

# Review: Keep tabs on your front porch with Ring Video Doorbell

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I get asked a lot of questions about technology, and the topic I get asked about most is how best to set up video cameras for home security.

I've reviewed several good home surveillance cameras, and today I have another great option: the Ring Video Doorbell.

The Ring is a replacement for your doorbell. Once installed, it will [ring](#) your home's existing doorbell chime so you know someone's at the door.

When someone rings your Ring Video Doorbell (\$199, [www.ring.com](http://www.ring.com)), your smartphone will ring like you're getting a phone call, but you'll see a live view of who is at the door.

You can choose to answer the call or ignore it. If you answer, your voice will project from a small speaker in the Ring, and you'll have two-way audio communication.

So you can see and speak to the visitor, but they can't see you.

You can answer the Ring from anywhere. Your voice will sound the same if you answer the bell from inside your house or from across the country.

That's great for answering the door, but what about keeping an eye on things?

We've all heard of someone who has had packages stolen from their front porch.

The neighborhood social media site Nextdoor.com has frequent mentions of missing packages. Some of those thefts have been caught on video, but most have not.

A common theme in those online discussions is about the best way to get video surveillance of the front door of the home.

The Ring can record video when motion is detected in its field of view.

The recordings are about 40 seconds long and are stored on Ring's server in the cloud.

The Ring records video at 720p resolution. There is a Ring Pro that requires a hard-wired installation and records at 1080p.

There is an adjustment to the motion detector sensitivity, and you'll have to play with it, especially if your Ring's field of view includes the street in front of your house. You probably don't want to get a notification every time a car drives by.

There's a slider in the Ring app to adjust the motion sensor, which can detect motion from 5 to 30 feet in every direction. You can turn off different motion zones if you like.

I had to adjust the motion zones in my yard after I noticed a few instances of a delivery person leaving a box on my porch that were not recorded.

My problem with those missed recordings may stem from my Ring facing into the sun during the afternoon. The Ring didn't seem to sense

motion unless the person stepped onto my porch, blocking out the sunlight.

Choosing to have the Ring save clips to the cloud is not free. You have to subscribe for \$3 per month or \$30 per year.

You don't have to subscribe to get only the two-way doorbell functionality, but you won't get to save any recordings.

The recordings are easily accessed through the app or through Ring's website, and they can be downloaded, emailed or even shared on Facebook.

I could not find a way to change the length of the recordings or how quickly the motion detector recycles to start another clip.

The Ring also has night vision to catch clear images even if your porch light is off.

## INSTALLATION

Our house had a traditional doorbell, so I unscrewed our existing doorbell button, exposing the two wires. My doorbell is of the traditional low-voltage variety, so I didn't have to turn off the power, but you should check your own system to see if you need to turn off your electricity before proceeding.

The Ring mounts to a bracket you screw or otherwise attach to your doorway.

I used the included screws, but you can use strong double-sided tape if you like.

There are two screw contacts on the plate for you to attach the doorbell wires.

The Ring then clips to the plate and locks in place with two screws that use a proprietary bit that's included in the box.

The Ring is easy to attach and remove if you have the bit, so don't lose it.

What happens if your Ring gets stolen?

If someone steals it, Ring will replace it for free. Hopefully you'll already have the thief's image in your stored clips. If your installation is wired, the wires will keep the Ring powered.

If you don't have a doorbell, or you don't want to remove your existing doorbell button, you can just mount the Ring in a convenient place and use it with the included rechargeable battery.

You charge the Ring with a microUSB cable (included). It takes a few hours, but once it's charged, the Ring should go for up to a year before you need to charge it again.

Keep that screwdriver bit handy when you need to pop it off to recharge.

If you don't have a doorbell chime in your house, Ring sells a small wireless chime (\$29) that you can plug into any outlet.

You can also buy as many chimes as you need, which is great if you have a big house and can't hear the doorbell from distant rooms.

## CAMERA-ONLY OPTION

Ring must have had a lot of requests for people who wanted a wireless

camera but didn't need it to also be a doorbell.

For those people, Ring introduced the Stick Up Cam, which is the motion-activated camera from the Ring in an outdoor enclosure without the doorbell.

The Stick Up Cam (\$199) has the same speaker and microphone, so you can use it to speak and listen.

The Stick Up Cam is battery-powered and can run for up to 12 months on a charge, just like the Ring Video Doorbell, but the Stick Up Cam can be powered by an optional solar panel (\$50).

The solar panel connects through a pretty long cable, so you can run it up to the roof or other place to face the sky. The solar panel produces enough power to keep the battery charged indefinitely.

Both the Ring and Stick Up Cam come with all the mounts, hardware and tools you need to install them.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are very few items that I can recommend to everyone, but the Ring is one of those rare gadgets that I think everyone needs.

It's easy to mount and set up, works well and stores clear video clips in the cloud.

The Ring Video Doorbell won't keep your packages from being stolen, but I'm willing to bet it'll be a big deterrent. A lot of people want the Ring for the doorbell feature, but I think just as many want it for the security aspect.

The Ring is even "mom-approved," as my mom decided to buy one after seeing mine in action.

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## Ring Video Doorbell

Pros: Easy to set up, records to the cloud.

Cons: I wish the recordings were 1080p. Can't set length of clips.

Bottom line: If you have a door, you need a Ring.

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