
Universal IR-Remotes - OneForAll

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A home theaterphile's guide to universal remotes.

Most audio/video buffs would agree that the most frustrating thing about having a home theater is the loss of coffee-table space. Magazines have been replaced by numerous remotes to control receivers, televisions, DVRs, DVD players, even air conditioners. On occasion, one of these remotes might be able to control multiple components, but it's rare that a single remote will be compatible with every component in your system. Hence the market for universal remotes. We've all seen them, either on the racks at electronics stores for \$30 or reviewed here, retailing in the neighborhood of \$700. However, many of us are hesitant to spend more on a remote than on a DVD player. But don't panic. Those \$30 remotes may be just the thing you and your coffee table are looking for. Some of them are easy enough to use that any non-buffs in your household won't have to go back to school for their electrical-engineering degrees.

JP1 upgradeable.

One For All URC 8910 - Manufacturer's Description

This One For All A/V LCD 8-Device With Learning Universal Remote Control (URC-8910) is a high-performance universal remote control. It is designed to operate up to eight home entertainment devices, including TV, video, and audio components. This remote control contains sophisticated technology that will allow you to conveniently consolidate the clutter of all of the original remote controls used in your home entertainment system. It's packed with easy-to-use features such as:

- Advanced Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) with 15 alphanumeric characters, real-time clock, and icons for constant visual feedback of operations and programming sequences
- A unique Home Theater mode that combines different device controls under one mode for operating convenience
- Three macro keys for instant activation of favorite key sequences
- Four learning keys to capture unique functions from your devices' original remote controls
- Key Mover for copying keys from one device to another, or to a different position in the same mode
- Code Search to help you program device codes without using the code list (starting on page 14) or for brands or models not listed
- Favorite Channel Scan for easy channel surfing
- Mode reassignment to control duplicate types of devices
- Volume Lock to assign volume controls to individual devices or to one global device
- Commercial Skip feature allows you to channel surf during commercial interruptions of your favorite programs
- Pre-programmed database with the world's largest and most efficient group of infrared codes insures device compatibility
- A low battery icon to notify you when batteries are getting low
- Back-lighting feature to aid operation in low ambient light

The One For All A/V LCD 8-Device With Learning Universal Remote Control requires four (4) new AAA alkaline batteries (not included) and easy programming to control your devices.

image: <http://cdn.soundandvision.com/images/archivesart/905remotes.2.jpg>

Starting off, the One For All URC 8910 can control eight components, and it includes some nice features. If you add a new piece of equipment to your system, you can access upgrade codes over the phone. So, unlike most computers, the URC 8910 won't go out of date in six months. The URC 8910 also remembers your personalized settings when the batteries run out, and it's those personalized settings that make this remote interesting. In the Home Theater mode, you can operate specific functions on different components without having to use the remote to switch between them. For example, all of the playback controls can handle the DVD player, while the audio controls adjust the receiver, and the channel controls alter the television. This will help keep family members sane, as will the Commercial Skip button. Once you program and enable this feature, you'll be able to switch to another channel while a commercial is on, and the remote will change the channel back after a designated time period. With these functions and the ability to upgrade, this remote packs quite a punch for its price.

Highlights

- Commercials disappear at the touch of a button
- Priced to get you into the game

At A Glance: One For All URC 8910 Universal remote Control

Features

RF or IR: IR

Other connection types: None

Learning or Preprogrammed: Both

Buttons reassignable: Yes

Number of devices controlled: 8

Number of macros: 3

Backlighting: Yes

Batteries: 4 AAA, not included

Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): 9.13 x 2.63 x 2.19

Weight (ounces): 8 (without batteries)

Price: \$35

Ratings: One For all urc 8910 universal remote control

Build Quality: 89

- Sturdy, plastic casing
- Firm button response

Value: 93

- You get plenty of bang for your buck

Features: 92

- Never miss the return of your show while checking the football score during a commercial

Performance: 89

- LCD shows which code is being used
- Limited memory for programming buttons

Ergonomics: 88

- Display can be difficult to read unless you look straight at it

Overall Rating: 90

This is a solid starter remote for someone who does not want to delve deep into the remote world.

