SMART HOME UPGRADES: IDEAS FOR A MORE FUNCTIONAL LIVING SPACE

Abstract

Smart home upgrades are transforming how we live by adding convenience, efficiency, and functionality to everyday life. This guide explores innovative ideas for enhancing your living space with smart technology. From advanced security systems and energy-saving lighting solutions to smart kitchen appliances and entertainment systems, these upgrades are designed to streamline household tasks, improve safety, and create a more comfortable environment.

Whether you're looking to optimize energy usage or add a touch of modern convenience to your home, these ideas offer practical solutions for making your living space more functional, organized, and tech-savvy. With the right smart upgrades, you can enjoy a connected, efficient, and more enjoyable home experience.

Getting Started

Upgrading your home with smart technology can feel overwhelming at first, but it doesn't have to be. The key to getting started is understanding your priorities and lifestyle needs. Begin by assessing which areas of your home could benefit most from automation or enhanced functionality, such as security, energy efficiency, or convenience. For example, consider smart lighting to reduce energy consumption or a smart thermostat to maintain a comfortable temperature. Start with smaller, manageable upgrades like smart plugs or voice assistants to get familiar with the technology.

Once you're comfortable, you can explore more advanced options like home automation hubs or integrated security systems. The possibilities are endless, and with a clear plan, you can make your home smarter, more efficient, and better suited to your everyday life.

"Transform your home into a smarter, more functional living space with simple upgrades that bring convenience, efficiency, and modern comfort to your everyday life!"

1. What Are Smart Home Upgrades and Why Are They Important?

A smart home refers to a convenient home setup where appliances and devices can be automatically controlled remotely from anywhere with an internet connection using a mobile or other networked device.

What Is a Smart Home?

A smart home refers to a convenient home setup where appliances and devices can be controlled automatically or remotely with an internet connection and using a mobile or other networked device.

Devices in a smart home are interconnected through the internet, allowing the user to control functions such as security, access to the home, temperature, lighting, and a home theater.

How Smart Homes Work

A smart home's devices are connected with each other and can be accessed through one central point—a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or game console. Door locks, televisions, thermostats, home monitors, cameras, lights, and appliances such as the refrigerator can be controlled through one home automation system.

The system is installed on a mobile or other networked device, and the user can schedule the performance of tasks and devices.

Smart home appliances come with self-learning skills. They can learn the homeowner's schedules and make adjustments as needed. Smart homes enabled with lighting control allow homeowners to reduce electricity use and benefit from energy-related cost savings.

Some home automation systems alert the homeowner if any motion is detected in the home when they're away. Others can call the authorities—the police or the fire department—if dangerous situations arise.

Once connected, services such as a smart doorbell, smart security system, and smart appliances become part of the internet of things (IoT) technology, a network of physical objects that can gather and share electronic information.

Smart Home Systems

Wireless
Smart homes can feature either wireless or hardwired systems—or both. Wireless systems are easier to install. Putting in a wireless home automation system with features such as smart lighting, climate control, and security can be limited in cost to several thousand dollars, making it relatively cost-friendly.

The downside to wireless systems is you likely need strong Wi-Fi coverage and broadband service throughout your entire house. This may require you to invest in range extenders or hardwired wireless access points. Wireless smart home systems are generally more appropriate for smaller existing homes or rental properties.

Hardwired
Hardwired systems, on the other hand, are considered more reliable. They are typically more difficult to hack. A hardwired system can increase the resale value of a home. In addition, hardwired smart home systems can be scaled easily. Therefore, it is often the default method when designing a new build or performing a major renovation.

There is a drawback—it's fairly expensive. Installing a luxury and hardwired smart system can cost homeowners tens of thousands of dollars. In addition, you must have space for network hardware equipment including Ethernet cables.

Components of a Smart Home

Heating
Smart home products now allow for greater control over heating devices, including turning products on and off, and controlling settings. Smart products may be armed with temperature or humidity sensors to automatically turn on or off if certain criteria are met. This line of smart home innovations also extends to air conditioners.

Lighting
Often with the use of a mobile phone, tablet, or custom remote specific to a product, lighting products now offer homeowners enhanced capabilities and convenience. Lights can be switched on and off, placed on a schedule, or set to change based on sunrise or sunset times. Like some more traditional products, lights can often be set to change based on motion. Smart bulbs can communicate over Wi-Fi and display statistics or metrics on your phone.

