

A Buyer's Guide to Home Automation



Home Automation refers specifically to things in your home that can be programmed to function automatically. In past years, those automations were basic; lamp timers, automated holiday lighting and so on, but now the possibilities are endless. The good news is you can now lock your front door, turn lights on and off, or check on your kids from miles away. Why not upgrade your family's safety, comfort, and convenience and get automated!

Complete home automation may sound complex and expensive, but the days of overly priced & complicated systems are no more. Today, home automation can help you keep tabs on things like who's in your home and whether the alarm has been activated. Yet, these handy gadgets give you numerous ways to control what goes on in your house, even if you're stuck at work or on holiday.

With home automation anything is possible, but it can be a minefield just to work out what system is right for you and what precisely you want it to do. Our home automation solutions are designed to offer you any combination of:

- Automated lighting & control systems
- Multi-room audio video
- Home cinema/Entertainment installations
- Security & CCTV systems
- Remote Access including garden gates
- Occupancy simulation
- Data & communication
- Heating and air conditioning.

The most frequent question we get asked by our customers is "which control system should I buy?" The truth is you will probably be very happy with various controllers but in order to determine the best solution for you we need to have a thorough conversation with you about your specific wants & needs, your home, timeline and budget. Then together we can figure out the best tailor-made solution for you.

It can be difficult to decide which kind of smart home you want. Here are some pointers to consider before you meet with us to help you work out exactly what you would like your personalised system to do for you.

Think about your daily activities.

What do you do, repeatedly, though out the day or week? Turn off lights, check to see if your doors are locked, open and close the curtains, start watching a film in the lounge and finish it in the bedroom, listen to music in the garden, adjust the thermostat, throw big parties. All those things can be done better or enhanced with an automation/control system.

Don't think that automation is for lazy people. An automation system doesn't empower a person to sit around on the sofa while robots do things for them. It allows you to live your life more efficiently by automating and monitoring some of the more mundane and routine activities, freeing you up for more important and valuable activities.

Know what's available.

If you want your breakfast cooked and waiting for you on the kitchen table when you wake up, then hire a cook. If you want to be able to intelligently manage your film and music collection, enable easier access to your lights, or always know when your kids come home from school, then get an automation system. Often people are surprised at some of the options available, or if they've heard about them, they're surprised at how useful they can be. We hear all the time that automated lighting is one of those things that once you've tried it, you don't know how you managed without it.

Think about what your time is worth and what you're willing to invest to get more out of it.

While there are many DIY options in this market most of those require time, as well as differing levels of networking or construction know-how. Do you want to put that time into learning and installing or do you want to come home from work and find it all finished? Why not let the professionals do the hard work for you?

Consider remote access.

Do you want to be able to check in on your house when you're away? Do you want to be able to open the front door or garden gates from another city? These are great new features available with many control systems.

Think about the future—proofing your home – will you want to add to the system in the future, planning a garage conversion, new garden landscape?

As your professional installer, let us help you to select the right products and services best suited to you. We will work with you and gain a thorough understanding of what you want to achieve with your personal home automation and then we will know the most suitable products that you require for your tailor-made system.

This where it starts to get fun—picking out what you want.

Home Automation Systems and Technology Choices

There are a multitude of Home Automation systems available, here's our list offering an overview of some of the most popular smart home technologies we have installed.



AMX is an all-encompassing high-end professional home automation system. Usually only found in large bespoke homes as well as commercial settings like hotels and offices, it employs proprietary technologies to provide an exceptionally polished system where every item is controlled and managed.



C-Bus from Clipsal / Schneider is a professional home automation system. It's hard wired using a variety of topologies with CAT5 or similar cables – including it's own pink version. It offers some wireless products in the range now too. It encompasses a large range of modules, especially lighting, from this single supplier.



The Comfort system from Cytech is one of the most popular smart home security panels around. As well as featuring If/Then/Else logic, one of its strengths is its ability to integrate with a wide range of other home automation systems via one of its 'UCM' boards. These hardware interfaces allow – for example – your security PIR to detect movement and then turn on your C-Bus controlled lighting in response. They support other standards like RS232, RS485, Ethernet, Crestron, KNX, Z-Wave, Velbus and GSM.



