



SPECIAL
REPORT

THE BEST HOME SECURITY SYSTEMS

**Choosing Smart Locks,
Home Surveillance Cameras,
Home Security Monitoring
Systems & More**

Basics of a **HOME SECURITY SYSTEM**



Here are products, features and FAQs for you to consider when setting up home security.

WHILE DO-IT-YOURSELF security is all the rage, many homeowners feel more comfortable about the reliability of a comprehensive, professionally monitored alarm system that ensures emergency crews will reach your residence fast. This may also help you save on your homeowner's insurance.

Here's a look at the key elements of a security system, and what each entails.

CENTRAL ALARM MONITORING

- ◆ A central station monitoring service verifies alarms before dispatching authorities.
- ◆ Typically, users do not pick their central station; the security dealer has its own relationship with a UL-listed station.
- ◆ Communications can be via land line, cellular, Internet or a combination.
- ◆ Cost: \$25 to \$45 per month (cellular backup may cost extra).
- ◆ Optional two-way alarm verification enables monitoring personnel to listen in—only in the event of an alarm—and communicate with residents to verify the alarm before dispatching. In most areas verification escalates the alarm response.
- ◆ Most insurance companies will give a substantial discount on premises with monitored systems.

MOTION SENSORS

- ◆ Motion sensors provide a second line of defense if an intruder gets past the door/window sensors.
- ◆ Sensors are often called PIRs, because they use passive infrared technology to detect the heat emitted by an intruder.
- ◆ Advanced PIRs will detect body heat and motion, and even distinguish between a person and a pet, up to a certain size.
- ◆ Motion sensors also serve as occupancy sensors. A security dealer can program the system to turn off lights in the room if there is no activity for 15 minutes.
- ◆ Mount PIRs in areas that burglars would have to pass if they gained entry

SIGNAGE

- ◆ Window stickers and yard signs tell would-be intruders: Don't even think about trespassing here.

SECURITY CONTROL PANEL

- ◆ As the hub of the system, the security panel communicates with all of the devices including sensors (wired and wireless), sirens, keypads, central monitoring station and the Internet.
- ◆ A UL (Underwriters Laboratories)-approved system will provide battery backup for 24 hours if electricity goes out.
- ◆ The number of "zones" refers to the number of sensors tied into the security system.
- ◆ Wireless self-contained systems include keypad, audio/siren and the system smarts

DOOR/WINDOW SENSORS

- ◆ The first line of protection, door/window sensors (sometimes called "contacts") detect the opening of doors and windows.
- ◆ A system can be programmed to sound a chime when a door or window is opened in an unarmed mode.
- ◆ Be sure to secure upstairs decks and balconies.
- ◆ Don't forget the basement; window wells are a common point of entry

SIRENS

- ◆ Most systems have one tone for a burglar alarm and another tone for fire.
- ◆ Consider a system that also provides voice feedback so it can announce the specific issue: "Intrusion, master bedroom window."
- ◆ Many municipalities prohibit outside sirens to avoid annoying the neighbors.
- ◆ A good system will have a siren time-out feature, typically 15 minutes, in the event the system should go off accidentally.

LIFE SAFETY/ENVIRONMENTAL SENSORS

- ◆ Most homes have standalone smoke detectors (required by law), but tying them into a security system ensures rapid response from the fire department.
- ◆ Heat detectors are used to detect fires in areas that are naturally smoky or dusty, such as kitchens, basements and garages.
- ◆ Additional sensors can monitor for carbon monoxide, natural gas and LP gas.
- ◆ Water sensors are often placed near water heaters, sump pumps and washing machines to detect leakage.
- ◆ Freeze detectors can report a low temperature; they're great for travelers or those with second homes.
- ◆ A variety of health-related sensors can be tied to an alarm system, including panic pendants and fall detectors.
- ◆ Use driveway sensors to notify you when a car pulls into the driveway.