This lighting category may also contain smart home products that control the degree of light. Automatic blinds may be installed and set to close based on sunrise schedules. Alternatively, electronic curtains allow users to manage their blinds using a handheld device.

Audio/Visual
One of the more appealing aspects of smart homes is the many entertainment products that can be connected to each other and controlled with a single remote. Television and speakers can be played on command using applications. They can be operated according to a schedule or by voice-control.

Security
One of the most important aspects of a smart home is the enhanced security capabilities it offers. Products with cameras track motion, capture video, or allow for live video feeds. These may be installed to sync with a ringing doorbell or set to capture certain areas of your property. Products can facilitate audio as well as video calls with individuals at your door.
Many smart homes are also refit with advanced security kits. These kits includes motion sensor detectors, home monitoring, notifications and alerts concerning suspicious behavior, and the ability to lock doors or windows remotely using a phone.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Smart Homes

Advantages
- Smart home technology systems offer homeowners convenience. Rather than controlling appliances, thermostats, lighting, and other features individually or by using different

devices, homeowners can control them all using one device—usually a smartphone or tablet.
- Security may be enhanced because users can get notifications and updates on issues in their homes when they're away. For instance, smart doorbells allow homeowners to see and communicate with people who come to their doors when they're not at home.
- Despite the cost of installing a smart system, homeowners can benefit from significant cost savings over time. Appliances and electronics can be used more efficiently, lowering energy costs.

Disadvantages
- Security risks and bugs continue to plague makers and users of smart home technology. Adept hackers, for example, can gain access to a smart home's internet-enabled appliances.2 For example, in October 2016, a botnet called Mirai infiltrated interconnected devices of DVRs, cameras, and routers to bring down major websites through a denial of service attack, also known as a DDoS attack.3
- Risk mitigation involves the added effort of maintaining and periodically changing strong passwords, using encryption when available, and only connecting trusted devices to one's network.
- The costs of installing smart technology can run anywhere from a few thousand dollars for a wireless system to tens of thousands of dollars for a hardwired system.
- Learning to use the home system may involve a steep learning curve.

Why Is a Smart Home Important?

A smart home is important because it allows a household to become more energy efficient. In addition, it allows people to save time and perform tasks more easily and efficiently. A smart home also offers a level of convenience that's absent with the manual method of performing tasks (e.g., turning on lights yourself).

Can a Smart Home Be Hacked?

Yes. Because smart home systems often require a live network connection, they can be hacked if the security protocol is inadequate. In addition, individuals must be careful about sharing sensitive login information, such as passwords.
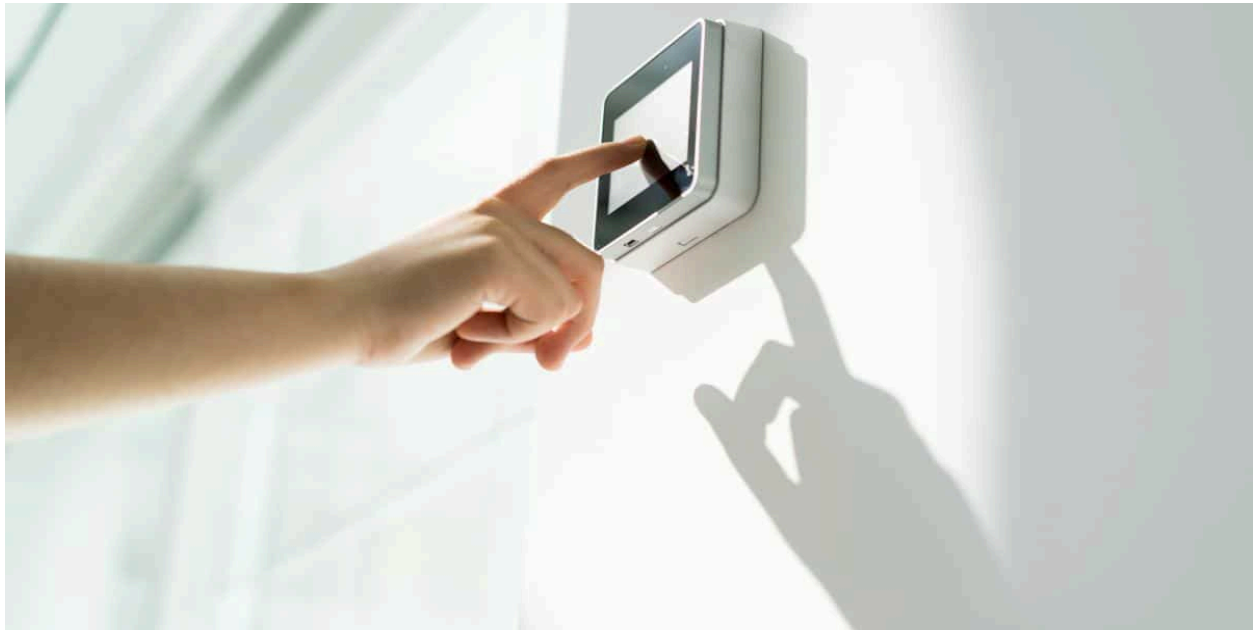
Is a Smart Home Worth It?