General Information

URC 8910 Universal Remote Control, \$35

One For All

www.ofausa.com

image: <http://cdn.soundandvision.com/images/archivesart/905remotes.3.jpg>

RadioShack Kameleon 6-in-1, \$60

RadioShack's Kameleon remote, measuring only 0.69 inches deep, brings a sleek, futuristic look to this group. The entire front of the remote lights up when you touch it. Unlike conventional LCD touchscreens, though, the Kameleon has hard buttons below the face that give tactile and aural confirmation for the finger and ear. Conveniently, the remote only illuminates the controls for the selected component. Like the One For All, you can upgrade this remote with current codes over the phone to keep it up to date. It also has a volume-lock feature that allows you to assign the volume control to one device no matter which mode the remote is in. While the backlit display is attractive and could become conversation fodder at your next dinner party, it is very sensitive and sometimes lights up seemingly on its own. Nonetheless, the Kameleon combines the smooth looks of an LCD display with the sensitivity of hard buttons.

Highlights

- Futuristic, mesmerizing backlit display
- Super-sleek, lightweight design

At A Glance: RadioShack Kameleon 6-in-1 Universal Remote Control

Ratings: RadioShack Kameleon 6-in-1 Universal Remote Control

Build Quality: 91

- Aluminum case gives it a different feel from other remotes
- Screwdriver required to access the battery compartment

Value: 92

- Over-the-phone upgrading keeps the remote on your coffee table for more years

Features: 89

- No more switching between components to change the volume

Performance: 90

- Can be difficult to differentiate between buttons without looking at the screen

Ergonomics: 94

- Ultra-thin feel takes some getting used to but is worth it
- Beautiful, bright display

Overall Rating: 91

The Kameleon is slightly limited in the features department, with most of the money going to the stylish look.

General Information

Kameleon 6-in-1 Universal Remote Control, \$60

RadioShack

(800) 442-7221

www.radioshack.com

Dealer Locator Code RSK

Read more at <http://www.soundandvision.com/content/universal-remote-roundup#eua5q1cAdpOBmwIA.99>

Universal Remote Control, Inc. URC-100 Unifier, \$100

The URC-100 Unifier, Universal Remote Control, Inc.'s entry-level offering, can control eight separate components. To help with setup, it comes with a DVD tutorial that shows you exactly how to get the remote up and running. A wonderful addition to the tutorial is a section that shows some of the advanced possibilities, such as the option of setting up macros or changing device names in the display. Perhaps the most intriguing facet of this remote is its expandability. For another \$75, you can add the MRF-100 Expander RF receiver, which will pick up the remote's RF signals from a distance of 50 to 100 feet. The Expander sits inside your component cabinet and converts the RF signal it receives into an IR signal. The six included flashers then transmit the IR signal. It's a great way to control the stereo if you are sitting outside barbequing and listening to music, or even if you have furniture blocking the IR signal. The MRF-100 is compatible with the other remotes that URC, Inc. has to offer, as well, which allows your remote-control possibilities to grow with your system.

Highlights

- With its RF signal, you can control the stereo from the backyard
- Setup DVD for users who are afraid of manuals

At A Glance: Universal Remote Control, Inc. URC-100 Unifier Universal Remote Control

Features

RF or IR: Both

Other connection types: None

Learning or Preprogrammed: Both

Buttons reassignable: Yes

Number of devices controlled: 8

Number of macros: 24

Backlighting: Yes

Batteries: 4 AAA, included

Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): 8.5 x 2.5 x 1

Weight (ounces): 8 (with batteries)

Price: \$100

Ratings: Universal Remote Control, Inc. URC-100 Unifier Universal Remote Control

Build Quality: 93

- Highly durable buttons keep their click
- Feels sturdy in the hand

Value: 93

- The expandability of this remote makes it worth the price
- Includes batteries

Features: 96

- Both IR and RF signals offer usage flexibility
- Setup DVD covers loads of options

Performance: 95

- Provides a strong signal
- Quick, (relatively) painless setup

Ergonomics: 92

- Fits well into either hand
- Intuitive button placement

Overall Rating: 94

Universal Remote Control, Inc. knows what they are doing and shows it with this offering to the remote world. Plenty of features, a plethora of customization options, and loads of expansion make it worth the price.