KEYPADS, TOUCHSCREENS AND APPS

- ◆ Typically, homeowners can arm the system to all (all sensors active), perimeter (ignores interior detectors) or some variation, and the homeowner can select which sensors or zones to ignore.
- ◆ In an automated home, the automation touchscreen may double as a security keypad, but at least one dedicated security keypad should be installed in the house.
- ◆ Mount your keypads in a place where outsiders cannot see its armed/disarmed status through a window.
- ◆ Alternatives include biometric (fingerprint), card and proximity readers, mobile device apps as well as wireless key fobs.

SECURITY FAQs

What's the deal with bargain-price security systems? Those may require a two- or three-year contract, much like a new mobile phone plan, and the monitoring rates are often higher. Beware: These subsidized systems include just the basics: typically two door sensors and one motion detector. Expect to pay more to get all of your doors and windows covered.

What's the difference between hardwired and wireless systems? The installed cost of a wireless sensor is typically about the same as a hardwired sensor. The wireless sensor itself costs more but the installation is quick, so the added cost is a wash. The tradeoff is that wireless sensors are generally larger than their hardwired counterparts because they include a radio and a battery. Batteries in a good wireless system should last three to five years or more. Wireless range might be an issue in a very large home or with some construction materials such as metal or plaster and lath. Still, wireless solutions are generally as reliable as hardwired and a great option for retrofit installations.

Why pay for a monitoring contract? Some security systems can be monitored via the Internet, smart phone or email, but such monitoring may not serve you well in an emergency. What if your cell phone is off, for example? On the other hand, professional monitoring provides 24/7 protection and the ability to dispatch emergency crews immediately. Moreover, most insurance companies will provide homeowners with a 15 percent to 20 percent discount for a monitored alarm system.

What else can you add to a security system? Most security systems can communicate with lighting controls, so an installer might rig the system to flash the inside and/or outside lights in an alarm event. Also consider a scenario in which the fans for your heating/AC system turn off if the smoke detector trips. Likewise, your water valve can be shut down automatically if a flood sensor trips.

Will I get charged for false alarms? Some communities charge a false alarm fee, but typically only after the second or third false alarm in a year.

Do I need a land line for alarm monitoring? No. You can use cellular or Internet as your primary or back-up communications.

10 Most Important **SECURITY SYSTEM ADD-ONS**

Electronic door locks, more sensors, lighting options and more ways to beef up your security system.

IMAGINE USING YOUR SMARTPHONE to see who's at your front door while you're thousands of miles away. Or hearing a unique beep when a door or a pool gate opens. Or having your home's lights turn off automatically when you leave.

Many of these "smart" home features are possible with security systems. They aren't just boring, mundane systems limited to arming and disarming an alarm and providing video feeds from surveillance cameras. Connect a security system to your home's lighting, electronic door locks, thermostats, motion sensors and driveway sensors, and the Internet—and you can start enjoying the benefits of true home control and automation.

When programmed by a custom electronics (CE) professional, a security system can react to the information it receives from connected devices such as motion detectors and window sensors. For example, when the system gets a "tap on the shoulder" from a water sensor in the basement, it can respond by sending you a text message and flashing the kitchen lights. Another text could go out when the electronic door lock is unlatched or a surveillance camera detects motion at the front door.

Here are 10 of the smartest devices to consider adding to your security system. Be sure to consult with your CE pro to ensure your security system supports these accessories.

Surveillance Camera

The best thing to happen to surveillance cameras is the Internet. Almost every manufacturer makes an IP (Internet Protocol) model, which lets you view—and often pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ) the camera—from any device with a web browser, such as your iPad, smartphone or laptop. If you don't like what you see on camera, you can pop into the app that came with your security system to alter the security settings remotely. Surveillance cameras come designed either for interior or exterior installation. Consider using both.



Smart Light Switches

Lights and lighting control are one of the first things a CE pro will suggest you link to your security system. This way, when the system senses someone in the backyard, it can flash the lights to scare away the intruder. When smoke is detected, the system can activate select lights to illuminate a pathway from the bedrooms to the front door, for example. The classic application is having the lights turn off when you arm the security system and are leaving the house (or having all go off except for a select few to make the home appear occupied). There are countless other ways lights can be integrated.

Motorized Draperies

Simply closing the window drapes and blinds provides most people with an extra sense of security. Many motorized rollers, tracks and rods can be integrated with a home security system, enabling it to close the shades, drapes and blinds automatically when the system is armed or when a timer signals them.

