

## Making Virtual Assistants Accessible

### 2. How to Use the Amazon Echo

deafscotland is the user led, membership organisation for the deaf sector in Scotland. For more information, visit the deafscotland website by clicking here: <https://deafscotland.org>

The current UK-wide COVID-19 pandemic has brought the impact and understanding of social isolation into the mainstream and raised awareness of the devastating effects isolation can have. We have seen a recent increase in the use of virtual communication technology which is allowing people to stay connected. Virtual Assistant devices are being used more regularly to bridge the communication gap.

The Amazon Echo is a Smart speaker. Smart speakers are wireless, have audio playback and have accessibility features. Smart speakers have special features to enhance ease of use that is available in a range of products. Some of these products have an in-built visual screen, for example Echo Show and Echo Spot.

This factsheet explores the Drop In, Intercom and Security functions available using Amazon Echo/ and Alexa enabled devices.

#### 1. Drop In:

The Drop In feature enables two-way communication with other Amazon Echos. This can allow you to stay connected with family or friends who also have supported Alexa-enabled devices.

If you have number of these in your home, the Drop In feature can also be used as an intercom system to listen in on each room where the devices are located.

Amazon Echos can be controlled from another room or when away from home by accessing the Amazon or Alexa (Android mobile) app.

Follow these steps to be able to use the Drop In function:

### Step One - Naming your Echos:

If you have more than one Echo it is easier to identify them by naming them based on the room they are in. If you only have one Echo device in the house, and plan on using the Alexa app to call it, there is no need to rename your Echo.

To name your Echo device –

Open the Amazon (iOS) or Alexa (Android) app.

Tap the menu icon in the upper-left corner of the app.

Tap Settings.

Tap Device Settings.

Tap Your Echo device.

Tap Edit Name below the device name.

Name the Echo device, for example 'Kitchen' depending on location.

Tap Done on your keyboard to save the new name.

### Step Two – Using Drop In:

To use Drop In, you have to let other people in – even those who also live in your house and other people who you want to share your account with.

#### **To allow you to use Drop In under your profile –**

Open the Amazon (iOS) or Alexa (Android) app.

Tap the Communicate tab.

Tap the Contacts icon at the top right of the screen.

Tap your profile at the top of the list of contacts.

Turn on the Allow Drop In switch.

Tap OK to confirm that you want to enable Drop In.

#### **To let others in your house use Drop In on each device –**

Open the Amazon or Alexa (Android mobile) app.

Tap the menu icon in the upper left corner of the app.

Tap Settings.

Tap Device Settings.

Tap your Echo device.

Tap Communications.

Turn on the Communications switch.

### **Step Three - Start a Drop In:**

Once set up, to Drop In on an Alexa Echo from another in the same home, say: “Alexa, Drop In on [name of other Echo].”

To Drop in on an external Alexa Echo, say: “Alexa, Drop In on [contact name].”

When you receive a Drop In, a chime will be heard on the Echo, the light indicator pulses green and you will automatically connect to the contact device. Drop In should happen automatically, and the person in that room or with whom you are connecting with outwith your home, will be connected to you.

The in-built screen on the Amazon Echo Show and Echo Spot allows you to view what is being said. Closed captions can also be added to assist accessibility.

When you want to end a Drop In session, tap the Hang Up button if you're on the Alexa app or, if using an Echo, say: "Alexa, end Drop In."

### **Step Four – Intercom:**

If you have more than one Echo , you can turn them into an ‘at home’ intercom system. If you don’t have two Echos, you can still use this feature with the Alexa app. from mobile phones and tablets.

Open the Amazon Alexa app and select Settings.

On your list of devices, select the name of the first Echo you want to use as an intercom.

After General select Drop In.

Select Household only. (You can toggle it to On if you want to extend this feature to your list of contacts).

Repeat these steps for your other Amazon Echos.

Now that you have set up the intercom, you can use your voice to work the intercom – “Alexa, Drop In on (name of other Echo)”.

This feature can also be used from a mobile phone/tablet.

Open the Alexa app.

Tap the Communicate tab.

Tap Drop In.

Tap the Echo device/contact that you wish to Drop In on.

## **2. How to control your Amazon Echo from outside your house using your phone:**

You can set up Smart white goods, heating, lighting so that you can control these when out of the house. Amazon's own shopping app on iOS and the Alexa app on Android both allow you to give Echo voice commands through your phone. The phone apps don't directly control your physical Amazon Echo unit, but act as a virtual Echo device, communicating with your Alexa account.

## **3. How to control Alexa from your iPhone:**

Install the Amazon app for iOS. Open the Amazon app.

Tap the microphone button toward the top-right corner of the screen.

Tap Allow Microphone Access button at the bottom.

Tap OK to give the app permission to use your iPhone's microphone.

After that, you can give Alexa commands by tapping the microphone button first, and then giving your command - no need to start with "Alexa," either. Alexa is listening whenever the blue bar at the bottom lights up.

## **4. How to control your Alexa from an Android phone:**

Make sure you are using the latest version of the app.

Open the app.

Tap the Alexa button at the bottom.

Tap Allow to give Alexa permission to use your phone's microphone and location so that it can hear your voice commands.

Tap Done at the bottom.

## 5. Security - Alexa Guard:

Amazon has introduced Alexa Guard to help you with safety and security in your home. Alexa Guard uses the microphones of the Amazon Echo speakers to listen for the sounds of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms as well as breaking glass. If the Echo detects any of these sounds, you will receive a warning on any phone or tablet that you have set up to receive Alexa alerts.

Alexa also records 10 seconds of the noise which you can play back to decide if you have to contact the emergency services, for example, the police or fire brigade. The Drop In feature can also be used to listen in to what's happening.

Other alarm systems such as ADT or Ring doorbell can also be used with Alexa Guard and can forward alerts to the security provider.

If linked to your lights, Alexa Guard can automatically turn them on when you are away from home.

### **To set up Alexa Guard.**

Open the Alexa app on your phone.

Tap Menu button on the top left.

Tap Settings.

Tap Guard.

Tap Set up Guard.

Tap Add to detect Smart smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.

Tap Add to activate Smart alerts for detecting the sound of broken glass.

Choose Add again to activate Smart lighting.

Enter your post code, so Smart lighting knows where to turn on.

Choose Confirm.

Once enabled change status from Home to Away on the Alexa Guard App or just say: "Alexa, I'm leaving" to switch to Away mode and activate Alexa Guard when you leave the house.

The light ring on your Echo will show a rotating white light to indicate the command has been registered and that Alexa Guard is now in Away mode.

When you return, say: "Alexa, I'm home" and Alexa Guard will be disabled.

### **We welcome your feedback:**

To make sure that this factsheet always has best practice and shows the best use of Virtual Assistants and related technology, we invite you to share your experiences both positive and negative. Please contact us at [admin@deafscotland.org](mailto:admin@deafscotland.org).