



Best complete home automation system

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The best home automation systems: Compare SmartThings, Apple HomeKit, Amazon Alexa, and more. The top home automation systems bring together all of your smart home devices in one hub, combining...

The home automation systems on this list will help ensure they all work smoothly, and give you complete control over all your smart gadgets. We've also highlighted the best home...

Our favorite models let you monitor and control your home's heating and cooling system by phone or voice, set temperature schedules, and offer energy-saving features that can help lower your...

There are four main smart home platforms: Amazon's Alexa, Apple's HomeKit, Google Home and Samsung SmartThings and all work with devices such as smart lights and plugs. But which is the best smart home system for you?

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Many smart home devices will work with multiple platforms, but some won't - and there are important differences between the platforms, the prices and the products available.

Smart home products typically fall into one of three categories: entertainment (smart speakers, TVs, streaming devices etc), home automation (lighting, heating and fun things like robot vacuum cleaners) and home security (cameras, video doorbells and other sensors).

That means choosing an ecosystem is a bit more complicated than just buying an appliance: if you choose a De'Longhi coffee machine or a Samsung fridge you're not committing to only buying De'Longhi or Samsung-compatible devices for the rest of your home. Until Matter becomes more popular, the choice of smart home products depends not just on what you want to do today, but on what you might want to add in the future - so it's something to give a lot of thought to before you whip out your bank details and commit.

If you're looking for the cheapest and most wide-ranging smart home platform, this is it: Amazon's aggressive discounting and extensive brand partnerships mean there's a huge choice of Alexa-based products at knockdown prices, especially during the site's frequent sales events, and Amazon's sub-brands Blink and Ring make very affordable smart security products that connect to its Echos and other hub devices. There are

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also lots of third-party products including key devices such as smart thermostats, smart bulbs and smart speakers - so whether you want to buy Amazon's own stuff or prefer other brands, you can still control everything with Alexa.

Google has the second most popular platform - and as with Amazon, fully compatible products include both its own devices (including those from smart home subsidiary Nest) and thousands of third-party devices, with all the key players on board. That means Hue smart lights, various makers' smart thermostats, smart security cameras and more. You'll often find Google Home compatibility alongside other platforms, particularly Alexa, so there's flexibility to switch sides further down the line without having to re-buy all your hardware. Google Assistant is arguably the best smart home digital assistant, and the app is available for both iOS and Android.

Apple's desire to deliver the ultimate user experience may be laudable, but it can also be expensive: for the first few years of its existence, HomeKit devices didn't just need to pass Apple's certification tests but had to include a dedicated HomeKit chip. That gave Google and Amazon a big opportunity that they both grabbed. Today, HomeKit remains the most expensive smart home option across multiple categories: where Amazon will routinely churn out smart speakers for less than £30, Apple's cheapest is the £89 HomePod Mini. Big names such as Hue are HomeKit-compatible, but some products such as Nest thermostats require additional third-party hardware.

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