Intelligent Thermostats

In addition to triggering smart switches to light pathways in response to a smoke alarm, a security system can also tell the smart thermostats to turn off the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems to prevent smoke from spreading. And just as the lights can be set to turn off when the security system is armed, a thermostat can be set back automatically to save you energy and money while the house is unoccupied. (Here's our review of Nest's learning thermostat.)

Electronic Door Locks

In addition to being convenient—fewer keys to juggle—an electronic door lock can report to your security system when someone enters or exits the house, as well as which passcode was used. The security system can send you a text or an email when this happens; it's a great way to know that the kids arrived home from school safely. These locks can also be installed on interior doors to protect sensitive areas in the house, like wine cellars, home theaters and gun rooms. (Check out our review of Schlage's Touchscreen Deadbolt.)

Driveway Sensors

It's often better—and safer—to know you have visitors before there's a knock on the front door. A driveway sensor can notify you that a vehicle has entered your property by sounding a chime or ringing the house phone. You can use your surveillance camera to see if you recognize the guest or pretend you're not home. Like most products that can talk to a security system, hardwired and wireless models are available.

Phone/Intercom System

Built with many of the same features as a traditional intercom system, a digital phone system lets you communicate easily with other members of your family. From a handset in the kitchen you can dial the extension of a phone in an in-law's bedroom to be sure they're doing alright. The phone extensions

can even work as baby monitors. By activating the monitoring feature, you can listen in on a sleeping baby from any other phone in the house. These phones can also tie into a communications station at the front door so you can speak with a visitor before welcoming him or her into your house. They may not tie in directly with a security system, but they're a great complementary piece. Some security systems have this feature built in, so you can communicate directly from the same keypad you use to arm or disarm the system.

Water Sensors

Placed by the sump pump, washing machine and beneath sinks, water sensors can signal a security system whenever they detect moisture. You can have the security system notify you by text or email, sounding a chime, or even turning off the water supply. Temperature sensors, freeze sensors and humidity sensors can communicate other potentially harmful environmental conditions to your security system.

DVR

We're not referring to the DVR you use to record your favorite programs. Available for security purposes are DVRs that record images captured by surveillance cameras. You can have the cameras record continuously, which takes up more space on the hard drive, or only when the camera detects motion. If the DVR has a built-in web server, you can view the recordings remotely on your smartphone, computer or other mobile device.

Special Sirens

Most security systems come with an alarm that activates in the event of an emergency. In some cases it's wise to add other noise-making elements or devices to the system. A chime that rings when somebody opens the gate to the swimming pool area provides a great heads-up. You might also add a siren to the backyard to scare away intruders, and another to keep track of your kids by beeping when any exterior door opens.

SMART LOCKS

Aren't As Dumb As You Think

A look at several products that use technology to get you in and out of the house.

FORGET YOUR KEYS? Actually in today's *Electronic House*, that's not a question, but a command! There are several smart locks out now, all of which make leaving your keys at home less of a worry.

Some smart locks look very similar to your existing door lock, with a slot for those old keys. Others can add a bit of flash to your front door. That said, all of these options have technology built in, so you can monitor visitors from your couch or halfway around the world.

Several companies are currently making locks that are accessible from your smartphone and/or tablet. Many of these options take the place of your existing lock, making them very easy to install. From there, you just add the device to your home network and/or download the corresponding app.

Of course, there are differences to consider when choosing a smart lock:

Size: The size of your lock matters. Some are small, while others include the actual handset or doorknob. Choose the one that's right for your door and needs.

Functionality: As mentioned, some smart locks include the actual doorknob. However, that's just one of a few features to consider when choosing a lock. Think about how you want to enter the home. Do you prefer iOS or Android? Do you want to enter the home with a code or the tap of your device? Also, will this lock be part of a larger home control setup? Some prefer to work alone.

Price: Of course, everyone considers the price tag of the actual lock, but some locks require a subscription for remote access. Keep that in mind, especially if you're not looking for another monthly fee.