It can be. You must do the research to determine whether the potential convenience, added security, and cost savings over time outweigh the cost to install a full home system. Consider using individual smart home products first to learn how well they fit your lifestyle and budget.

The Bottom Line

Leveraging innovation and technology, smart homes simplify the daily tasks faced by homeowners and add new capabilities that may enhance their security. The smart home will continue to evolve.

Whether you control home products remotely using your phone or schedule the performance of tasks for certain times, smart homes have revolutionized the way people control the products they live with.

2. Top Smart Home Devices for Energy Efficiency

We love decking our home with the best smart home devices. They enable us to control our appliances with our voice, have the lights and the heating just so when we get home from work, and help us monitor our homes, even from afar. Not only that, but they help us save energy and change the way our rooms look without requiring a single splash of paint.

To create a smart home, you'll need a smart home hub like a smart display or speaker. Some of these only work with certain smart home ecosystems (like Google Home, Apple HomeKit, or Amazon Alexa), but an increasing number support the Matter standard, which is designed to make it easier for smart home devices from different companies work seamlessly with one another.

Many of these devices feature a voice assistant, which interacts with you as you make commands to adjust a device or get an update on the weather. With smart home tech, you can minimize the energy consumption of your smart lights by having them turn off automatically at certain times of day (or just change color for ambiance). You can upgrade your safety with the a home security camera or smart lock, and you can even turn some of your not-so-smart devices into smart ones using a smart plug or switch.

As we're constantly testing and reviewing smart home devices, we keep a close eye on the best available, taking into account their pricing, feature set, and specs to help you find the right ones to install in your space.

The best smart home devices 2024

The best smart speakers
The best smart speaker for you will depend on your chosen smart home ecosystem. All of the options below offer good sound quality and excellent speech recognition, though if you're looking for audiophile quality then you might want to check out something like the Bose Smart Speaker 500 instead. Take a look at our complete guide to the best smart speakers for more details.

Smart lights
Smart lights can be controlled using voice commands, motion sensors, or programmed automations, and opting for colored ones means you can easily set the mood for parties, gaming, or to help you unwind at the end of the day. These are three of our top-rated options, but our full roundup of the best smart lights includes lots more bulbs, strings, and panels.

Security cameras
These home security cameras let you keep tabs on your home while you're away, letting you see live footage on your phone and alerting you when they detect motion. You can even set them to trigger your smart lights when a visitor arrives (welcome or not). Take a look at our guide to the best home security cameras for more options.

Video doorbells
video doorbellsWith one of the best video doorbells, you'll be able to see who's calling whether you're at home or away, and never miss another package delivery thanks to wide-angle footage that allows you to see boxes left on your porch. Make sure you check whether you already have suitable wiring, or if you'll need a battery-operated fully wireless doorbell instead.

Smart displays
A smart display gives you a visual way to control and monitor your smart home that's larger and easier to read than your phone's screen. It serves as a smart speaker too, letting you give voice commands to control your other devices, and some allow you to stream video too. See our guide to the best smart displays for more details.

How to choose the best smart home devices for you

Building your smart home from scratch is a big process, and there are a few things to consider before diving in.

