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1 About Echo and Alexa

Digital personal assistants are fast becoming one of the most common ways to get information and control a range of tasks in the home: from playing music to controlling a smart lighting system. One of the most popular digital personal assistants is the Amazon Echo, which is a hands-free speaker that uses Alexa to provide the voice-controlled functionality of the device. This chapter shows how to set up the Echo, using the Alexa app, so that it is ready to listen to your commands and respond to them.

About Amazon Echo

It would be nice if we could all have a personal assistant to help with day-to-day activities. Unfortunately, this is not an option for most of us, but help is at hand from the digital world. Digital personal assistants are now widely available to help with a range of tasks, from reading out the latest news to turning the lights on or off. One of the leading digital personal assistants comes from Amazon, in the form of Echo and Alexa.

The Amazon Echo is a hands-free speaker that you use to communicate with Alexa, and this is where content is delivered. Think of the Echo as the body of your digital personal assistant, and Alexa as the brains of the operation. Alexa can react to different voices, and some of the uses for the Echo and Alexa include:

- Playing music from your own music library or through an online radio station.
- Requesting the latest news and sports headlines.
- Setting up processes so that several actions can be performed in sequence.
- Making calls and sending messages to your contacts.
- Controlling smart devices in the home, including lighting systems, central heating and plugs.

The services and information delivered through the Amazon Echo by Alexa are cloud-based, which means that all of the data is stored in an Amazon computer (server) and then delivered through the Amazon Echo when it is requested. Nothing is physically stored on the Echo; it is merely a delivery system. The Echo works through connecting to your home Wi-Fi network: without Wi-Fi it will not function properly.

Models of Echo

There are several different models of Echo, which provide different functionality. This gives you the flexibility of putting different Echo models in different rooms of your home, to create the ultimate Echo experience. The models of the Echo include:

- **Echo**. Now in its 2nd generation, this is the original version of the device and can be considered as the "standard" Echo. It is a high-quality speaker that provides excellent sound for music, in addition to the full range of services from Alexa. It comes in a range of colors, and fabric covers can also be placed over the device, so that it can blend in to any room in your home. The cover style can be selected when you buy the Echo from Amazon.

Color Name: **Charcoal Fabric**

The standard Echo and the Echo Dot have buttons on the top of the device to control the volume, although this can also be done with voice commands to Alexa.

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- **Echo Dot**. This is a smaller version of the standard Echo device and is a good option if you want to expand your Echo system so that you have several devices, in different rooms. If you choose to do this, each Echo can be used independently (e.g. you can play different music in the family room and a bedroom).

- **Echo Spot**. This is an Echo device that includes a circular screen, like a slightly expanded version of the Echo Dot. It provides the standard information from Alexa and it can also be used to make video calls and display movies or TV shows from a streaming service such as Amazon Video or Netflix.

The Echo Dot and the Echo Spot do not have as powerful speakers as the other Echo models, although external ones can be added with a cable or Bluetooth.

- **Echo Show**. This is a model of the Echo that comes with a larger screen than the Spot: 7 inches (measured diagonally). It can be used for all of the same functions as the standard Echo, plus it can be used to stream movies and TV shows and make video calls.

- **Echo Plus**. This is the largest Echo model and contains a built-in smart home hub, so it is an excellent option if you want to use it to control other Echo devices and also smart devices in the home (although much of this can also be done with the standard Echo).

The button on an Echo with a solid dot is the **Action** button. This can be used to wake up the device, enable Wi-Fi mode (if not in operation) and turn off alarms and timers.

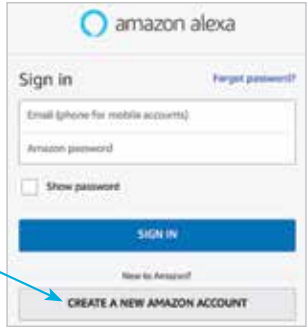
Setting Up Amazon Echo

The Amazon Echo has to be set up for use through the Alexa app, using an Amazon account. Once this has been done you can begin exploring and using the full functionality of the Amazon Echo and Alexa.

1. Download the Amazon Alexa app to your smartphone or tablet

2. Plug in the Amazon Echo. Alexa will tell you when it is ready to be set up, via the Alexa app

3. In the Alexa app, enter your Amazon account username and password and tap on the **Sign In** button. If you do not have an Amazon account, tap on the **Create A New Amazon Account** button



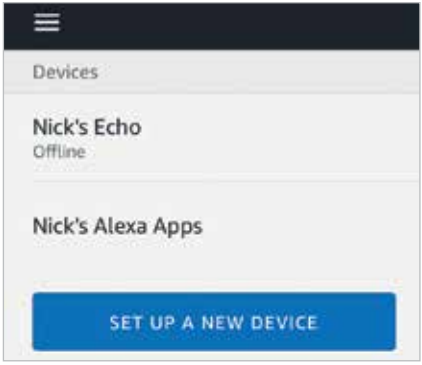
4. Tap on the **Continue** button

The Amazon Alexa app can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store, or online at https://alexa.amazon.co.uk (or .com)