First major control system built from the ground up using Apple's iOS devices – iPad®, iPad® mini, iPhone®, and iPod touch®. Features simple swipe gestures. Using Key Digital's Compass Navigator™ software, programming a Compass Control® device is an intuitive step by step process utilizing simple 'drag and drop' gestures.



As an official Control4 Authorized Dealer we highly recommend Control4. It is an all-encompassing mid to high end home automation system allowing you to control virtually any device in a home or business, automatically. Founded in 2003, the company mission is to deliver an elegant and more affordable way to control and automate lighting, music, video, security, and energy in a single room or throughout the entire home.



Crestron has been in business for over 40 years and is another high end all-encompassing professional home automation system. Like AMX it is a very fully featured proprietary system that has matured over many years. It is usually installed by CI's in large bespoke homes with big budget HA systems offering control of everything from Crestron's touchscreens and iOS devices.



Global Caché produce a range of WiFi / Ethernet IP enabled IR, serial, and contact closure devices. Most recently they have launched the iTach Flex range. The hardware allows you to control your home automation system using iOS (iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch) Android devices as well as integrate them into controllers such as Indigo.



KNX is the successor to several previous standards including the European Home Systems Protocol (EHS) and the European Installation Bus (EIB / Instabus). It's a huge ecosystem for the smart home with over 7,000 certified KNX products on the market from over 100 companies. KNX is currently popular in Europe but has very little presence in the USA.



A relative new comer, LightwaveRF from JSJS designs offers a range of attractive modern home automation modules at reasonable prices. This wireless range currently doesn't support status requests – although this may be coming in future hardware.



Around since 1961, Lutron are famous for inventing the solid-state dimmer. Now known for their intelligent lighting controls, Lutron is a professional grade system found in high end domestic and commercial installations.



Nest was started by Tony Fadell, one of the leads in both the iPod and iPhone design and development. Nest introduced the learning home heating thermostat and the more recently the Nest Protect smart home Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm and Nest Cam IP CCTV. Nest were acquired by Google in 2014.



Rako Controls produce a range of wired and wireless smart home lighting products that are designed and manufactured in the UK. iPhone and iPad control of lighting is available with their hardware bridge and their free Rako iOS App.



Founded in 2005 Savant Systems provide a suite of integrated proprietary automation solutions for residential and commercial applications built using Apple technology.



Zigbee is based on an IEEE 802 open standard and provides a low power personal area network.

Cabling

Can be retro-fitted or carried out during the build stage. It is very important to consider future proofing at this stage and to have thoroughly thought through what you would like to control with your new system. Typically, our home automation installations would include the following cables:

- CAT 5/6
- HDMI
- Speaker
- COAX
- Fibre Optic
- Alarm
- Small Power & Lighting
- Lighting Control

Frequent questions and concerns from our clients...

How much will home automation cost me, and will it have an impact on my energy bills?

Once we've had a detailed discussion with you, we will send you a full quotation in our standard clear & transparent format. Look out for recent case studies coming soon to our website including full installation details, project images and costs.

After an installation what if I want to add new equipment or automate something else?

With the correct cabling structure in place all systems are fully scalable and expandable.

If I fully automate my home will I be safe and secure?

Yes, to different levels very much depending on the systems installed. We can explain this to you fully when we see you and will be more than happy to discuss all the options available.

Help & Support

The best home automation solutions have plenty of features compatible with your needs. It is also essential for home automation systems to have a usable configuration and readily available customer service. If you have a problem, it's very important to have good customer service options. We are proud to provide helpful support channels including face to face, telephone, email & user manuals. If you need us, we're here for you.

Our Matters specialist team can fully automate your home and entertainment systems. We'll bring you up to speed, so you are confident in controlling your new system and watch you sit back and have fun with it. We absolutely love hearing from our clients to see how they are getting on with their bespoke systems, they are always a pleasure to design & install.

As you can imagine, no two installations are ever alike, and no two clients are ever the same. We trust you found this guide useful but there is no substitute for meeting in person for expert advice. We'd love to talk to you, demonstrate all of the options and to help you design your own tailor-made Home automation and entertainment system.

Call now on 01494 738080 to speak to one of our specialists or if you prefer email enquiries@mattergroup.co.uk and we can contact you.