

How to get started with home automation

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If you're not, shall we say, technically inclined, the idea of using home automation might seem out of this world. But the good news is, there's a variety of gadgets and gizmos on the market to help even the least tech-savvy person live in a smart home.

-First steps to a smarter house

Rest easy - you don't have to go "all in" when deciding to embrace [home](#)

[automation](#).

"Pick an initial feature of your [home](#) you would use the most in terms of automation, and expand from there," says Lee Travis, owner of Wipliance in Bellevue, Washington.

But also keep in mind that you might want to add more smart technology to your home as time goes on. Investing in products that are compatible with a central automation system will help simplify the process down the road.

"A consumer can buy a thermostat or light switches and make them smartphone accessible, and have an app on your phone for each one," says Kellan C. Warren, vice-president of Kelltech Systems in Dallas. "But keep in mind what your end goal is and purchase products that get you on that path. Once you start integrating, everything can work together. You can open the garage door, turn on the lights and set the thermostat with one touch. You make the rules."

One of the most popular automation integration systems experts recommend is Control4, which starts around \$1,000.

"The great thing about products like Control4 Home Automation is that you can install the system to control one feature initially; whether it's your lights, your entertainment system, your security, or more," Travis says. "Then as your needs change, you can expand on the existing system with those additional features."

-Let there be light

Having your lights automatically come on when you walk in a room or being able to turn lights on throughout the house when you're not home is more than just convenient - it's a safety issue. You won't have to worry

about stumbling over footstools in the dark or potential vandals casing a home that appears empty.

-Get the temperature just right

Living an energy-efficient lifestyle not only helps save the planet, but it also pads your wallet. It's a win-win! A smart thermostat can help you cut down on energy bills by learning your habits and knows when to make the house warmer or cooler just for you.

-Curtain control

Some days you might want to flood your house with sunlight. Other days, you might want to hibernate in the darkness. With automated window treatments, the decision is literally at your fingertips.

Automating your blinds, curtains or shutters can also help keep your home's interior at a comfortable temperature (blocking that late afternoon sun!) and give you privacy in an instant from the outside world. Shades can be set to open at sunrise and close automatically at sunset, or whatever time you prefer.

-Under lock and key

Still hiding that spare key under the doormat? With the advances in electronic locks and wireless control, you don't ever have to worry about losing your house key again. Electronic locks allow you to lock or unlock the door from your cell phone or you can set a temporary code and timeframe if you're expecting a visitor. The lock will also send you a text message when your kid gets home from school - just like magic!

-Garage door assurance

How many times have you backed out of your driveway, driven halfway down the street and looked over your shoulder to make sure you actually closed your garage door? There's no need to risk a neck sprain (or running off the road) anymore once you've installed a remote access package to your garage door opener. From your smartphone, you can open or close the door and also receive activity notifications of any door movement.

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