



Helpful Echo/Alexa Voice Commands

The following pages give you various voice commands that you can use with any of Amazon's range of Alexa powered voice command/response Echo devices. Here is a list of the types of commands we explain :

Contents

Clear Alexa, End an Action	5
Changing the Volume.....	5
Alarms, Timers and Reminders	6
Lights and Other Switches	7
Notifications	7
Listen to Music.....	8
Multi-Room Music	8
Intercom	9
Additional for Contributors.....	10
Weather and News	10
Calendar	11
Shopping and Custom Lists.....	11
Stock Prices.....	12
Time and Date	12
Conversions	12
Cocktail and Wine Information	13
Travel Info	13
Alexa Security and Guard Functions	13
Find Your Phone	14
General Knowledge Resource.....	14
Strangest Skill	14
Most Useless Feature.....	15
Amazon Deals.....	15

Alexa Echo Connect Commands	15
Alexa Show Commands	16
Still More Features and Skill Suggestions.....	17
Chaining Alexa Commands and even Creating Your Own Skills	20

Syntax and How We Explain Each Command

Each section has three parts to it – the section heading, the spoken commands and explanation about the commands.

Spoken commands are shown in this style text.

Text within [square brackets] is optional. Change the descriptive words in (round brackets) to actual words for your requests

Text on either side of a “pipe” – eg Heads|Tails - is an either/or choice. Choose one or the other but not both.

Note that we don’t show the “wake” word (ie usually “Alexa” – see discussion in the next section immediately below) at the start of each phrase, but you’ll need to add that every time.

The comments are in this type of green text.

Please note it is entirely possible that other variations on the phrases we list below will work, using different words, synonyms, and different word orders to convey the same concept, and possibly with some words omitted. Feel free to experiment.

Amazon is adding more features and intelligence to Alexa every week, and we’ve often noticed that phrases that weren’t recognized before now seem to work, and word order and sentence structure is less rigid than before.

How to Speak to Alexa

Unless Alexa is actively listening for a response from you (its blue light will be on) you need to ‘wake’ the service by using its ‘wake word’. This is set by default to “Alexa” but you can change it to Echo, Amazon or Computer if you prefer.

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We recommend keeping it as Alexa, because that is the least likely word to be used in normal conversation, reducing the number of times you accidentally start it.

When addressing a unit to give it a command, you should speak conversationally, the same as you do in ordinary conversation, including running words together. All speech recognition software these days is designed to work with words run together and actually does better that way than if you speak each word individually.

Although there is an understandable temptation, when addressing Alexa, to first say “Alexa” and then pause, waiting for it to beep, and its lights to flash, before continuing on with what you want to say, this is not necessary. You can simply say the entire thing in “natural” speech.

A possible exception to this is if Alexa is currently playing music. Then we generally will first say “Alexa” which causes it to mute the music and we think that makes it better able to hear and understand what we subsequently say to it.

Adding “Skills”

Think of “skills” as you would apps on a phone.

Your phone comes complete with some built-in capabilities, and so too does Alexa. Then, when you wish to add more functions, services, etc, on your phone you load more “apps” and with Alexa, you add more “skills”.

To do this, you can sometimes simply say

Enable (Skill name)

If that isn’t possible, you should go to the Alexa App on your phone and choose the option Skills & Games. On either an iPhone or Android phone, click the three lines in the top left corner of the home page and choose the Skills & Games option from the menu that opens up.

You can then browse through or search for specific skills and add them to your Alexa service. Most are free, some have optional extras that are charged.

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In total, there are thought to be over 100,000 skills available as of September 2019, with 30,000 of those having been developed during the year. Yes, it is hard to keep up with them all!

We've not seen an updated count anywhere since the September 2019 number, which is slightly strange.

Where to Place Your Alexa Units

This is fairly self-explanatory – put them anywhere and everywhere that would be convenient. The more the merrier, or so Amazon would wish you to believe.

But there is one subtle thing to consider. Particularly with Alexa increasingly being integrated into home security units, it is suggested to keep your units away from windows, for fear that a thief might see the unit and be able to simply shout commands to Alexa through the window – commands to unlock your front door, open your garage, or who knows what else.

On the other hand, because one of the Alexa Guard features is to listen for broken glass in your windows (when burglars break in) you might want to have them not impossibly distant so they have a chance of hearing this should it ever occur.

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List of Alexa Commands

The following list is not in any obvious order. Sorry! We thought about alphabetical order, but it was difficult to know what the key word to sort would be, so we simply listed them in some sort of vague “makes sense to us but perhaps not you” order!

But if it means you find a command you didn’t know about, while looking for a different command, perhaps that’s not a bad outcome. Serendipity can be a wonderful thing!

