

# WHAT IS A SMART HOME, AND WHY SHOULD YOU WANT ONE?

What is a smart home? That seemingly simple question has many different answers, depending on who you ask. In short, a “smart home” is a residence equipped with a number of devices that automate tasks normally handled by humans. Some are built into the structure itself and some added later, and homeowners operate them with applications, voice commands, automation, or using artificial intelligence.

For some homeowners, turning a house into a smart home can be as simple as buying a connected speaker. For others, it can involve linking several different products, including speakers, cameras, computers, smartphones, tablets, televisions, security systems, appliances, and more.

## WHY SHOULD I HAVE A SMART HOME?

Now that we’ve explained what a smart home is, why should you set up your house with smart or connected home products?

### SAVING ENERGY (AND MONEY)

For many, the driving force behind creating a smart home is the potential to save energy and money with automated heating and air conditioning systems. Smart thermostats, such as those made by Alphabet’s subsidiary Nest, quickly and precisely automate the heating and cooling of a home. This usually reduces the owners’ electric bill. Other products such as connected lights and appliances can use less energy by powering down when not in use. These kinds of products should be high up on anyone’s smart home checklist.

### MAKING LIFE SIMPLER

Comfort is key. We all try to have as much of it as possible, so it’s obvious this is one of the main reasons to get a smart home. You can start with things as simple as getting smart lights. These can turn on/off using voice commands, location rules, sensor detection, or even simple schedules.

### SECURITY AND SAFETY

While you can buy alarm systems to protect your home, smart homes can offer added security. Connected lights, cameras, and even doorbells can help make a home safer. If you’re home alone and someone is checking out your house to see if they can break in, having these kinds of devices might scare them off.

### HANDLING REGULAR HOUSEHOLD TASKS

If you want to take some of the tedious tasks of home care out of your hands, connected and automated devices have you covered there too. The most obvious device is the Roomba robot vacuum cleaner from iRobot, along with similar products. However, appliances can also come with smart home functions. Picture a laundry machine that automatically starts a wash cycle, or fridge that orders milk online when it senses that you’re low.

## MAKING THE HOME MORE ENTERTAINING

What is a smart home if not also a place to hang out and relax? This technology can also keep you entertained and informed in new and exciting ways. Connected speakers, combined with AI-based digital assistants, can play music, offer news and sports scores, and can even help you control other connected devices as well. Connected devices can also find a good film to watch, either at home or in a real movie theater.

## BUY YOUR FIRST SMART HOME PRODUCTS

There are tons of products out there that can help make your home smarter. To help you get started, we've created a list of just five products we feel would be perfect for starting your journey into the world of smart homes.

### GET YOURSELF A SMART SPEAKER

You can find plenty of smart speakers, the most popular featuring the Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa digital assistants. Some can get pretty complex, so we believe your best bet is to go with one of the smaller, more affordable smart speakers. These would be either the Amazon Echo Dot or the Google Nest Mini.

### LIGHT THE WAY WITH SMART BULBS

Smart light bulbs are probably among the first buys for most users. We recommend Philips Hue lights just because they are pretty much available everywhere, and they aren't too expensive once you get through the initial purchase of the bridge and first lights.

### CONTROL THE WEATHER WITH A NEST LEARNING THERMOSTAT

The leader in connected heating, Alphabet's subsidiary has created a smart thermostat that keeps your house automatically dialed to temperatures you like. It can also respond to voice commands for both Google Home and Amazon Echo speakers.

### SEE WHO'S KNOCKING WITH A SMART DOORBELL

The Ring Video Doorbell 3 Plus is a solid entry in the video doorbell market. It offers Full HD resolution, a quick-release rechargeable battery, and pre-roll footage for capturing those important pre-doorbell press moments. It's a solid option for those invested in Amazon's smart home ecosystem, but other options might be better for Google-based homes or privacy-minded folk.

### CENTRALIZE YOUR SMART HOME

If you want to have one central router that connects all of your smart devices together, you can't go wrong with the Samsung SmartThings Hub. It supports nearly all wireless protocols, along with Alexa and Google Assistant voice commands and more, for easy home automation.