

Which smart speaker is perfect for you?

We help you sort through the smart speaker options from Amazon, Google, Apple, Sonos and others.

Amazon, Google and Apple all make competent smart speakers, and the competition between these tech giants has made this category better and better. Amazon helped popularize smart home devices and smart speakers with the original Echo and the now-famous digital assistant known as Alexa, but today you have a bunch of options from several different companies, each with their own pros and cons.

So how do you figure out the difference between them and pick the best smart speaker for your needs? Well, the key differences largely come down to hardware size, price and audio quality. If you don't need much oomph from your music and you're good with a little lower audio quality, you can save money and get the same smarts in a smaller smart speaker body.

Our favorites, the Amazon Echo Dot and the Google Nest Mini, are both awesome smart devices. Pretty much all of your options include multi-room audio and let you turn on the lights, play music, ask a question, set a reminder and more with simple voice commands. If that sounds appealing to you, it might be time to give in to the growing hype of this burgeoning category of devices and buy a smart speaker.

If you have an affinity for one of those brands in particular, your job of picking a speaker is easy. Head here for help picking an Amazon smart speaker model. Here's a guide if you want a Google-equipped smart speaker. The \$350 Apple HomePod is your only option if you want a Siri-enabled smart speaker, but the good news is it has great audio quality, which makes listening to music very enjoyable.

If you're platform-agnostic, and don't need to choose between Alexa or Google, the range of choices might seem intimidating at first. But picking the best smart speaker can be easy if you know what you're looking for. Here's our thoughts.

Note that the products discussed here are independently chosen by our editors.

Other options

Those smart speakers are our favorites, but you still have lots of other options if you're looking for something specific. Read our breakdown of Alexa versus Google Assistant versus Siri if you'd like to learn each one's pros and cons and decide by platform.

Note that neither the original Amazon Echo nor the original Google Home made an appearance above because you can get the same capabilities for less with the smaller (Dot and Mini) versions. That said, if you want a smart speaker that splits the difference between affordability and premium sound, both are still solid options.

If you like the idea of always-listening help but want something more visual, check out our smart display best list. Smart displays essentially combine a smart speaker with a touchscreen so you can watch videos on

YouTube, make video calls, scroll through pictures and control your smart home gadgets with a touch. Amazon and Google both have several options in this booming smart display category of smart home tech.

There are also lots of third-party devices with Alexa built in, and a growing number of third-party speakers with Google Assistant. Check out the Amazon Tap or the UE Megablast if you want Alexa in a portable body. The TicHome Mini is another, more compact choice if you want a portable smart speaker with Google Assistant. You can also buy add-ons from a company called Ninety7 if you want to make your Google or Amazon smart speaker portable.

Finally, the Harman Kardon Invoke uses Microsoft's assistant Cortana. It's competent enough if you're a Windows fan but otherwise doesn't have enough going for it to stand out from the crowd. Samsung even has a much-delayed smart speaker, the Galaxy Home with Samsung's assistant Bixby.

Figure out what platform or features you'd like, and you should be able to quickly narrow down your options and find the best smart speaker for you and your family.

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