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Nest's Thermostat E has a new design, a cheaper price, and almost all the same features / Designed to be forgettable

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Nest is debuting a new version of its thermostat today, the first truly different model since the product was introduced in 2011. It's called the Nest Thermostat E, and it can do nearly everything the regular Nest Thermostat can do, except it's cheaper and housed in a brand new design — one that's intentionally much, much plainer.

Rather than a glossy metal ring with a big, bright screen in the middle of it, this version of the Nest Thermostat looks a lot more like other, duller thermostats.



Google Nest Thermostat E: The inspiration behind the design.



But that's the point: Nest is trying to make a version of its thermostat with appeal beyond the gadget-loving crowd. It wants this to be a thermostat that you buy and forget about, but still get all the benefits that come with having some built-in intelligence. Namely, a reduced heating bill.

To make the Nest Thermostat E more forgettable, Nest has hidden its display behind a frosted glass that blocks some light from coming through. Rather than a detailed interface, you'll see big, bubbly numbers and notches shine through when you spin the thermostat's ring around to set the temperature.

The Verge

The simplified interface is really nice, although the display itself looks a bit fuzzy. I know it's ridiculous to complain about the sharpness of a thermostat's display (you're going to stare at it for seconds of your life, at most), but between using a low-res 320 x 320 panel and then putting a piece of polarized glass on top to intentionally blur it, what you get is a softness that looks mostly stylized, and just a little bit bad. But again, it's not like you're going to spend a lot of time looking at it.

Like other Nest Thermostats, this new one is connected to the internet and can also be controlled through a smartphone app. The thermostat will also use your phone to tell whether you're home or away, so that it can adjust the temperature accordingly. Nest claims that its thermostats save homeowners between 12 percent and 15 percent on their heating and cooling bills on average each year, which is really the feature it's going to try to sell new customers on.

The only feature that the Thermostat E won't have that Nest's higher-end thermostat has is a feature called "farsight," which lets the thermostat tell when you're across the room and then turn on its display to show you the time or temperature. I have no idea why anyone wanted this feature from a tiny thermostat screen in the first place, so you're really not losing much.

Nest hopes to sell a lot more by making a less techy product

The Thermostat E will also be compatible with fewer heating and cooling systems (mostly higher-end ones, Nest says, like those that include a humidifier), but it's still supposed to be good for 85 percent of homes. The original Nest Thermostat is estimated to work with 95 percent of homes.



Otherwise, all of the traditional Nest Thermostat features are here, including

presence detection and integration with third-party services through Works

with Nest. That includes support for Amazon's Alexa and Google's Assistant, though users of Apple's HomeKit platform are still out of luck.

The new model begins shipping tomorrow and sells for \$169, while the traditional Nest Thermostat will remain on sale for \$249 as a separate product line. In a briefing last week, a Nest representative said the company hopes to sell two to three times as many thermostats over the next four years, and much of that hope seems to rely on the cheaper Thermostat E — which means it's going to have to make boring thermostats seem a lot more interesting.

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