**Amazon Echo Factsheet**

**What is it?**

Amazon Echo is a cylindrical home audio speaker (similar size to a flask) that integrates a personal voice assistant named Alexa, very much like Siri, Cortana and Google Now on your phone or tablet. It's always on and always connected with Wi-Fi allowing it to sit on your home network and access cloud services and Bluetooth. The Echo Dot has the same technology, but is a smaller (similar size to a puck) with a less powerful speaker.

The Echo (unless muted) listens continually. To activate it the user simply has to say the “Activation word” (Echo, Amazon or Alexa) and then give a command such as “Play Radio 4”. Alexa can set timers, give you the news, play books from Audible, stream music, play games, integrate with Google Calendar, tell jokes – the list goes on.

Some of those capabilities are built in, while other 'Skills' have to be enabled in the Alexa app. Skills are similar to apps.

**How much is it?**

Amazon Echo (2nd generation) **£89.99**

Amazon Echo Dot (2nd generation**) £39.99**

[prices correct as of 9th March 2018]

**Where can you get it?**

www.amazon.co.uk

Several high street retailers also stock the Amazon Echo including:

Tesco, Argos, John Lewis, Curry’s PC World

**Why/when you might consider it:**

To enable a person to:

* To access news, headline and weather reports
* To access audio books and full library of music
* To access radio stations and change between them easily
* To use as a talking clock/ calendar and alarm
* If the individual is interested in technology but cannot handle a phone/tablet settings
* Source entertainment such as games and quizzes

The device may also be used as an **orientation aid** in the home – with some individuals being able to orientate themselves from the direction of Alexa’s response

**What do you need to be able to use it?**

* **A device to download the Alexa App.**

The Alexa App is compatible with Fire OS, Android and iOS devices and also accessible via your desktop browser.

**NOTE:** The mobile device does not need to be within the home/area where the person is using the Amazon Echo. e.g. a relative could download the app and go through the set up.

* **WiFi**

In order to complete tasks, play music etc. the Amazon Echo requires connection to WiFi. Broadband deals start from around £17.00 per month.

* **A sighted person to assist with set-up.**

A notable downfall of the Amazon Echo for people with sight loss is that set-up of the device with the Alexa App requires sighted assistance.

**NOTE:** Certain skills and services are subject to change, may not be available in all areas and may require separate subscriptions or other fees e.g. Amazon music starts at **£3.99** a month to subscribe to.

**What do I do next if this might be the right piece of kit for someone?**

* Some resource centres and disability living centres may have an Amazon Echo to demonstrate or hold workshops/tech days for demonstrations – these may be tailored to specifically using the device as a person with sight loss.
* Curry’s, PC World and similar stores in which the devices are out on display to ‘try’ may be another option. Take the person to one of these stores and ask a member of staff for a demonstration.
* If you have a device which could work as a mobile Wifi hot-spot – possibly look into purchasing a demo Amazon Echo Dot (£39.99)

Instructions for using the Amazon Echo with a Wi-fi hot spot can be found here:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=202039580>

in the Amazon Device Support section on Amazon’s website.

**What support is out there?**

* RNIB - you can contact the **RNIB Technology For Life Team** by emailing tfl@rnib.org.uk or call the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999.
* Robin Christopherson from [AbilityNet](https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/) uncovers useful features and the different ways you can use the Echo in his daily podcast, "Dot to Dot".
* Facebook Group called: **Amazon - Echo, Dot, Alexa & Skills for Blind & Partially Sighted.** This is a closed group and you must send a request/reason to join
* **Amazon.co.uk** – Help – Amazon Devices – Alexa, Echo and Echo Dot. The Alexa help section covers many topics and includes Alexa Help videos.