

## **WHY WIDE SCREEN VERSES SQUARE?**

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...A little back story:

The current aspect ratio used for television was originally developed by W.K.L. Dickson in 1889 in Thomas Edison's laboratories. Dickson was using film that was 1" wide with frames 3/4" high in his experiments with a motion-picture camera called the Kinescope. This film size, and therefore the aspect ratio (4:3), became the standard for the film and motion-picture industry. In 1941, when the NTSC proposed standards for TV broadcasting, they adopted the standard of the film industry. Why would they reinvent the wheel?

“This film has been modified from its original version.  
It has been formatted to fit your screen.”

Recognize that message? In the 1950's, film studios worried about competition from TV and searched for something they could offer that TV couldn't. They came up with the wide screen format. Wider screens, such as Cinerama, Cinemascope, and Vista Vision, gave the theater audience more of a feeling that they were actually in the movie.

It's a simple but good idea. So good that DTV and HDTV are going to use it too. Coincidentally, wide screen is formatted much closer to the way we actually see. Our field of vision is rectangular, not square. So, when we view movies in wide screen format, the image fills our entire field of vision and has a much more powerful impact. (The average of the wide screen formats seen in the theater is about 16 x 9, so that's the ratio chosen for HDTV.)

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(I would like to thank Robert Cringely for his contribution to this article.)