

10 Tips: Using Amazon Alexa with a Crestron Home Control System for Advanced Voice Control of Your Home

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One of the most exciting developments in home control is the alliance between Crestron and Amazon Alexa.

Now you can control any combination of home devices with a simple voice command. Just say “Alexa, good morning,” and your shades will open, your thermostat will adjust, your TV turn on and tune to the news, your coffee start brewing – or anything you want.

That’s on top of the thousands of possible uses of Alexa by herself, such as adding events to your calendar, shopping online, or helping you tune your guitar.

With Crestron linked to Alexa, you can trigger any combination of otherwise unconnected systems to work together to make your life easier. Say “Alexa, good night,” and you can lock the doors, turn on the alarm, turn off all the lights, and even put your music on a 30-minute off timer.

Your house can respond to the way you’re feeling as well. “Alexa, it’s too cold” can raise the thermostat.

“Alexa, it’s too dark” can bring up the lighting levels.

You can expect Alexa to operate everything in your home, including your audio/video system, lights climate, shades and security, pool or hot tub. Other systems can do some of this, but we like Crestron with Alexa best for three reasons:

- It’s comprehensive. Anything Crestron can control, Alexa can control.
- It’s seamless. There’s no need to say, “Alexa, tell Crestron we are leaving.” Simply say, “Alexa, we are leaving,” and she’ll set the security system, temperature, lights and other systems to your preferred away mode.
- It’s easy for the integrator, and that’s good for you. Crestron has built the Alexa Voice Service into the Pyng Control Hub, as well as the SIMPL programming platform, making Alexa a simple, reliable, reasonably-priced add-on.

At Think Simple, we like Crestron/Alexa so much that we offer it with every new home system, and we now install it more than half the time.

Still, we'd like to help everyone get the most out of their voice-controlled homes. So we thought you'd enjoy these 10 insider tips:

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1. Install Alexa in every high-use area, or anywhere you'd rather not have to touch a control screen or your phone. In the kitchen, change the channel or turn up the lights when your hands are wet. In the bedroom, flip on a night light without fumbling in the dark. In the family room, stop hunting for the remote.
2. Put your Echo or Echo-enabled devices in places that are convenient but out of the way: on your night stand, on a counter, or built into the ceiling.
3. Keep it simple. Used with Crestron, Alexa can control a remarkable range of devices, but you can't really have a conversation with her – she is limited to certain commands said in a certain way. While it's easy to say, "Alexa, turn on the lights," don't expect to say, "Alexa, turn on that red lamp over there next to the couch."
4. For that reason, we like to use Alexa to control the presets we set up with Crestron. "Alexa, we are home," or "Alexa, party mode." For most people, "Alexa, turn off the TV in 15 minutes" is the most complicated command they will want to give.
5. Keep your setup simple as well. For example, you can run Alexa's voice through your home audio system, but it's quicker, easier and just as nice to save your audio system for music and use the Echo device for her voice.
6. We like to use Sonos speakers with our Alexa installations, simply because Sonos works so very closely with Crestron and Amazon.
7. Ask your integrator about the Sonos One smart speaker. It has Alexa built in, so you don't need an Echo device. It has automatic equalization as well, so it sets up fast and sounds great.
8. When you start using Alexa, it can help to put a cheat sheet with several commands next to the device, just to get you acclimated to the technology. (We normally provide one for Think Simple clients.) Of course, if you get stuck, you can always just ask, "Alexa, what can I say?"
9. Create a profile for your voice (under "Your Voice" in the Alexa app). Alexa works well out of the box, but by doing this step she will be able to call you by name and personalize your experience.
10. Don't forget to try out some of the third-party applications (or "skills") that can do all sorts of things in addition to controlling your home. They're a lot of fun and very helpful.

One more thought. Alexa will be a great addition to your home, but she keeps getting smarter, adding features, and improving her understanding and accuracy.

Think Simple is an integrator of high-end residential systems with offices in Fort Lauderdale, Nassau and New York. Visit them at thinksimple.com.