USB cable and you will not need to use an audio interface.

## Games capture card (or video capture card)

It may be the case that you have a high quality digital video camera, which is likely to be better quality than a webcam, you can add this into your setup by using a Games Capture Card, named as such because they're popular with those who stream themselves playing computer games online.

The device connects to your computer via USB and connects to your camera via an HDMI cable, and when plugged in and with your camera switched on, your camera will appear as if it is a webcam within your computer for use with your streaming software or platform of choice.

For this to work:

- The camera you wish to use should have a 'clean HDMI output', meaning that any information that you see in the camera's viewfinder (battery power remaining etc) is removed from the feed, so we only see the shot
- Your computer will need to be relatively powerful to receive the high-quality footage whilst simultaneously livestreaming

A Games Capture Card can be the most expensive upgrade for your system, so if possible see if you can borrow one to try before you buy to see if your computer setup can stably stream with this addition.

Prices start at £135



Visit [www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources](http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resources)  
for more support and advice