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# Everything we know about the Google Nest Hub Max

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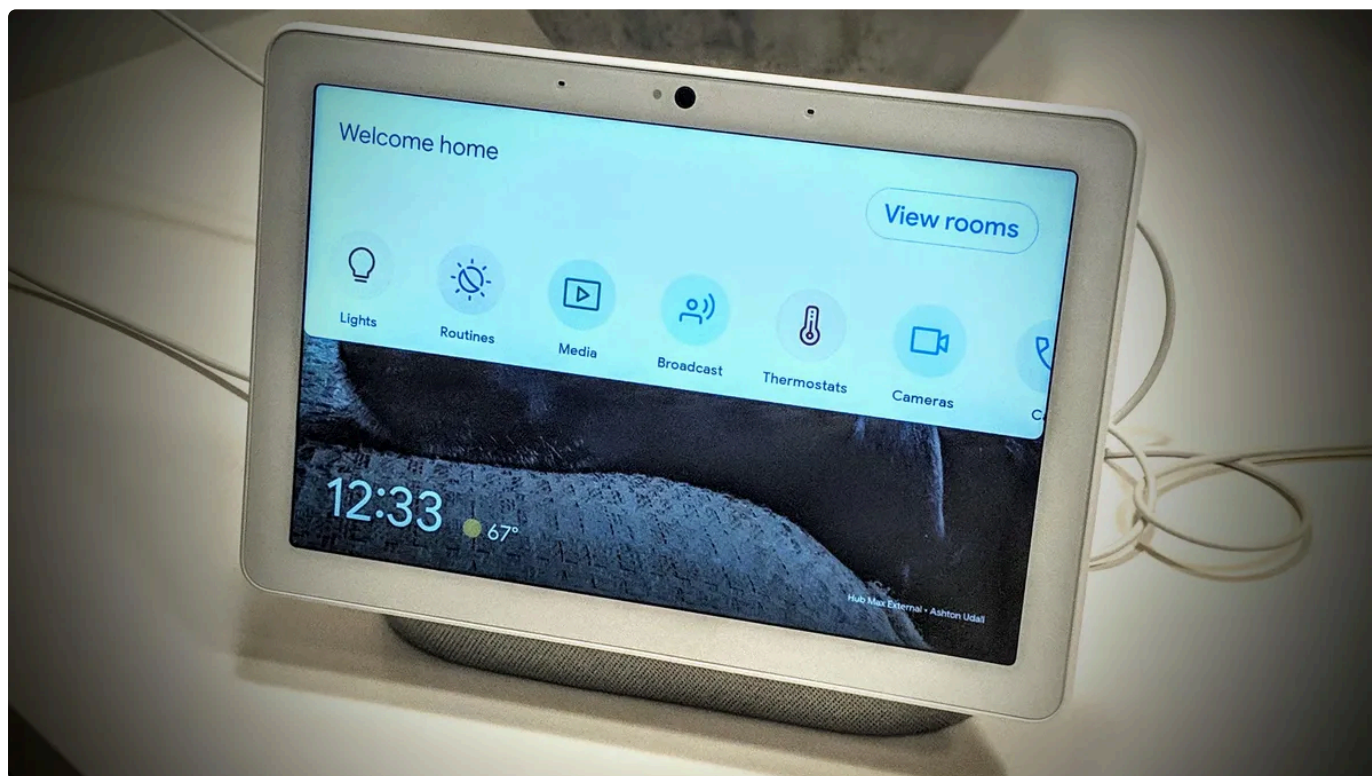
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Google's 10-inch smart display is hitting stores soon. Here's what we know so far.

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5 min read



Juan Garzon/CNET

The [Google Nest Hub Max](#) hits store shelves on Sept. 9. It will cost \$229 (£219, AU\$349) and have a 10-inch touchscreen. In many ways, it will be similar to the [Google Nest Hub](#) -- formerly the Google Home Hub -- only with more features, a bigger screen, a built-in camera and beefier sound quality.

It could be awesome, and we have a good idea what to expect as Google debuted and demoed the device in May at [the company's developer conference](#). As the release date nears, here's everything you need to know about Google's premium [smart display](#).

## The basics

Both the \$229 price and 10-inch display dwarf the comparable numbers of the original Nest Hub (a 7-inch screen for \$130, but it's usually on sale for much less). The Hub Max is looking to be a premium alternative, and the stats match those of the main competition -- the \$230, 10-inch, second-generation [Amazon Echo Show](#).

