

# Setting Up Your Smart Home

As ALS progresses, you may notice that it is becoming harder to do everyday things around the home, like turning on lights, adjusting the thermostat, and answering the door. Recent advances in smart home technology have made it possible to continue to do many of these things on your own, regardless of your physical limitations.

Smart home technology can let you control electronic devices around your home by speaking, touching a screen, or using an alternative access method.



## Creating a Smart Home with Consumer Products

Smart home consumer products can be a great option for people living with ALS due to their affordability, flexibility, and ease of use. Today's smart home devices operate through technology that many people already have: internet, Wi-Fi, and a smartphone or tablet. Digital assistants like Amazon's Alexa can be used with smart speakers, smart displays, phones, tablets, and computers. Once you set up your digital assistant and platform, you can choose from a wide variety of smart devices like bulbs, plugs, thermostats, and doorbells.

## Choosing Your Digital Assistant Platform

You can control everything through a digital-assistant-powered platform that can be operated by voice and/or a customizable digital dashboard on your phone, tablet, computer, or smart display. The most commonly used digital-assistant platforms are Amazon's Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple's Siri. You can do online research, talk with smart home experts, and consult with your ALS occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, or assistive technology professional to determine which platform and smart speaker might be best for you.

## Choosing Your Smart Devices

Once you have chosen your digital assistant platform, you can start researching and shopping for smart devices. Before purchasing a product, make sure that it is compatible with your platform. Many devices work across multiple platforms.

Some of the most common types of smart devices are smart bulbs, smart plugs, smart video doorbells, smart locks, streaming media controllers, and smart video cameras. There are many other types of smart devices. You can research and purchase them online or in stores that sell electronics.

## Other Smart Home Setup Options

There are two other ways you could set up your smart home. Instead of purchasing consumer products and running them through a digital assistant, you could either set up a hub or hire a company to install a custom system for your home. Setting up and using a hub can be a frustrating experience unless you have the technical expertise yourself or hire a smart home technician to help you with setup and troubleshooting. Hiring one company to come to your home to set up a custom system may provide the best functionality, but it is also the most expensive option.

## Selecting Your Best Access Method

No matter which system or digital assistant you have, you need to be able to access your platform. Access methods include tapping your phone or tablet's touch screen, using voice commands, and using eye-tracking technology. The occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, or assistive technology professional from your ALS clinic or medical team should be able to help you determine which access method is best for you.

## Getting Started

Smart home technology can be empowering, but it can also be frustrating when things aren't working right. If you don't feel confident setting up smart home devices, you can ask a tech-savvy family member, friend, or neighbor for assistance. Your ALS occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, or assistive technology professional may also be able to help.

Home automation costs are not covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance. However, if you are a military veteran with service-connected benefits, the VA will likely cover all of your home automation costs—even the more expensive custom systems. If cost is a concern, you can ask your local ALS Network care manager or ALS clinic if they have a smart home program, devices in their equipment loan closet, or suggestions for financial support. Another option is asking your state's Assistive Technology Program ([www.at3center.net/state-at-programs](http://www.at3center.net/state-at-programs)) if you can try out short-term loaner devices and/or get technical support.

### Get Local Support



*Formerly ALS Golden West*

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(866) 750-2572

[info@alsnetwork.org](mailto:info@alsnetwork.org)

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