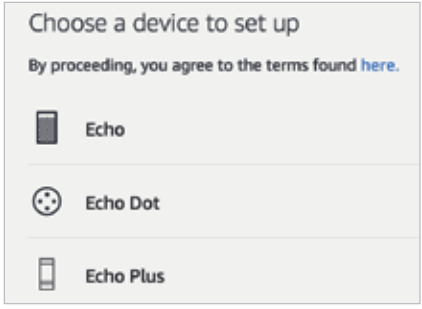
5 Tap on the **Menu** button

6 Tap on the **Settings** button

7 Tap on the **Set Up A New Device** button



8 Tap on the required device to set up. This is also the process that is used if you want to set up additional Echo devices after the initial one has been added



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9 Select a language for Alexa and tap on the **Continue** button

10 Since Alexa is a cloud-based service, it needs access to the internet via your home Wi-Fi network. Tap on the **Connect To Wi-Fi** button

11 When the light ring on the top of the Echo turns orange, tap on the **Continue** button

12 In your smartphone's or tablet's Wi-Fi settings, select the **Amazon** network

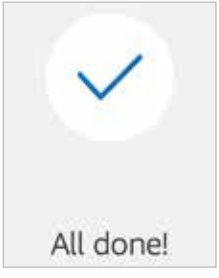
13 Alexa will inform you that you have connected your Wi-Fi to the Echo and ask you to complete the setup process in the Alexa app. Tap on the **Continue** button

14 Tap on your home Wi-Fi network to use this with Alexa

15 Enter your password for the Wi-Fi router

16 Tap on the **Connect** button

17 The Echo is prepared for use. When the **All done!** screen is displayed, tap on the **Go To Home** button to go to the Homepage of the Alexa app

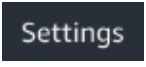


Changing the Wake Word

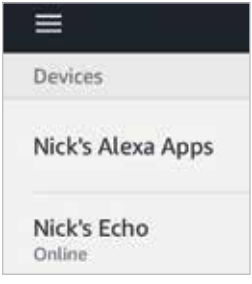
Each time you want to ask Alexa to do something, the wake word has to be said first to activate the Echo and Alexa. By default, the wake word is "Alexa", but this can be changed. To do this:

1. Open the Alexa app

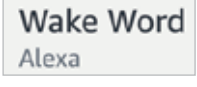
2. Tap on the **Menu** button

3. Tap on the **Settings** button 

4. Tap on your Echo's name; e.g. Nick's Echo (make sure it is showing **Online**)



5. Tap on the **Wake Word** button



The Echo name can be changed by selecting **Alexa app** > **Menu** > **Settings** > **Device name** > **Edit,** tapping on the existing name and entering a new one.

6 Tap on the down-pointing arrow next to **Alexa Device wake word**

7 Select a new wake word

8 Tap on the **Save** button to apply the new wake word for activating Alexa

Changing Alexa's Accent

The voice used on the Echo cannot be changed from a female one, but the accent can be changed. To do this:

1. Open the Alexa app and access **Menu** > **Settings** > **Echo name**, as shown on page 14

2. Tap on the **Language** button

3. Tap on the down-pointing arrow next to the existing language

4. Select a new language (this will be the accent used by Alexa)

5. Tap on the **Save Changes** button to apply the new language and accent for Alexa

Setting Your Location

It is important that Alexa knows your location (or more accurately, the location of your Amazon Echo) so that specific items can be tailored to it; i.e. when you ask for the current weather, or restaurant recommendations nearby. To set your location:

1. Open the Alexa app and access **Menu** > **Settings** > **Echo name**, as shown on page 14

2. Tap on the **Edit** button next to **Device location**

3. Enter a location for the Amazon Echo and tap on the **Save** button

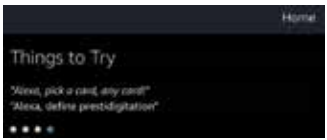
4. The location entered in Step 3 is displayed under the **Device location** heading and this will be used by Alexa

Around Alexa's Home

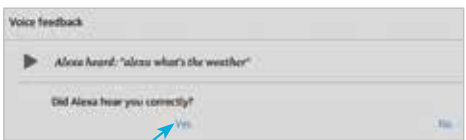
Within the Alexa app, the Homepage can be used to display the requests that have been made of Alexa and also give feedback about the accuracy of voice commands that have been made.

1. Open the Alexa app and tap on this icon at the bottom of the screen to view the Homepage

2. The top panel offers suggestions for questions to ask Alexa



3. The results for voice commands that have been made are shown below the top panel, with the most recent one at the top

4. Tap on the **More** button to provide voice feedback

5. Tap on the **Yes** or **No** buttons to provide feedback about whether Alexa heard your command correctly. This is used to train Alexa for subsequent requests