

How to Use Smart Speakers Safely This Christmas

 Smart speakers can be great addition to any household.



Not only can they be of practical use (like adding to the seemingly never-ending Christmas shopping list!), but they can be a source of fun for the whole family.



However, knowing how to use them safely is important.



What are the risks of Smart Speakers:

There has been growing privacy concerns surrounding smart speakers because they record and store everything you say to them – read tips below on how to delete these recordings.

- Some people may use smart speakers to ask personal questions, which other users may be able to see.
- Smart speakers can listen in on conversations so make sure you know how to mute the microphone.

- Smart speakers can be set to automatically purchase products. We would recommend disabling this setting.
- Smart speakers can alert you to incoming deliveries – be mindful of this when ordering surprise or personal items online.
- Some devices can offer to ‘learn your voice’ – this is not always necessary so limiting it may give you better privacy.
- Despite human names for some smart speakers designed to build trust, children and young people should understand that they are interacting with a non-human interface which can sometimes get things wrong.

Amazon Echo Speakers

Christmas Tip: Ask Alexa if she believes in Santa Claus or to sing a Christmas Carol.

You can turn off in-app **voice purchasing** or set up a code to prevent children from ordering products from Amazon.

You can **easily restrict access** via parental controls to inappropriate content.

Turn off or restrict ‘drop-in’. This feature allows users to drop into a video call with someone else’s Echo.

Activate the **‘Do Not Disturb’** option. This would be most suitable for when your family is sleeping.

On the **Echo Show**, you can turn the camera and microphone off by using the button on the device.

Google Nest Speakers

Christmas Tip: Ask your Google assistant “Tell me a Christmas Joke” or ask “What do elves eat for Christmas”.

Users can set up **Family Link**. This is done by setting up another account for your child. Your child’s voice will be added to your Nest.

Make sure to use **Google’s Digital Wellbeing tool**. This allows users to set up filters for music, video, and assistant queries.

You can turn off **Google’s Pay Assistant** to prevent any unwanted purchases.

Apple HomePod Speakers

Christmas Tip: Ask Siri to “Kiss me under the mistletoe” or “Tell me a Christmas

You can stop your child from accessing explicit content by following guidelines found on Apple’s website.

Users might also want to lock personal requests. This is what Apple calls the ability to send and read texts, add reminders, and create notes. This will prevent anyone from sending messages from your Apple device.

You can prevent children from making in-app purchases by following the instructions found on Apple’s website.

Facebook Portal Speakers

Because users have to be over the age of **13** (if they are using Facebook), there are no control settings for children under this age.

Users can place **PIN codes** on accounts to ensure nothing happens without their permission.

You can set a **screen lock** on the Facebook Portal, promoting security and ensuring that children and young people in your care do not use it without your permission.

You can disable the microphone and camera with a switch on all devices.

The portal includes a small slide that is used to cover the camera, for extra privacy.

If you have a smart speaker that we haven’t covered, we advise you to do some research online and make sure you have the information you need to keep children and young people safer.