General Information

URC-100 Unifier Universal Remote Control, \$100
Universal Remote Control, Inc.
(914) 835-4484
www.universalremote.com
Dealer Locator Code UNV

image: <http://cdn.soundandvision.com/images/archivesart/905remotes.6.jpg>

Sony RM-AV2500, \$150

At the upper end of our list is Sony's RM-AV2500 Integrated Remote Commander. This is the perfect remote for someone who has always wanted to pilot the Starship Enterprise. (A word of caution: At approximately 7 by 4.5 by 1.5 inches, some non-enthusiasts might be intimidated by this remote's size. It is more of a lap or table-top remote than it is a handheld one.) The top third of the remote is a touch-sensitive LCD screen that contains the majority of the buttons, while the lower section has hard buttons for the most-used controls (volume, channel, and navigation), as well as twelve component-selection buttons. It even has a designated button for a MiniDisc player, along with two extra buttons for whatever components you like. You can use the enclosed component codes to hook up, say, a DAT machine, or maybe even dig the Betamax out of the attic. You can teach the remote commands from an old remote using the Learn function, which is easy to accomplish, but can be time consuming.

Sony says that the RM-AV2500 is preset at the factory to operate Sony-brand components and should be useable out of the box to control all Sony A/V components. After I tested it, I found that this is not necessarily true. When I used the presets on a few different components, I found that the Sony STR-K840P and STR-K850P A/V receivers did not respond to the remote, and the supplied Sony codes did not rectify the matter. If this is your situation, be prepared to program your remote one function at a time.

That being said, once everything is set up, the Integrated Remote Commander lives up to its name. And, with 24 macro control functions, one touch is all you will need.

Highlights

- Enough component-control options for a small country
- Macro-mania

At A Glance: Sony RM-AV2500 Integrated Remote commander

Features

RF or IR: IR

Other connection types: None

Learning or Preprogrammed: Both

Buttons reassignable: Yes

Number of devices controlled: 12

Number of macros: 24

Backlighting: Yes

Batteries: 4 AA, not included

Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): 7 x 4.5 x 1.5

Weight (ounces): 12.35 (without batteries)

Price: \$150

Ratings: Sony RM-AV2500 Integrated remote commander

Build Quality: 93

- Solid construction
- Hard buttons are not all illuminated

Value: 87

- Includes a good number of features
- Doesn't control all Sony products, as advertised, which makes the price questionable

Features: 94

- Buttons to control any remote device in your house
- An enormous wealth of macros

Performance: 88

- Did not control all Sony components out of the box
- Touch buttons sometimes do not respond

Ergonomics: 88

- Its large size can be an acquired taste
- Hard buttons are easy to find and identify in the dark

Overall Rating: 89

While the RM-AV2500 has loads of options, its size and lack of compatibility might make you hesitate. If you get by that, this remote can last you many years.

General Information

RM-AV2500 Integrated Remote Commander, \$150

Sony Electronics Inc.

(800) 865-SONY

www.sonystyle.com

Dealer Locator Code SNY

So Long, and Thanks for All the Remotes. . .

There are plenty of possibilities out there—the trick is filling your own personal needs. In an ideal situation, check out a friend's remote, and see how you like it. Whatever your decision, the idea of a universal remote is to make the viewing experience more enjoyable and accessible for you and your family, so make sure they like it, too.

image: <http://cdn.soundandvision.com/images/archivesart/905remotes.7.jpg>

Logitech Harmony 676 Universal Remote Control, \$200

For those of you who want to step up to the next level, there is the Logitech Harmony 676. It includes everything you need to get started, even the batteries, and setup is relatively painless. Just pop in the installation CD (PC or Mac), hook the remote up to your computer with the supplied USB cable, and log on to Logitech's Website.

The online walk-through is straightforward and allows you to customize the remote functions (including button-response speed) as you go along and, later, to update the remote with the latest firmware release. Plus, when you go out and buy a new piece of gear, you can just hook the remote back up and change your settings online.

Perhaps the two most impressive aspects of this remote are the intuitive nature of the button placement and the built-in macros. If you have family members or roommates who don't want lengthy instructions on how to use the remote, the macro buttons are perfect.

They're color-coded and have pictures for the assigned task. As an added cosmetic bonus, the remote comes with two extra faceplates, so you can have a red, blue, or silver remote depending on your mood. While the Harmony 676 is expensive, its customization and ease of use make it worth the price.

Logitech

(800) 231-7717

www.logitech.com

Harmony 1000: The Power User's Universal Remote \$300

The essential center of your entertainment system. Say "Goodbye" to the wasted time and endless frustration of multiple remotes controlling multiple devices, and say hello to one single, easy-to-use device with a cool new shape. The Harmony 1000 remote control, with its engaging and logical interface, simplifies even the most complex programming functions. Logitech's patented Smart State technology® makes it possible to seamlessly control up to 15 separate components with just one touch. Programming your HDTV? The Harmony 1000's color display makes it easy to control even the aspect ratio and sound modes. And, you can do it all without direct line-of-sight, since the Harmony sends both infrared (IR) and radio frequency (RF).

