

New (remote-controlled) Home Automation Devices



The world is changing fast! These and other home automation tools will let seniors (and everyone else) customize their home environment for safety, savings and comfort.

Phillips' Hue is a “personal wireless lighting” system that performs simple remote control lighting operations, but can also copy color palettes from favorite photos. It can be expanded up to 50 bulbs on a single controller bridge managed by an Android or Apple app. (The \$200 starter pack contains three bulbs and a bridge.)

You can wake up gently with slowly increasing light intensity or use light “recipes” for different moods or tasks (Relax, Concentrate, Energize, Read). Each bulb has its own “web address” so it can be controlled independently or in tandem with the entire system, which can be integrated with motion detectors and other standard home automation devices. MeetHue.com


Nest Labs debuted with its Nest learning thermostat, which uses heuristic scheduling and a set of algorithms to learn from users' behavior, claiming roughly 20 percent savings on monthly heating and cooling bills. You can also change the temperature in your house remotely using an Apple or Android mobile device.

Next came Protect, a smarter smoke and carbon monoxide monitor. Nest Labs recently opened their software to developers and Control4 has already created a system that integrates lights, motorized shades and other devices. More recently, Nest Labs was purchased by Google. Nest.com

Samsung is introducing a Smart TV that not only goes online, but also lets you adjust your thermostat and close the blinds without leaving your recliner. Samsung.com

LG's HomeChat is a messaging app that allows you to control “smart” LG appliances from a mobile device. While shopping, for instance, you can send your refrigerator a text message and find out how much milk you have—or the expiration date—so you know what to buy. Instruct your vacuum to run while you are away. Start your washing machine or check the status of the current load. Or, ask your cooking range how to prepare a particular dish and it will provide the recipe! LG.com

WeMo Home Automation connects a small group of home automation products, all of which can be controlled from a smartphone, to make homes safer, warmer/cooler and less expensive to operate. A motion detector will light up a room as someone enters, effortlessly improving safety. The WeMo light switch can be controlled from anywhere using WiFi and a smartphone. Plug-in switches let users remotely turn appliances on and off, set schedules and monitor usage and costs. Belkin.com



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