Clear Alexa, End an Action

Stop

Generally but not always will clear/end any command or action or condition

Changing the Volume

Set the volume to (a number between 0-10)

Volume up/down

Increase/decrease the volume

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Alarms, Timers and Reminders

Set an alarm for (a specific time am/pm) [using (some sort of music or other audio source such as "BBC News on TuneIn" or "radio station on TuneIn")] [in/on (name of device)]

Set a repeating alarm for weekdays at (time)

Wake me up at {time}

Set a timer for [seconds or minutes or hours and minutes] [in/on (name of device)]

Start a [seconds or minutes or hours] (name to remember it by) timer

Remind me to (do something) [at a certain time/in so many minutes]

List alarms/timers/reminders

How much time left on my timer

Snooze

Clear all alarms/timers/reminders

Clear (time) alarm

Cancel my (unit name) timer

Doesn't need any associated Skill

An alarm can be set for a specific time in the next 24 hours.

Multiple alarms can be set, one by one.

Timers can be set for certain periods of time.

Note that you can say "set an alarm for [15 minutes]" and it will set a *timer* for that period. This is important because if you then say "list alarms" it won't tell you about the *timer* that it set.

A new format is to be able to set a timer or alarm on another device and to cancel them on another device.

Reminders or specifying what a timer for are great, because when they come due, Alexa tells you what the reminder is for, based on what you told it when setting the reminder. Much more useful than just having an alarm or timer sound, but not being sure what it is for!

Generally you turn off an alarm, timer, or reminder by saying *Stop*.

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Lights and Other Switches

Turn on/off (name of switch or light or group of devices)

Dim [the] (name of switch or light or group of devices)

Need to connect the switches and plugs and lights to Alexa first through the apps associated with the devices.

Can also connect door locks and thermostats and various other devices.

Dim and related brightness commands require dimmer switches rather than on/off switches and dimmable lights rather than simple on/off lights.

You can also create **groups of lights** (and other devices) so that instead of having to turn them on and off, one at a time, you can turn them all on or off at once. We suggest one group “all lights” so in an emergency you can turn on all lights in your house, and for convenience at night you can turn them all off, too. A device can be in multiple groups, so you could also have a group for “living room” and “upstairs” and so on as well as an “all lights” group.

Notifications

Notifications are typically messages from Amazon about orders you have made and their shipping/delivery status.

Notifications/Read my notifications/What did I miss

If you see the light pulsing on your Echo unit, it probably means there is a notification waiting for you. This command simply causes Alexa to tell you what it is, and then to clear the light signal.

Clear/Delete all (of my) notifications

If you don't want to hear the notifications, this command will get rid of them without requiring you to listen to them first.

We suggest setting Do Not Disturb times of day for your Echo units. You can do this through the Alexa App. We were being bothered by ridiculous announcements from Amazon about orders being shipped coming through the Echo unit in our bedroom at times of the night/early morning when most people would be sleeping. Setting the Do Not Disturb hours solved that – you don't lose the messages, they simply wait until the end of the DND time to appear.

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Listen to Music

Play (relaxing) music

Play music by (The Beatles or any other group)

Play (name of song)

Play my (station name) station on Pandora

Play (radio station name) [on TuneIn]

Skip this track

Pause/Start

Doesn't need any associated Skill

Can ask for a music genre, to match a mood, or a particular artist.

Can also play Spotify, Pandora, various other streaming services or music from your Amazon music account once you've connected them to your account in the Alexa app

You can stream music through your house through multiple Amazon devices – set them up in the Multi-room Music section of the Settings menu in the Alexa app. If you do this, the music will be synchronized across the devices. If you instead have devices separately playing the same music, there will probably be a few seconds of difference in the timing of each device.

Multi-Room Music

Play (music source) [on (name of source)] on (multi-room speaker group)

First, using the Alexa app, go to Devices and create a multi-room music group that includes all the Alexa speakers you wish to play the music.

Then choose any type of music source. If it is from a source like TuneIn, you *might* need to specify the music source as well.

You can stop playing the music by simply saying *Alexa Stop* to any of the speakers playing it. That will then stop the music playing on the entire speaker group.

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Intercom

Drop in on [name of Alexa unit/contact person]

Drop in on all devices

Hang Up (or "Stop" which works for most things)

This allows you to connect with other Alexa units in your family account, and – depending on their settings – with other Alexa devices belonging to other people who you have in your contact list.

The “all devices” option makes a type of conference call where all devices can both send and receive. This is useful if you’re not sure where in the house someone else is, but if you have a unit in a noisy area, that will cause problems.

You can also just say *Drop In* and Alexa will list the different units you can drop in on (useful if you can’t remember the name of the unit you want to call)

When active, it acts as a two-way voice activated intercom.

Announce (say something)

Tell everyone (something)

Whatever you say after the command word Announce will be played, as a recording of your voice, to every Alexa unit in your network, as soon as you have finished making the announcement.

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