

# A PARENT'S/CARER'S GUIDE TO SMART SPEAKERS



## 1. What are smart speakers?

Smart speakers are voice-activated devices that come with a digital assistant designed to help you with daily activities. The digital assistant is activated with a 'wake word', such as "Hey Google" for Google devices or "Alexa" for Amazon devices. After hearing this word, the virtual assistant will respond to a voice command or answer a question, such as, "Turn the light on" or "What will the weather be like tomorrow?"

## 2. How do you use them?

Smart speakers can play music, book appointments, make and receive calls, play games, tell jokes and much more. They can also be used to control other smart home technology, like smart TVs and devices that control lighting, heating, etc.

## 3. How much do they cost?

Prices for smart speakers range from €50 to over €350. These prices do not include fees associated with subscriptions, such as music streaming services.

## 4. Can owners of smart speakers interact with each other?

Smart speakers can make and receive calls - either to or from other smart speakers, phones or both. Amazon devices also offer a Drop In feature, which allows contacts that you approve to contact you without you needing to answer.

## 5. How old do you have to be to use it?

A child of any age can technically use a smart speaker without needing the consent of a parent or carer. This has caused concerns about the processing of children's data.

## 6. Is it risky?

Like all online devices, smart speakers can pose certain risks in terms of your child's privacy and the content they are exposed to.

Turning on content filters, disabling voice purchases and switching off the ability to make and receive calls can help to protect younger users. However, you should also talk to your child about online safety and establish agreed time limits for using smart speakers.

Fears have been raised that smart speakers allow companies to observe what happens in your home too, and that smart home technologies could potentially "spy" on their owners. However, every company offers privacy settings in its app, and some allow you to delete asked questions and conversation history.