

Fact sheet

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Smart Devices

The world of technology has grown hugely over the last decade making automated devices available to anyone including those with limited 'technical ability'.

Various devices can now connect and 'talk' to each other usually via Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or mobile data.

In many ways these devices are fun gadgets that add interest to the home, opening information that may have previously been difficult to find.

Many of these devices can play games, music, and videos, but they can also provide ways for people to manage their home environment and help to reduce isolation for people who are on their own.

Most smart devices start with a primary 'hub', 'controller' or 'speaker', which could be a mobile phone, or something like an Alexa or Google Home. They need to be connected to the internet. These virtual 'assistants' allow you to use your voice to give commands or ask questions.

Home management

You can ask your hub to help with simple tasks such as **setting reminders** for yourself e.g. "Remind me to take my tablets at 6pm" or, "Remind me to feed the cat".

It can also act as your alarm clock, "Wake me up at 7am".

When you are cooking you can ask it to "Set an alarm for 10 minutes".

You can also simply ask it to tell you the time when you are not near a clock or struggle to access one.

Smart light bulbs can be put into lamps or main light fittings; many of them have a large range of colours that you can choose from. You would simply ask your primary controller to "Turn the lights on" or "Turn the bathroom light off".

A Wi-Fi **thermostat** links to the home boiler system and can be controlled from anywhere; it can link to a mobile phone so you can even control the temperature at home when you are out and about. Someone else can also keep an eye on the temperature for you, for example if a family member notices that your house is cold on a winter's day, they could turn it up a few degrees to make sure you keep warm.

A **doorbell** linked to the Wi-Fi can help you to have more control when dealing with callers at your door. The connected doorbells have a camera and they can link to your smart phone or a smart speaker (hub) with a screen, so you can see in real time who is at your door.

If you have the doorbell linked to your mobile phone, you can see who is at your door wherever you are, whereas with the doorbell linked to your Alexa or Google home you will be able to see who is calling on the screen of that device.

If you have a **smart TV** (one that can connect to the internet), you can link it up to your hub and then you can control channels and volume. Televisions vary in their capabilities so you would need to research what is important to you and make sure you have devices that are compatible.

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Communication

Devices like the Alexa or Google home can be enabled to allow you to call people via a **voice command**, for example if you say, "Alexa, call David" it will automatically call that person and open a two way conversation. If you have a primary hub with a screen you could even video call one another. You may have separate devices in different rooms in the house, and can either send messages or call the other device; you could even send a message to the person downstairs to ask them for a cup of tea!

Some people may struggle to make or receive a video call so there is a function in which you can just '**drop in**' on another person. The other person doesn't need to press anything, you can just appear on the screen and initiate a two way video call. This obviously needs to be done with prior agreement.

Music, entertainment and games

Smart speakers have lots of games that you can either play by yourself, with other people in your house or virtually with people all over the world. They include trivia quizzes, riddles and truth or dare.

You can listen to podcasts, music and audio books from smart speakers. Some devices have a limited amount of free content. For a bigger selection of these things, you will need to subscribe to apps that will give you access to unlimited music and books; there are many different ones available at varying costs.

It is advisable to do some research before subscribing to anything to ensure that you get a service which is both useful and accessible.

This fact sheet covers a small section of what is available from devices and services – there are many different ones available that are suitable for different people. Hopefully this has given you an idea about what is out there, and you can now explore what might be helpful to you and your own circumstances.



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