A lot of shoppers have questioned the safety and reliability of these locks. After all, hackers gonna hack. Just remember that lock manufacturers want to make sure each product actually... well, locks. Also, a lot of those hackers have bigger fish to fry. That said, if you're housing a mini Fort Knox, you may want to look into adding a full-fledged security system or even a Bullmastiff.

Are you ready to pick your perfect smart lock? (Well, not *literally!*) Check out these smart lock systems:

Yale Key Free Touchscreen Deadbolt

Yale's latest deadbolt doesn't have any sort of app component. So what makes it so smart? It has the good sense to connect to any platform or app using Z-Wave or ZigBee. That lineup includes systems made by Crestron, Honeywell, Leviton, AT&T, Staples, and much more. To make that happen, you'll need to add in a \$125 module, as well as the third-party manufacturer's subscription fees (if any). Otherwise, this lock has an illuminated touchscreen and keypad for keyless entry via a code. Also worth noting is that the lock allows for a few dozen codes, for personalized or temporary entry options. **\$200 (deadbolt only)**



Lockitron

This one doesn't want to see your old lock go into the trash heap. Instead, Lockitron fits snugly over your existing lock. Why bother? Because Lockitron packs in Bluetooth 4.0, Wi-Fi and NFC support. Just attach this to your door, hook the included mini server to your home network, and download the app. From there, Lockitron can provide hands-free access, when you're walking up to the door with the smartphone in your hand or pocket. It also provides remote access, alerts (for \$5 a month), and the option for black, white, silver or blue finishes. **\$179**



Schlage Touchscreen Deadbolt

We reviewed this deadbolt in July 2013. However, since then, it's had a few enhancements. It's still easy to install and offers key-free entry via a touchscreen, with options for up to 30 user codes and a built-in alarm. Of course, it also still has smart features, with an add-on subscription to Nexia Home Intelligence (which adds a \$9 monthly fee for remote access). The big change is that parent company Ingersoll-Rand recently announced a spin-off company, which will put this lock's Z-Wave support to more widespread use. In other words, the lock will soon be able to integrate into other home control systems as well. Expect more on that in coming year. **\$199**



Kwikset Kevo

Like some of the other entries on our list, Kwikset's Kevo is a Bluetooth-enabled deadbolt that's designed to turn your smartphone into a key. However, you will need to physically touch the lock to get in. Users can also opt to send "eKeys" to friends and service people. Once someone receives an eKey, they will need to install the free app. If it's easier, you can just open the door remotely. Kevo also sends notifications when someone enters and exits the home. Designed to work with iOS devices, the company says that an Android app will be coming soon. It should also be noted that this smartphone doesn't discriminate against those without currently technology. If you don't have a smartphone, a Kevo key fob option is available for single-person use. **\$219**



LockState RemoteLock

This lock has a keypad, but also the power of Wi-Fi for access from any smartphone, tablet or other web-enabled device. It can provide remote access, temporary codes, scheduled access times, and text alerts. However, the hook here is that RemoteLock is part of the LockState Connect family, so it can be integrated with other home devices, including motion sensors, thermostats, security cameras, and more. Available in lever or deadbolt models, RemoteLock does have a service fee for those remote features. However, next to free, it's the cheapest we've seen, starting at just 99 cents per month. **\$249**



Goji

Like some of the other locks on the market, the Goji has support for Bluetooth and Wi-Fi and can deliver access upon approach (with a smartphone that has access, of course). However, it does add a few interesting options to your front door. First of all, it has a camera, allowing the lock to send and record picture alerts of visitors. It also has a sharp LED that will welcome users in bright blue text. There's no keyhole on this one, which could be a problem. That's why Goji offers 24/7 customer service in case you misplace your phone. There's also a key fob option for misplaced keys or users opting for smartphone-free use. **\$245**



August

Forget fumbling with keys. The August doesn't even need you to reach for your smartphone. It uses Bluetooth technology and your portable to actually unlock the door as you approach. It certainly knows your phone, but allows you to also send invites to friends and extend that invitation to a night, a week or indefinitely. The lock uses four AA batteries and doesn't need to connect to your network, so it's always on. Currently, the August is available for pre-order, with plans to ship in early 2014. When that happens, it will be compatible with the iPhone and Android devices, but BlackBerry and Windows Phone 8 support is supposed to follow soon. **\$199**



Simple, Stand-Alone **SECURITY CAMERAS**

Get a peek at security solutions that work in conjunction with the web.

