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Universal Remotes: Some Things to Consider

By Bear Cahill

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We probably all have about 8 "universal" remotes these days. Every new component you buy comes w/ one, but none of them are really "universal" because there's always some feature on one device that the other remotes don't have a button for. But wdn't it be nice to really be able to use one remote for all your devices? I do!

There are so many different universals on the market these days that it's impossible to go over them all here. So I'll hit the high points and let you decide. I'll pick a few popular types/models and go over a few points that helped me decided for or against them.

One thing you need to understand is what a 'learning' remote is. That means that you can set the remote to learn other remotes' signals: you set it to be ready, aim another remote at it, press a button on that remote and the learning remote stores that signal.

Now whatever button you set up on the learning remote sends that same signal. This way even if your univeral remote doesn't have a 'Eject' button, it can send that signal.

All of the remotes listed here are learning b/c that's the only way to be truly universal.

Most universal remotes these days also allow you to run macros. That way when you want to watch a movie, w/ just a couple button clicks, you can have it turn the TV on, the stereo to DVD player, etc.

Also, the usually have timers so you can turn the TV on and off while you're out of town for example.

Big LCD: Sony RM-AV3000

This remote was the 'big boy' on the block for a long time. It does it all and looks cool doing it. The two main draw backs to this model are size and buttons.

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Because it's so big, it's hard to use w/ one hand – you can't reach across the remote to press some buttons or parts of the LCD. Next time you're watching TV, see how often you just use one hand on the remote and think about giving that up.

This model used to be pretty expensive, but it's getting better.

Internet: Harmony SST-659

I haven't actually tried this one, but I get the idea and I like it. You can program this remote to work w/ your devices and upload the configuration. That way others can use it. More directly, you can use other peoples' configurations!

The point of this one is ease of use so I'm assuming it wd be relatively straight forward to hook it up

and program it. Maybe a little intimidating, but I bet most people cd do it and it wd be worth it.

I'd say the main drawback here is price. Once it's setup, you probably wdn't need to go online w/ it again for months (until you bought a new component to control) so the hassle is limited.

Finally, setting up any universal remote is going to involve some learning and this one is probably worth it as much or more than the others if you're willing to spend the money.

Basic: Sony RM-VL1000

This is the remote I have and I love it. It's learning so it's really universal. It's the right size, weight and shape for either hand. It's got all the normal buttons w/o being too crowded, but also 4 buttons beside the LCD. You can program these buttons to be whatever you want and lable them what you want too. You can scroll thru 3 "screens" for these buttons so each component can actually have 12 buttons programmed in the LCD buttons.

It's preprogrammed w/ most common components and those settings use the LCD buttons when necessary, but you can change any buttons programming as you wish.

It can control up to 12 components which is plenty for most people, but you can have the volume set to always control the same device. I have my volume buttons always control the stereo even if the rest of the buttons are working the TiVo. Similarly, I have my power button set for my TV even when I'm working the TiVo.

It has a built in 'power off' macro that turns all Sony components off. You can define the rest of the macros yourself and even run them on a timer (I have it set my TiVo to standby every night).

It's a bit of a pain to setup, but once it's done you're set and it's so worth it.

And it's so cheap!

Summary

Take all things into consideration when shopping for a universal remote: is it learning, macros, timer, size, shape, weight, cost, buttons, setup, etc. What's important to you?

Recommendation

If you're willing to spend the money, I wd get the Harmony. Otherwise, I wd get the Sony VL1000 – it's (probably) harder to setup, but so much cheaper and a great remote.

Bear Cahill runs: The Armchair Geek (www.thearmchairgeek.com), Webpage Hosting Info (www.webpagehostinginfo.com), Go To College Online (www.gotocollegeonline.com) and The Video Exchange Community (www.videoexchange.org)

Universal kitesurfing hand signals

By Jakob Jelling

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Even though kitesurfing is a dangerous sport, it is popular around the world. People from different countries travel around the world to different kitesurfing locations. That is the reason why universal kitesurfing hand signals are very important. Universal kitesurfing hand signals will help you to communicate with other kitesurfers even if you speak different languages. You will especially need to know universal kitesurfing hand signals for safety reasons: letting people around you know that you are in distress and that you need help.

There are many different universal kitesurfing hand signals and we will talk about some of the most important ones. If you need help, for example, the proper one of the universal kitesurfing hand signals is to wave both of your arms in the air. Also, if you need help and you are down in the water or your lines are down, you will need to whistle to signal boats or kitesurfers moving toward you. Another one of the universal kitesurfing hand signals you will need to use is you want help with landing. You will need to tap flat hand on your helmet. People on shore will need to wave both hands to indicate that they will help.

There are two universal kitesurfing hand signals to tell people to look at something. If you want other people to look at you, you will need to point two finger of one of your hands at your eyes. If you want other people to look in some specific direction, you will need to point a straight arm in this direction. Yes and No signals are very simple. To say "Yes", you will need to nod your head up and down. To say "No", you will need to move your head left and right.

When you are launching, you will need to show thumbs up (or head nod) to people around you and loudly say 'launch'. Another one of the important universal kitesurfing hand signals is the get ready to launch signal. You will need to put your arm above your head. Your arm should not be straight, but it should also be some distance above your head or helmet.

Jakob Jelling is the founder of <http://www.kitesurfingnow.com>. Visit his kitesite for the latest on kitesurfing equipment, kiteboarding lessons, places to surf and much more!



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