1. Easy to set up:

Just connect your Harmony remote to your computer and the Web wizard walks you step-by-step through a simple set up. Enter in your model numbers for your components, then answer a few easy questions about how you "Watch TV" or "Watch a DVD" You'll be controlling even the most complex system without any of the hassles of elaborate macro-programming.

2. Easy to use:

The Harmony Remote is the world's only remote with Smart State Technology® activity control. Just press one of the Activity buttons, such as "Watch TV" or "Listen to Music," and your Harmony Remote automatically sets up your entertainment system, without you ever having to program a "macro."

3. Easy to get help:

With the Harmony remote, you don't have to know anything about your entertainment system to operate it. No sound? No picture? No problem! There's even a handy "HELP" button to guide you through simple troubleshooting and get you back in control.

4. Never out of date:

The Harmony Remote device database is constantly updated with new components and fine-tuned settings. Simply connect it to your computer using its USB interface, and your remote is updated automatically!

See It For Yourself

Take a product tour [Flash]

Learn how easy it is to get a Harmony remote to work with devices that make up your home entertainment system. By selecting this link, you can take a product tour of the device's capabilities, as well as seeing just how easy it is to set up the Harmony 1000 for your particular home system.

Features

One-touch activity controls

Simply touch one icon and the Harmony remote will power on all the necessary components.

Easy-to-use 3.5" touch screen

Large, color icons and backlit buttons ensure an entirely new level of ease and functionality.

Computer-based set-up

Simply connect the Harmony 1000 to your computer, and the wizard guides you through the entire set-up process.

Rechargeable

No need to worry about power with the rechargeable Lithium-ion battery. The handy recharging stand ensures that the unit is always powered up and easy to find.

World's largest A/V control database

Your Harmony 1000 will control everything from HDTVs to PVR/DVRs, from laser discs to VCRs—even lighting controls! Logitech's online database now includes 4500+ brands and 150,000+ IR devices — and the list is growing every day.

Control of devices through cabinets, walls, and floors

With a wireless range of 100 feet, the Harmony RF Wireless Extender (sold separately) allows control of devices without a line of sight.

Get the Logitech Harmony Adapter for PLAYSTATION 3. Finally, control movies on your PS3 — drama free.

Wish you could control all your movies, music, games and entertainment gear — including your PLAYSTATION 3 — with one remote? Wish granted.

Add one touch PS3 control to any Harmony remote with the new Logitech Harmony Adapter for PLAYSTATION 3. Now your entire entertainment system and every PS3 command is at your fingertips. Want to watch a DVD or Blue-ray Disc movie? Play a game? Turn the console on or off? Easy. Just press one button on the remote to experience instant entertainment gratification.

Logitech
(800) 231-7717
www.logitech.com

Read more at <http://www.soundandvision.com/content/universal-remote-roundup-page-2#EeerUgvT9YryJ9zk.99>

Logitech Harmony RF Wireless Extender
Logitech Harmony RF Wireless Extender...

Product Description

Gain complete control of components that are hidden behind cabinets or walls. With a range of up to 100 feet, you can place your equipment out of sight, or even move it to the next room. Designed for use with the Logitech® Harmony® 1000 or 890 Advanced Universal Remotes, Z-Wave (RF) Technology enables remote control of audio, visual, lighting, climate, and security systems without direct line-of-sight. Use additional receivers to control multiple entertainment systems.

According to the Logitech/harmony website:

The Harmony RF Wireless Extender is compatible with the following Harmony remote models:

Harmony 890

Harmony 895

Harmony 890 Pro

Harmony 1000

Harmony 1100

The Harmony RF Wireless Extender is not compatible with the Harmony 900 or any other Harmony model not listed above.

Mouse over image to zoom

Have one to sell? Sell now

IR MINI-BLASTER/SHELF EMITTER RECEIVER - (Harmony 900)

5.0 out of 5 starsworks extremely well on both Mac and PC setup - using latest firmware

By Paul Christensen VINE VOICE on January 6, 2007

Verified Purchase

The Logitech Harmony RF Wireless Extender allows your RF-equipped Harmony Remote (the 890, 895 or new 1000) to control components without having an IR "line of sight" to the components. One RF Wireless Extender is included with the Harmony 890, but it is unfortunately not included with the Harmony 1000.