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY to start thinking about vacations. But while you're thinking about relaxing, travel gear, and your best swimsuit, predators are doing a bit of their own planning.

Now is the perfect time to think about a security system. Today, there are plenty of security options that work in conjunction with smartphones, tablets and computers. That way, you can check in on your property, whether you're soaking up the sun on a local beach or one that's 3,000 miles away.

Of course, installing a whole-house security system can really cut into your vacation budget. If all you need is a little peek, there are a variety of stand-alone security cameras that are inexpensive, easy to set up, and can work alone—as well as in pairs. Whether you opt to set up one camera in the living room or outfit the entire house, these security solutions can save you from any post-vacation surprises left behind by thieves, vandals, and even Mother Nature.

Stem IZON

This remote room monitor is so super slim, it can be placed almost anywhere. In fact, it can nestle very nicely on a shelf or somewhere else where it isn't so out in the open. From there, it will watch and listen—and even alert you to when there's motion or noise, via push notifications. That's right, there's an app for this as well, but only an iOS one. Designed to work with the iPhone, the iPad or the iPod touch, the IZON can tilt and swivel from a flat surface or be mounted to the ceiling. **\$129.95**



Belkin NetCam HD

This little Wi-Fi-enabled camera can be set up without any help from a PC. Just plug it in and use the app to get everything up and running—and spying. It can stream audio and 720p HD video. Also, because it has a wide-view lens, it's nice for larger spaces. Pair it with the free NetCam app for live viewing or to record the action right to your portable. Other features include night vision, alerts, and support for iOS and Android devices. **\$129**



Netgear VueZone

This video monitoring solution is one of the smallest on our list. Besides the compact size, the real hook here is that it's completely wire-free. It doesn't even need a power cord, which makes it easy to move and mount. Once it's in place, users can watch a live camera or receive a motion-detection alert and video clip via any web-enabled device. All VueZone cameras come packing the Basic service or you can opt for Premier to get the video motion alerts and support for up to five cameras. The Elite service triples those options, for up to 15 cameras and additional storage. **Starts at \$199**



Y-Cam HomeMonitor

This plug-and-play system promises instant security in minutes, thanks to both Wi-Fi and Ethernet connectivity. Once it's hooked to the network, create an online account and start peeping through any web-enabled computer or smartphone. There are no monthly fees and users can link several cameras for a whole-house solution. Another bonus is that Y-Cam offers indoor and outdoor HomeMonitor options. Each setup has free live streaming, 7 days of cloud storage, and unlimited email alerts. If you're into hoarding some of those tense moments, you can store alerts for up to 30 days for \$39.99 per year per camera. **\$199 to \$349**



Samsung Wi-Fi SmartCam

Samsung unleashed this simple camera, which includes Wi-Fi support, a built-in microphone, and IR LED lamps for night vision. Like many of the other offerings, it can offer real-time sound and motion notifications, as well as a quick peek via the Samsung SmartCam website and the iOS and Android apps. The hook here is built-in Picasa and YouTube integration, sharing via Twitter and email, and the option to add cloud-based storage through iWatchLife. **\$149**



Dropcam HD

This Wi-Fi-based webcam has become a really popular security solution. That's probably because it offers a 720p peek from any web-enabled device. It's also easy to add anywhere, thanks to the magic of Wi-Fi. The included Basic service can deliver a look at the living room or other area via real-time video, with cloud storage options starting at \$9.95 per month (or \$99 for the year). **\$149**

Foscam FI8918W

Our last entry is certainly one of the most popular—and most affordable. Promising a clear 640-by-480 resolution, the unit also has motion detection and night vision up to 26 feet. It can even pan up to 300 degrees and tilt another 120. Designed to work in conjunction with any web-enabled device, the FI8918W also has Wi-Fi support, two-way audio, WEP and WPA encryption, motion detection, and password protection. **\$74**



