



SMART HOME TECHNOLOGIES AND BENEFITS

All kinds of devices and appliances are getting smarter. You probably already know about TVs and thermostats (and, of course, phones). But everything from lightbulbs to washers and dryers to refrigerators to security systems are available with internet capabilities that allow for easier and more automated control.

With smart home technologies, you can use voice command or an app on a phone, computer or tablet for remote control, giving you more freedom to customize parts of your home. In turn, you'll receive alerts and information about an action being finished (e.g., the dishwasher cycle being complete) or a potential issue (e.g., a water leak).

Here are several smart home technologies to be aware of:

- Smart speakers like the Amazon Echo and Google Home allow you to perform many tasks through voice command and can connect to other smart home devices to give you additional control.
- Smart lighting comes in a few forms. Basic smart lightbulbs, color-changing bulbs and smart light switches give you flexibility in your lighting options (switches may require an electrician for installation). For added security, many smart lights can be set up on a vacation mode to make it seem like someone's at home when you're out of town.
- Smart plugs connect to a traditional outlet and can then be used to power a device. You can use a dedicated app to manage what's plugged in, set up a schedule or timer, or see how much energy is being used.
- Smart thermostats like ones from Nest and Ecobee make it easier to adjust your home's temperature for different times of day, schedules or occupancy levels.
- Smart appliances, such as refrigerators, microwaves and ovens, often come with added functionality that allow for operation through an app or voice command.
- Smart security systems can be found with a variety of setups to meet your needs, allowing you to monitor and control your home's security from virtually anywhere.

Here are the benefits you'll experience from integrating smart devices into your home:

- Convenience and comfort are the primary advantage you'll gain with smart home technology. You get a remote and sometimes hands-free way to control devices and customize a variety of actions, from scheduling to automating to occupancy sensing.
- Related to convenience is accessibility, which is a particularly big perk for an aging population. Being able to shut off lights or change the temperature via voice command can be especially helpful for those with mobility, dexterity, memory or vision issues. Some smart speakers also allow family members to check in with each other to keep in touch.
- Smart home technologies can produce energy and cost savings thanks to their added control and automation. For example, you can avoid wasting electricity by setting up your thermostats and lights to operate only when you need them. Some thermostats can even monitor the health of your heating and cooling system and alert you before a system failure.
- Advanced security comes from being able to monitor your home remotely via cameras and motion sensors.

Talk with your electric cooperative about any programs or incentives that may be available to help you integrate smart home technologies into your house.

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