



Nielsen “Sweeps” Months

Nielsen’s national sample, composed of a cross-section of representative homes throughout the United States, captures the TV viewing information that provides a basis for program scheduling and advertising decisions for local television stations, cable systems, and advertisers.

Electronic metering technology is the heart of the Nielsen TV ratings process. In the top 56 TV markets, Nielsen uses two types of meters to capture how TV is used: set meters capture set-tuning only and report what channel is being tuned, while People Meters go a step further and gather information about who is watching in addition to what channel is being tuned. Paper diaries are used in the remaining television markets to collect viewing information from Nielsen’s sample homes. Each year Nielsen processes approximately 2 million paper diaries from households across the country for the months of November, February, May and July — also known as the “**sweeps**” rating periods. Seven-day diaries (or eight-day diaries in homes with DVRs) are mailed to homes to keep a tally of what is watched on each television set and by whom. Over the course of a sweeps period, diaries are mailed to a new panel of homes each week. At the end of the month, all of the viewing data from the individual weeks is aggregated.

Sweeps Dates for the 2011/2012 Television Season:

Sweep Month	Measurement Period
November 2011	October 27 - November 23
February 2012	February 2 – February 29
May 2012	April 26 - May 23
July 2012	June 28 - July 25