Third Iris VIAAS Falcon HD

This dome camera can spy from above indoors and out, delivering both on-demand and recorded videos to any device with web access. The weather-resistant camera offers 720p HD streaming and high-res JPG images, as well as built-in Wi-Fi, power focus and power zoom features. It also has a built-in infrared (IR) exchanger that automatically flips into night mode, for better visibility. According to VIAAS, you can link hundreds of cameras, if needed. Just know that each one comes packing a year of service, which includes cloud-based archiving. After that, expect to pay at least \$119 per year per camera. **Starting at \$299**



Honeywell Total Connect

This company is known for some of its whole-house security solutions, but Honeywell does have four different stand-alone cameras for indoor and outdoor applications. The iPCAM-WI2 is a fixed solution available in white or black, with a 640-by-480 resolution and built-in Wi-Fi. The iPCAM-PT adds in pan and tilt features and motion sensors, with the iPCAM-WO made for outdoor use. All four can be paired with Honeywell's WAP-PLUS (Wireless Access Point) for secure, wireless networking, as well as Total Connect Remote Video Services (\$10-\$15 per month) for a peek from any web-enabled device. **\$200-\$300**



D-Link DCS-2332L

Most of the options on our list are perfect for indoor spying. However, sometimes you need to keep your eye on the prize—or at least your backyard. This outdoor day/night camera has IP-65 certified weatherproof casing, so it can live outside all year round. Expect nice 720p HD video, even during the harshest weather conditions. Other features include a passive infrared (PIR) sensor for motion detection and email alerts, a 10x digital zoom, night vision up to 26 feet, and a micro SD/SDHC slot. **\$284**



8 Must-Have Devices FOR A SECURITY SYSTEM

By Rachel Cericola

YOUR LOCAL NEWS is filled with stories of break-ins and burglaries. It's heartbreaking—and in some cases, completely avoidable.

Having a home security system can actually deter intruders. Of course, there are predators who are bold (or stupid) enough to continue with their crime-spree, even when some type of security is obviously in place. That's when a system can be most effective. It can alert police, the fire department, and even the neighbors. It can also catch burglars in the act, via connected cameras.

According to the FBI, there were over 2.1 million burglaries in the United States in 2010. That number may get you thinking about a security system, but here are a few other things you should think about:

Monitoring Costs. Monitoring is something very important to consider. Do you want another set of eyes keeping watch on your home? There are plenty of services to choose from, but they're going to cost you. A service that comes with 24/7 professional monitoring like ADT, Vivint, Xfinity Home and AT&T Digital Life cost \$29.99 to \$49 month and can get first responders to your house much faster.

Again with the Money! There are other money-related things to keep in mind, besides monitoring fees. For instance, some towns charge a permit fee to have a security system, while others may charge for false alarms. Make sure to contact your installation and/or monitoring company or even your town hall to find out about any associated fees before it's too late. Oh, you may also want to call your insurance company. They may actually give you money or discounts for having some type of alarm system installed.

Security Can Be Part of a Bigger Package. Security is easy to tie into a larger home automation system, especially lighting. If you currently have smart devices or want to add them in the near future, make sure that your security system is compatible.

Wired vs. Wireless. Hardwired systems have always ruled the security roost. However, there are a lot of great wireless options out there these days. In other words, don't assume that adding security will require massive holes in the walls. That said, you should also know that most wireless systems aren't completely wireless. Many require a power source or other types of wired connections.

Now that you have the basics, let's look at some of the most important hardware components in a home security system:

Smart Locks

It doesn't seem like the most high-tech part of the security system, but it can be. Smart locks are all the rage these days. Some tie into a larger home security setup, while others work nicely alone—or at least in conjunction with a smartphone or other web-enabled device. When choosing a smart lock, consider the size of the lock, the functionality, and of course, the price. After all, there are several smart lock options these days, including the pictured August Smart Lock.

For More Information: August

Control Panel

If this is going to be a high-tech system, it's going to need a brain. The control panel monitors the activity from the various components that you'll see on this list. Once something like a sensor or camera is triggered, the control panel can notify you or a monitoring company (if you have that option). While not all of the products on this list require a control panel, it does tie together a complete system. There are plenty of hardwired and wireless options. ADT has specific control panels that can tie into other products and the company's 24/7 monitoring service. Elk has the M1, a control panel that's designed to work with several third-party systems. Honeywell also has a slew of its own options, including the pictured VISTA-21iP, which provides up to 48 zones of protection.



