

BUYER'S GUIDE

How to AUTOMATE YOUR SMART HOME

Doing things for yourself is so 2020. Jennifer Pattison Tuohy picks the best products to make your home work for you...

Our homes are evolving. Smart speakers, like Amazon's Echo or Google's Nest devices, are flying off the shelves and into the hearts of our homes. Our appetite for digital home assistants didn't even seem to slow during the pandemic, with 30 million sold worldwide over the summer of 2020. So if you've invited a virtual butler into your home, here's our pick of what we think are the key products you should install if you are looking to make the leap from a smart speaker to a smart home. Once you have these in place, you can start stringing them together and automating much of your home life.

Best Mesh Wi-Fi Router Google Nest Wi-Fi

FROM £129 | BUY FROM AMAZON, GOOGLE | WORKS WITH GOOGLE HOME

A mesh Wi-Fi router spreads Wi-Fi signal throughout your home, regardless of walls or inconvenient layouts. It consists of 'hubs' you plug in around the house to demolish dead zones. While not the fastest or most advanced mesh system available, Google Nest Wi-Fi fits excellently into a smart

home for two reasons: it works as a 'hub' for some connected gadgets, and doubles as a smart speaker. Each 'point' is also a Google Assistant voice speaker, spreading Wi-Fi and voice control all over your home. Plus, it's simple to set up and run. You manage it from Google Home's app on your smartphone, and there are built-in parental controls that give you the ability to shut down connectivity to your kids' devices with just a word – ideal for getting them to the dinner table on time.



Best Smart Security System – Abode Smart Security Kit

FROM £299.99 | BUY FROM ABODE | WORKS WITH AMAZON ALEXA, GOOGLE HOME, APPLE HOMEKIT

A smart security system protects your home, thanks to wireless sensors and cameras that you can monitor from your smartphone. But the sensors that detect when a door opens, or if there's

motion in your house, can also tie in to other smart devices, such as lights, locks and thermostats, telling them when to turn off, unlock or change the temperature.

Our top pick is Abode, as it offers a solid DIY security system with expandable smart home capabilities. Abode's monthly fee starts at just over £3 a month, but we like the Monitored Immediate plan at £13.99 a month, as it gets you professional monitoring, cloud storage for a video feed and smart features such as geofencing of the alarm (tracking your location by your phone) so you don't have to worry about triggering it accidentally.



Best Smart Security Camera Arlo cameras

FROM £125 | BUY FROM AMAZON, ARLO | WORKS WITH AMAZON ALEXA, GOOGLE HOME, APPLE HOMEKIT

A smart security camera is an easy way to keep an eye on your home when you're away. They're easy to set up as they use Wi-Fi to send you footage, so no need to run wires through your walls. There are lots of good ones out there, but our top pick is Arlo's system. The small, battery-powered cameras can be installed anywhere, and can be hooked up to power if you don't want to worry about charging them. They have a wide range of price points and can record up to 4K. They're also smart enough to distinguish between people, animals, vehicles and packages, so you don't get inundated with alerts.



Best Robot Vacuum Cleaner Roomba i3+

FROM \$399 | BUY FROM AMAZON, IROBOT | WORKS WITH AMAZON ALEXA, GOOGLE HOME

The smart home should be about robots doing everything for you, so you don't have to lift a finger. Sadly, we're a long way from that reality, but in the meantime, there are robot vacuums. More affordable, more intelligent, and better at vacuuming than ever before, a robot vacuum will help

keep your house clean – yes, even under the settee. Our favourite is iRobot's Roomba i3+, the newest model from the oldest smart vacuum manufacturer. We like it for its combination of affordability and self-emptying capabilities – it has its own external bin it returns to to suck out the debris when its on-board bin is full.

The i3 will be available in the UK later this year, but if you can't wait, then the pricier i7+ is an excellent option. The i7+ can do smart things like just clean the kitchen, thanks to smart maps you control in the app. Both bots can be controlled by voice using Alexa or Google, so you can ask it to clean, pause, or go home with just a few words.

Best Smart Thermostat Nest Learning thermostat

£219 | BUY FROM GOOGLE | WORKS WITH AMAZON ALEXA, GOOGLE ASSISTANT

The Nest Learning thermostat is the best out there, and now controls your hot water too. While there are cheaper options, none are as smart or look as good. The Nest uses AI to recognise your patterns, based on your adjustments, presence, and other factors to continually adapt a schedule that will keep you comfortable and save you energy.