Make no mistake, this device is an absolute REQUIREMENT for any large room or complex setup. In my configuration, the Harmony 1000 didn't have the strength to power all of my components through IR from 20 feet distance. The RF extender solved this problem, and now I can control my entire setup even from another room.

One RF Wireless Extender can control up to 8 components within the line of sight of the unit, or within line of sight of the 8 included IR emitters. You can add multiple extenders to your configuration if you have components in different rooms or areas that could not be served by one unit. Annoyingly, even if you have more than 8 components within the reach of the unit or the emitters the Harmony software won't let you assign more than 8 devices to a single extender.

IMPORTANT: You should try to setup and verify your Harmony configuration using IR-only if possible before adding the extender, even if you have to sit near your components or have cabinet doors open. This is because the Harmony software makes you connect and disconnect both the extender (which must be unplugged from AC power) and the remote each time you make a change. Setting up the Harmony first, by itself, with IR is much easier to make changes to the configuration.

After verifying I could control my components using IR-only, I added the RF Wireless Extender to my setup.[Read more >](#)

45 of 48 people found the following review helpful
3.0 out of 5 starsNeeds hardware change

By Full Score on July 10, 2007

Verified Purchase

Works well with both the Harmony 890 and 1000. Fairly easy to set up, though there are two HUGE drawbacks which Logitech should fix.

1. They have hard-wired the cable to the Extender so that you have to unplug the unit whenever you want to upgrade the settings - a royal pain when it's plugged in behind your components.
2. Even if you want to make a tiny change to the Harmony settings (e.g. changing a couple of icons) you have to update BOTH the Harmony and the Extender. This takes much longer and, because it's hard-wired, is very annoying.

Comment Was this review helpful to you? YesNo Report abuse

34 of 37 people found the following review helpful
5.0 out of 5 starsRF Extender Works and Can Save You Money

By Earth Spirit TOP 1000 REVIEWER on January 29, 2007

Verified Purchase

I really like this RF Extender. I've used it on the H890 remote as well as the new H1000 remote. All I can say is that it really works. You do have to hook it up to your computer and program it separately from your remote. It has its own firmware. It's easy to do though. I haven't encountered any problems yet setting one up. I'm a professional A/V designer and installer. This is the new way to go. I've installed many hardwired remote IR systems in the past by Xantech and Russound. Those systems cost upwards of \$125 on there own. Why not pay a little more and get a great universal remote to boot (H890 for around \$250). It comes with a power adapter and IR blasters that plug into this unit then stick on the components you want to control. You can use a flashlight to shine on the face of those source components to help you in locating the IR receiver windows on your cable box/receiver/DVD player etc. (look for a round hole or LED shaped device) Anyways, this is a great product in my opinion.

Update, I will have to say this. I wish they made the transformer have a connector at the Extender instead of hardwiring it in. I do not like having to reach thru many wires in different A/V racks to pull out the transformer and then plug it back in every time the remote gets updated. It would be far easier to unplug the ir emitters and a power jack all at the same location!

1 Comment Was this review helpful to you? YesNo Report abuse

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful
5.0 out of 5 starsShortcomings are being corrected - on some units

By Steve on January 22, 2008

Verified Purchase

I was a little cautious when deciding to purchase the 890, which comes with the RF Extender as a package, based on several of the reviews which indicated how difficult it was to disconnect the extender once set up to reprogram. The IR modules and power cord wires now have connectors to the base unit so disconnecting is now a snap. Earlier reviews implied this was not the case, so appears Logitech has been listening!

As has been mentioned in many places, documentation is pretty much worthless. For a novice, it isn't clear, for example, that you can plug in the IR remotes and attach them to any component without additional programming. The RF

Extender simply transmits the same signals to all IR devices at the same time - duh!

I had to fumble a bit to get the 890 to talk to the RF extender - again, a little documentation would have been helpful here as the 890 display scripts weren't much help in this step. I didn't quite come to the point of calling tech support, but came close.

Finally, while the RF Extender can support up to 8 devices, it does so with four pairs of IR remotes. There are two IR modules attached to the end of the wire. You can split these about two feet apart. I haven't seen any issue with how well they attach. The glue seemed pretty strong - especially if you use the one inch square mounting pads. The only problem I had was accidentally running one wire over my CD player tray. I had to remove the wire and come down from the top of the player. Removing the IR pad was not easy, so doubt they would come detached on their own.

Now the best part. Once it was connected and talking to the 890, it works flawlessly! [Read more >](#)