As with other smart displays, you'll primarily control the Hub Max with voice commands. It uses the same digital assistant (just called [Google Assistant](#)) as the Nest Hub and has the same voice enabled features as smart speakers like the [Google Home Mini](#). You can ask questions, control your [smart home](#) devices, check the weather, play music, make a call, turn on the TV and much more with your voice.

After you give a command, the touchscreen will show extra info when appropriate. Ask about the weather and you'll see the forecast for the week. Search for restaurants in the area and you'll see pics of the place and directions. You can use the screen to make video calls, watch YouTube and pull up a smart-home control panel.

The touchscreen on the Nest Hub is particularly good at walking you through the steps of a recipe and acting as a digital photo frame. It has a light sensor that adapts both the brightness and color warmth of the image to match the room. These features and the well organized smart-home control panel help elevate it above the smart display competition from [Amazon](#). The Nest Hub Max will start from this same strong base and offer a handful of unique extras.

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### The Nest Cam

The Amazon Echo Show has a built-in camera for making video calls while the Nest Hub doesn't. The Nest Hub Max adds a cam with a 127 degree wide-angle lens and uses it to offer a variety of extra features. First, it doubles as a security cam. When you're away, you can have your Nest Hub Max watch for motion and send you alerts via the Nest app if it sees something. If you have a Nest Aware subscription for cloud storage, you can set activity zones and customize notifications based on whether it sees a familiar or a strange face.

# Facial recognition

With facial recognition, the Nest Hub Max can show you personalized reminders when you enter the room.  
Angela Lang/CNET

In addition to Nest's familiar face feature, you can opt into a feature that allows the Nest Hub Max to show notifications and personalize your home screen when you walk in the room. With the feature enabled, you'll see your pictures and calendar on the screen. If it recognizes multiple people in the room, the Nest Hub Max will do its best to combine everyone's info.

Google representatives noted that this feature is meant more for convenience than security. You can't make purchases verified by face match. The Nest Hub Max will also store all facial recognition data locally.

# Gesture controls

With gesture controls, hold up your hand and your video will stop.

Angela Lang/CNET

Most smart speakers and smart displays struggle to hear you over loud music or background noise. The Nest Hub Max will try to solve this problem with basic gesture controls. Look at the camera and hold up your hand to pause whatever is playing. You can make the same gesture to resume your music or video.

During my demo in May, the gesture recognition was easily fooled by a strong backlight, but it did pick up my hand gestures from a variety of angles in normal lighting conditions. The reliability of this feature will be one of the main areas we'll look at once we get our hands on the device for a scored review. It could be quite handy if it's polished.

# Video calls

Like the Echo Show, you'll be able to use the camera to make video calls. The Hub Max will even go one step further by taking a leaf from the [Facebook Portal](#)'s book. During a video call, you can have the camera pan, tilt and zoom automatically to follow the action. We really liked using this on the Portal. It's particularly handy if you have small children and out-of-town relatives who want to keep up with the action.

During video calls, the Nest Hub Max will pan and tilt its camera to follow the actions.

Angela Lang/CNET

The Hub Max feature doesn't offer the same depth as the Portal. You can't pick an individual to follow if multiple people are in frame; it always tries to follow everyone it can see. You're also limited to using the company's proprietary video chat software, called [Google Duo](#). The Portal offers [Facebook's](#) video chat software as well as WhatsApp (which Facebook owns). You can add silly hats and other augmented-reality adornments with Facebook, but not with the Hub Max.

Still many of these deficits could be fixed with updates (or potentially added since we saw the demo in May) and the camera on the Hub Max already followed the action reliably. It brings most of the functionality, if not all of the extras.

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## Better sound

During my demo, I was able to hear the Nest Hub Max play music. It sounded pretty good and much better than the original Nest Hub. Given the size difference, I expected as much. The Nest Hub is roughly on par with the Google Home Mini in sound quality. It's fine for background listening, but it's well below the music chops of the Amazon Echo Show.

We'll pit the Nest Hub Max against the Echo Show directly when we test it. In isolation, I couldn't tell if it was better, but it did play a variety of genres of music at max volume with no distortion.

# Ready to test it

Given how much Google showed in May, I wonder if the Hub Max will debut with any surprises as far as features. I doubt it, as it has already a longer feature list than the similarly priced competition. In fact, it looks to be the most robust smart display on the market yet. If it's polished and everything works as promised, the Nest Hub Max will be a tough act to beat.

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