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What Is Home Automation

A Basic Definition

For some it may be something as simple as remote or automatic control of a few lights. For others, security may be the central application. Still others may choose to install advanced controllers or use voice recognition. As a very basic definition, we tend to refer to home automation as anything that gives you remote or automatic control of things around the home.



Adding home automation to an existing home is surprisingly affordable and simple. Our average product costs less than \$40 and most require no new wires! We've taken the guess work out of what to buy and created a "[Good, Better & Best Product Comparison Chart](#)" for both existing homes (retrofit) and new construction homes. We included everything from lighting control, surveillance, irrigation, whole home audio/video and more!

We at Smarthome think that home automation should be what you want it to be. Check out our [Interactive Home Tour](#) to see what a Smart Home is all about. Whatever your "MVP" automation project might be, we're confident that using it will make life around the home more convenient, safe and fun!



What Can I Control?

Lighting



Probably the most popular control category and a great way to get involved with home automation. [Starter kits](#) begin at less than \$60 and are plug-and-play easy to install. Dim light fixtures you could never dim before, and control them from anywhere in the house (or world via the Internet).

Security Systems & Access Control



Have your home call you and/or loved ones if there is an alert situation. You can save money on security monitoring services or even monitor for non-traditional security events like water in the laundry room or basement. Additionally, Smarthome products include devices that will allow you to unlock the front door to let friends in or close the garage door from your office via the web.

Home Theater & Entertainment



Just imagine replacing that pile of remotes with just one controller. Now, imagine not having to know all 10 steps to starting up your home theater - just press the HBO icon and your home automation products/system will do the rest. [In-wall](#) and [in-ceiling](#) speakers are especially popular with homeowners as they provide beautiful sound throughout the house while adding no clutter whatsoever.

Phone Systems



Phone systems that are usually used for small business applications are surprisingly convenient in the home. With caller ID and a home automation controller you can even screen your calls for only those you wish to cause your phone to ring. Voice control software turns every phone in your home into a remote controller.

Thermostats



[Remote-control thermostats](#) allow you to adjust the temperature from bed at night or even from a cell phone while on your way home (or to your



second home!). They can even trigger a notice to you if the temperature gets too low (to prevent pipes from freezing) or too high (to protect your pets, plants, etc.).

Irrigation



Have your sprinklers turn on only when it's not raining. Some of our customers even turn the sprinklers on when there's [motion](#) in the yard at unwanted times - imagine an intruder trying to explain the wet clothes to the police!

Cable & Structured Wiring



Home automation can be accomplished using various types of connectivity. What's great is that many of today's home automation products need no new wires - so they are perfect to retrofit into an existing home. If you are building new or doing a major remodel, please consider adding networking, audio, video and control wiring while it is easy and relatively inexpensive. Later on you'll be happy you did.

How Can I Control Them?

Remote Control

Remote control gives you the convenience of controlling lighting, appliances, security systems and consumer electronics from wherever you happen to be at the time, like your couch, car or even in your bed. There are several different "methods" of controlling devices remotely. Below we highlight the pluses and minuses of each.

Remote Technology	Products	Advantages	Disadvantages	Popular Applications	Cost
Infrared	Standard A/V remotes including remotes for the TV, DVD, tuner, etc	Affordable	Line-of-sight	TV / consumer electronics	\$10+
Powerline	X10 , UPB	Affordable + whole house	May need noise filters & phase couplers	Lighting, appliances and security	X10: \$10+ UPB: \$75+
Radio-Frequency (RF)	Z-Wave	Works through walls	Long distance issues, more expensive than X10	Garage doors, computer networking	\$35+
PowerLine & RF	INSTEON	Affordable, whole house, works through walls, no noise filters required, works with legacy X10 products, maximum speed and reliability, adding products increases reliability	-	Lighting, appliances, computer control	\$30+
Hardwired	Cat5; Coax	Speed and reliability	Cost & difficult to retrofit	Video, networking & high-end applications	\$1,000+

X10-compatible products are the most popular home automation products because of their low cost and ease of installation, especially into existing homes. To learn more about X10, [click here](#).

Taking advantage of X10's convenience and popularity, Smarthome has created INSTEON technology, which combines powerline with RF remote technology for maximum coverage and reliability while still maintaining the low cost users have come to expect from Smarthome products. INSTEON-compatible products work with legacy X10 products but require no additional noise filters since each installed INSTEON device acts as a repeater. To learn more about INSTEON, [click here](#).

Automatic Control

Automatic control adds even more convenience by making things happen automatically,

without any effort being necessary. Examples include having your lights turn on at dusk and off at your desired time, having your whole home theater turn on and tune to the desired station after one press of a button on your remote.

What are the Benefits of Home Automation?

Convenience

We've all gotten used to controlling our TV from the couch; just wait until you are able to dim the lights as well. Imagine adjusting the temperature from your bed or controlling the volume of your whole-house audio system from any room. Or imagine the wall/ceiling heater in your bathroom coming on automatically on chilly mornings 5 minutes before your alarm clock goes off so that it is warm when you enter. Many Smarthome products also save energy -- we'll all agree that's a nice convenience.

Safety

We're all used to opening the garage door from the car, but you'll be surprised how much safer you'll feel coming home to a lit home and even turning on more lights from your keyfob remote upon your arrival. With a couple of basic products you can have your whole house light up like Fort Knox when there is motion detected at any corner of your house. Imagine your house sending you an email if there is motion where there shouldn't be any. Or you can have your security system call you if there is an alarm, which might include your typical security alarm or even a low or high temperature or water in the laundry room or basement.

Fun

High-tech products for the home are fun to use and share with others. Whether viewing visitors at your front door on your TV or tuning your stereo by using voice recognition, you'll find home automation surprisingly enjoyable. And when it comes to impressing the friends, you'll be happy to show off your newfound applications.

With the broad selection of home automation products offered by Smarthome, you can control just about anything you wish in your home. If you have questions about a particular product please visit our [online help-desk](#) and/or [contact our expert technical support team](#) - they're happy to help you find exactly what you are looking for.

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