

Stream Deck, a device designed specifically for streamers, is a must-have productivity upgrade

Even without streaming, Stream Deck will change the way people work. It's one of the best productivity upgrades many people have made in a while, and now they can't work without it.

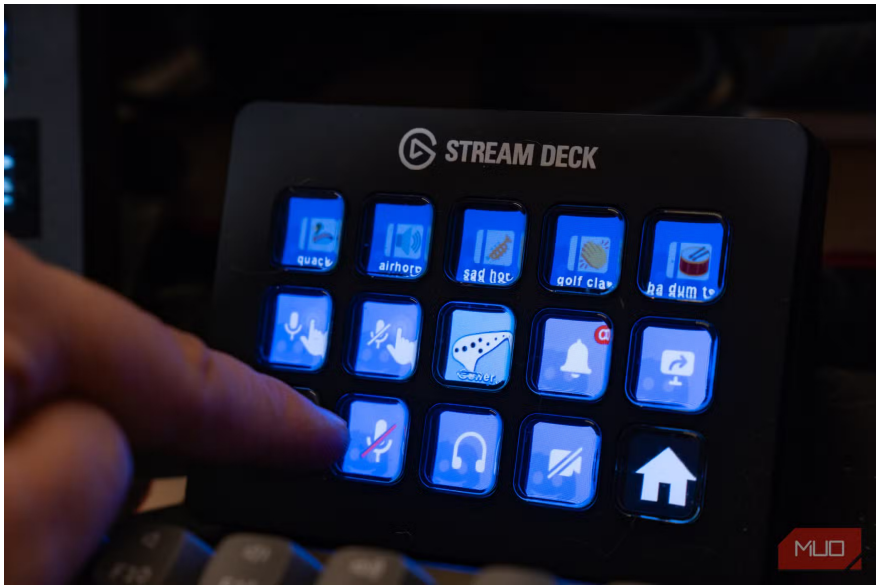
A lot of people have always been fascinated by the idea of a Stream Deck. Not because many of them are professional streamers, but because it looks like a great way to have handy, programmable buttons to do whatever they want.

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Choose the right Stream Deck

Many sizes, countless buttons







There are a lot of variations of the Stream Deck, and depending on which one you buy, it can be a big investment. You also don't need as many programmable buttons as you think, so spending over \$200 on a Stream Deck XL that only has half the buttons blank isn't a great idea.

The Stream Deck Mini, with its six buttons and \$49 price tag, seemed like a great option, but Elgato followed suit with the Stream Deck Neo. Whether you stream or not, the Stream Deck Neo is the perfect companion for the job. It has just enough buttons for all your custom mappings, and the dedicated page buttons really make having multiple pages of buttons a possibility.

There's also the regular Stream Deck Mk2, the Stream Deck +, and a few other accessories that plug into the device. Having so many options can make the decision a little difficult. If you're wondering which Stream Deck model to buy, consider the number of custom keys you need and add two to it. If you're buying a Stream Deck just for productivity, you should go with the Stream Deck Neo.

The music controls are really useful

Instantly adjust volume and control playback without having to press Alt+Tab mid-play

Many people constantly have music playing in the background while they work. When using 4 monitors, one of the two screens is dedicated to YouTube Music so they can quickly change or control the music. However, when switching to a dual monitor setup, covering the entire screen with just one music player is not a viable option.

Some people don't like fiddling with the function keys on their keyboards, so they initially came up with a few solutions to this problem. The first solution was to create custom shortcuts using Microsoft PowerToys to control music. This is useful, but only when you're typing at your desk. If you need to change the music, you'll need both hands to use the shortcuts.



App shortcuts to help you stay awake

One touch to open anything

Stream Deck is more than just a useful music controller. Another important function it handles is launching applications. Set up buttons for your most-used programs, including text editors, code editors, browsers with specific tab groups, project management tools, communication apps, and anything else you might need.

It also houses a variety of system controls, such as volume and microphone mute, camera controls, and switching audio output between headphones and speakers. Almost anything that used to take multiple clicks to launch or adjust can now be done with a single tap on the Stream Deck.

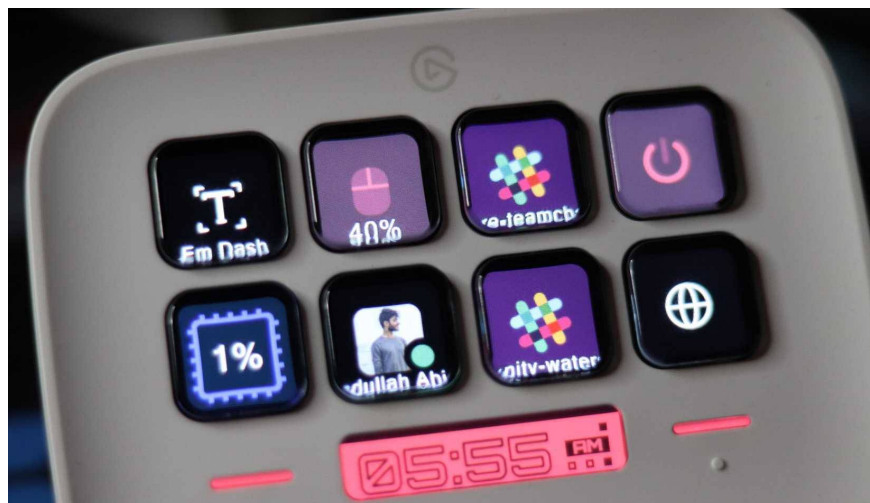


Automation without complexity

No need to worry about coding, just install once and forget it

Another strength of Stream Deck is its software. You can create multi-step automations with a simple drag-and-drop interface, making it easy to create complex workflows even if you're not tech-savvy.

For example, there's an end-of-day button that saves my work, closes specific apps, backs up important files to the cloud, updates my Slack status, and can even dim the lights if I select the right button. What used to be a tedious shutdown process is now condensed to a single button press.



A near perfect device

There are still a few imperfections, but it's still the most useful thing on my desk.

Stream Deck Neo isn't perfect. The software sometimes doesn't work as expected, and the touch-sensitive buttons for turning pages are sometimes unreliable. Some integrations, including the one for the YouTube Music app, require third-party plugins, which can be a hassle to set up. Once you get the hang of it, though, the whole process becomes much easier.

I bought Stream Deck Neo as a tech journalist curious about productivity tools. But I've kept it because it really helps me get better at my job every day. Yes, it's designed for streamers, but it's also incredibly useful for anyone who spends their day using multiple apps, managing digital workflows, and trying to stay focused in an increasingly distracting digital world.

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