For More Information: ADT, Elk Products, or Honeywell

Keypads or Touchscreens

If you're going to have a control panel, you'll need ways to access it. Sometimes, running down to the main control panel isn't convenient—or safe. Instead, you can add keypads throughout the house so the system can be accessed almost anywhere. Of course, you probably wouldn't need one inside the bathroom, but having one in the garage and another in your bedroom will allow you to arm and disarm the system, check the status, or alert the monitoring company at a moment's notice. There are plenty of keypads for the DIYer, but every professionally installed system also has its own selection of keypads. Pictured is Honeywell's 6280 Color Graphic Voice Touchscreen Keypad, which has audible alerts and Z-Wave support, as well as the ability to display video and photos.



For More Information: Honeywell

Sensors

There are several different types of sensors. These are basically “switches,” which can trigger the alarm system in case of an emergency. Some sensors are designed to alert the system when a door or window has been opened. Some can even alert you to breaking glass or when water is present in a place where it shouldn't be present. Once a sensor is triggered, it can alert your system to sound an alarm, send a text message, or even notify authorities. In some cases, the sensor can trigger cameras to start recording. Despite being the smallest part of a security system, sensors are the most crucial. Just be aware that some sensors do require wiring knowledge to be installed and/or integrated into a whole-house system. Of course, there are easy alternatives like the pictured Swann Magnetic Window/Door Alarm, which doesn't require wiring and operates like a stand-alone security device with its own built-in audible alarm.



For More Information: Swann

Motion Detectors

What happens if an intruder slips past those window and door sensors? You may want to think about a motion detector. This is very similar to a sensor, except that it detects motion and body heat. Pets can actually trigger some motion sensors, so you may want to take that into consideration when buying one. (In other words, a few extra bucks could save you a lot of chest pains.) However, if you don't have a pet or need an inexpensive alternative, Belkin's WeMo Switch + Motion makes for an affordable (\$79.99), easy alternative. Just plug in the device and pair it with the lamp and the free WeMo app. Users can set up the system to turn on a light, fan or other device once motion is detected. The system can also send out alerts, making it a nice compliment for a web-enabled camera.



For More Information: Belkin

Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors aren't just convenient; they're also required by law. They can even be pretty high-tech. If the smoke detector is tied into a security system with monitoring, you can get a super-speedy response from police and fire departments. The newly released Nest Protect doesn't work with larger security systems, but it does work with the Nest thermostat and a variety of web-enabled devices. The combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarm also has audible alerts, the option to silence the alarm with the wave of a hand, and a Pathlight feature for lighting your way in the middle of the night.

For More Information: Nest

Security Cameras

Cameras have become a vital part of the home security setup. After all, who doesn't want a peek at their home while away from home? There are plenty of hardwired options, but stand-alone, web-enabled cameras have recently become a very popular security option. Both the Dropcam HD and Samsung's upcoming SmartCam HD PRO (pictured) offer an easy alternative. Just place the camera wherever you want it, plug it in, connect it to your home network, and you can get a live peek at your property from any device with a web connection. Some stand-alone cameras even offer cloud-based storage for a small monthly fee.

For More Information: Dropcam and Samsung Techwin America



Key Fobs

This tiny device may not seem as essential as the others on our list—until your smartphone runs out juice, anyway. A key fob is a tiny device with built-in access to your security system. No web connection is needed. Instead, it has limited access built into a something that can double as a keychain. It's also a nice backup plan or even an easy way to give someone limited access to your home security system. Key fobs are also very easy to store in the glove compartment or in a kitchen drawer. The one pictured is Vivint's key fob, which allows users to arm and disarm the security system, as well as call the monitoring station, all without having to enter the home.

For More Information: Vivint



If you're interested in learning more about home security systems check out these useful resources

Find an Installer: Locate a professional in your area who can set you up with your dream system.

EH Daily: Helpful articles on a variety of home tech topics.

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