Smart Speakers and Smart Homes for Smart People

IN this eighth installment in our [educational webinar](https://austinlighthouse.org/training-education-services/webinars/) series the Austin Lighthouse training team will share their experiences with smart speakers and smart home devices. It turns out we do all live in the sci-fi future where you can tell your house to cool down, your oven to heat up, and your fridge to order more milk.

# Objectives

* Discover what a smart speaker is and how it fits into a smart home.
* Experience samples of three different smart speaker platforms.
* Control appliances around your home with only your voice.

# Presenters

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# How to Participate

Presented by Thomas

Please raise your hand if you have any questions or comments. We welcome your participation.

* On a PC or Mac to raise your hand press Alt+Y or Command+Y.
* ON a telephone to raise your hand press \*9.
* On a PC or Mac, you can also type questions in through chat using Alt+H or Command+H.

# Smart Speaker Options

## Echo and Alexa

Presented by Eric

* The Amazon Echo is the most popular smart speaker.
  + The Echo devices are also called the Amazon Voice Assistant, or Alexa.
  + The Echo is activated with its wake word Alexa.
  + The echo comes in several types and sizes
    - The Echo Dot looks a bit like a hockey puck three inches across and about an inch tall. For $40 the Echo Dot works well in a kitchen or bedroom.
    - The full-size Echo brings enough sound to fill your living room. It is available for $80 and looks like a taller version of the Echo Dot at about six inches high.
    - The Alexa voice assistant also comes built-in on several other speakers from Sonos and Bose as well as an Echo Auto for the car.
  + To work with services like TuneIn Radio, Spotify, and many more many companies have written skills. Skills work with Alexa the way apps work with the iPhone.

## Google Home and Google Assistant

Presented by Dan

* The Google Home is a great choice if you use an Android phone.
  + The google Home is the device, but the technology behind it is the Google Assistant.
  + The wake word for the Google Home is Hey Google.
  + The Google Home also comes in a couple different sizes.
    - The Google Home Mini looks like the Echo Dot, but with a curved top. Some people joke that it looks like a jelly doughnut.
    - The Google Home is comparable to the regular Echo in size, shape, and quality.
    - Finally, the Google Home Max is the right speaker if you want powerful bass and room filling sound. Also, if you don’t mind spending about $300.

## Siri and HomeKit

Presented by Baylee

* Not to be left out every iPhone and iPad has the smart assistant from Apple named Siri.
  + Siri can be woken up by saying, “Hey Siri”.
  + Devices that work with Siri will say “Works with HomeKit” on the packaging.
  + Siri does all the same things as the Amazon and Google devices, but the only speaker with Siri on it is Apple’s HomePod.

# Smart Home Options

## Overview

Presented by Thomas

Smart Home devices come in all shapes and sizes. They will have some things in common.

* Smart Home devices or appliances from different manufacturers are designed to work best together. Devices from different companies can work together, but it will take a little more work to set up.
* Many Smart Home devices will have a logo on them which says “Works with Alexa”, “Works with HomeKit”, or “Works with Google”. If you don’t find this your device may still work, but it will take some research. NOTE: It is important to do your research on items that say they work with either the Echo or Google Home. Some of these devices depend on 3rd party software that may not give you full functionality of the device you wish to control.
* Most smart home devices work with apps on an Android or iPhone. These apps come from many manufacturers, so learning about the accessibility of the app is important.

## Examples

Round Table Discussion starting with Taryn

* Here are some types of smart home devices to be found.
  + Security devices such as locks, alarm systems, and cameras  
    Note: For a cheaper alarm system option, Simply Safe is accessible with VoiceOver.
  + Safety devices such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and baby monitors
  + Home control devices such as smart plugs for outlets, thermostats, and light switches
  + Appliances such as refrigerators, ovens, microwaves, and coffee makers

# Putting it All Together

Presented by Aaron

Getting smart speakers and smart devices to work together can be a challenge, but some neat things become possible once the work is done.

* Turn on or off lights at specific times. Thomas says, “This comes in handy for me when I forget to turn a light off for days because I can’t see it.”
* Check the temperature of the house, refrigerator, or the oven from an iPhone or Android phone. Smart appliances may not be accessible directly, but if the device can be controlled from an app on your phone or tablet then Voiceover, Talkback, Magnifier, or Zoom can provide the accessibility.
* Check on what is happening at the house while away. For example, with an Echo speaker in a room at home it is possible to drop in on that room at any time from a smart phone. This is great for checking in on the kids without requiring that they answer the call.
* For those who are technically minded it is possible to set up routines which will pre-heat the oven to 350° when arriving at home while turning on the light in the kitchen and pulling up the recipe for dinner on a tablet. Routines can do amazing things, and there are many ready-made routines out there which are easy to use.

# Acknowledgements

Presented by Thomas

Thank you to everyone who has participated in this webinar and thank you to everyone who is watching the recorded version later. The Austin lighthouse would like to say a special thank you to Dr. Miller and Northwest Hills eyecare for bringing us in contact with their patience and friends.

If you have any questions or suggestions on additional topics for future webinars please email [thomas.stivers@austinlighthouse.org](mailto:thomas.stivers@austinlighthouse.org).

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