How To: Start Building Your Smart Home!

If you're interested in automating your home, there are a number of ways to get started, here we'll walk you through the flow that has worked best for our members.

First off, we recommend building your connected home in steps. Also, consider investing in smart home technology that can save you money and time.

Try starting simple. Light bulbs and plugs are some of the easiest and least expensive ways to get started. The advantage of starting with light bulbs and plugs is that they are easy to setup and you can start seeing the benefits right away. Smart plugs can quickly convert existing household items like lamps and coffee machines into smart devices. You can then turn the lamp on and off by using the app you've installed on your mobile device. You can also set it on a schedule, so that it turns on and off at specific days and time. This is most useful if you are on vacation and you want the light to turn on and off to make it appear as if you are at home.

The next step is installing a smart thermostat. Smart Thermostats are more expensive (and harder to install) than light bulbs, but the device that people associate with a "smart home". In the long run these devices end up paying for themselves in the form of lower electricity bills. Nest looked at a year of its users' data, and discovered that the Nest

thermostat could save customers about 20 percent a year on home heating and cooling costs!

Another common way consumers start getting setup with a Smart Home is by installing a security device like smart deadbolt locks, doorbells, and security cameras. Like the thermostats, these devices are more expensive than the light bulbs and plugs and take a bit more effort to install. But if you are looking to add another level of security to your home with additional features and remote control, these options may fit your needs.

How do you take your smart home to the next level? If you get a voice-control device like an Amazon Echo (eg Dot, Tap, Show) or Google Home, you can use it to control compatible lights bulbs and plugs. For example, I have two lamps in my living room and it's difficult for my young kids to turn the lights on and off by themselves. Now that these lamps are connected to my Amazon Echo my kids just have to say "Alexa, turn on living room lights". You can also use Echo or Home as a smart speaker system, playing music throughout your home with services like Amazon Music, Spotify, Pandora, or iTunes.

Ok, now you have multiple smart devices in your home, and you probably want to consider getting a "Hub". Hubs provide a unified command and control platform for all your smart devices. You can create "scenes" that command multiple devices to do a set of actions. For example, you can create a scene called "I'm Home". So when you unlock your front door, the thermostat increases the temperature to 76 degrees and turns on the living room lights. Or you can create a scene

called "Goodnight" to turn off all the lights, lock the front door, and lower the thermostat temperature to 68 degrees.