First, decide which voice assistant would suit you and your household the best. Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple's HomeKit each have their pros and cons, and you should be aware that

not all smart devices integrate with all assistants. So, if you already have a preference or own some smart home devices already, that will ultimately feed into your choice.

For example, if you already own a Ring doorbell, then you might get the most out of an Alexa-led smart home. Similarly, a Nest security camera will always work most seamlessly with a Google Assistant. This can be in the form of a smart speaker or display. Again, our guide on what to consider when designing your smart home should be able to help you identify the ideal smart home system for you.

3. How to Enhance Home Security with Smart Technology?

Nearly every fixture and appliance in your home—from the lights, the HVAC system and even the coffeemaker—can be controlled remotely with a Wi-Fi connection and mobile device. But choosing the best smart technology for your home can be tough, and for good reason. Some devices aren't compatible with Android, while others aren't well-suited for Mac OS. Some products present third-party privacy concerns; others have performance issues. So how does one decide? If you're feeling overwhelmed, and aren't sure where to start, this guide will help you crack the code to setting up a smart home with confidence.

Choose a Virtual Assistant

Voice-activated virtual assistants allow homeowners to control their smart devices remotely with a simple command such as "Google, turn off the lights" or "Siri, open the garage door." When optimizing your home for smart technology, consider quality, price, privacy, compatibility and user experience of the virtual assistant of your choice.

Depending on whether you want that virtual assistant in one room versus throughout the whole home, what kinds of tasks you need help with, whether privacy is important to you and more, you will need to research which virtual assistant will most serve your needs.

Pick the Hardware That's Right for Your Home

After choosing a voice assistant, you'll need a hardware device for your smart home. This is a piece of hardware such as a speaker, display or mobile device, that will help to manage all the smart technology devices in your home. Most speakers need to be plugged into a wall outlet and can only be used from home. On the other hand, displays and smartphones can be controlled from the app even when you're miles away.

Choose Your Preferred Smart Gadgets

Manufacturers and designers produce hundreds of smart products and accessories every year. The following types of products are some of the most common ones found in smart homes.

Smart Lighting
Turn the lights down low while you're watching TV, make them brighter for reading or meal preparation and schedule them to turn off at bedtime—all with a tap or voice command. Some smart lighting products require a bridge, which is an app that connects all of your lighting devices. Many lighting manufacturers offer an array of smart home lighting products for the home.

Smart Bulbs and Lamps
Smart bulbs provide excellent energy efficiency compared to halogen and traditional incandescent bulbs. Plus, some smart lighting systems enable you to control up to 50 bulbs. Smart lamps come in various designs and styles such as table lamps, floor lamps, ceiling lamps and sconces. With a smart lamp, you can easily switch lights on and off, vary lighting strength with a dimmer and even change lighting colors from across the room.

Smart LED Light Strips
Smart LED lighting strips are great for a number of lighting uses, including task lighting under cabinets for food preparation, holiday decoration such as fireplace mantels and for illuminating books and decorative objects on bookcases and floating shelves. Smart light strips are available in bright white, softer yellow bulbs and even bright colors with visual effects that kids will love.

Smart Plugs
From your coffee maker to your air fryer and curling iron—you can remotely turn smart and traditional appliances on or off with a smart plug. Schedule your coffee pot to turn on at 7 AM and heat up your curling iron at eight.

Smart plugs are power adapters enabled by a home's Wi-Fi system that enable you to manage the electrical flow of connected devices that are plugged into the adapter. You can set up and schedule appliances from smart plug apps, smart speakers, displays and smartphones and tablets.
Outdoor Security Lights

Outdoor security lights are a must to help you see outside when it's dark and, as a plus, they can also help deter burglars from entering your home. These lights are available in spotlights, floodlights, sensors and camera lighting.

Smart Thermostats

Smart thermostats improve air quality by monitoring humidity and temperature levels. They also increase your heating system's energy efficiency by shutting off when you're away and turning back on when you return.

Smart Security
Smart security systems can keep your family and valuables safe without the investment of expensive hardwiring security installations. Here are some features of smart security:
- ❖ Monitor areas that could pose security risks, including windows and doors
- ❖ Detect lighting and room temperature changes, such as an open window
- ❖ Control locks, surveillance equipment and video security remotely

Consideration Factors for Creating an Optimal Smart Home

While, in general, the point of smart devices is to make your life easier and make your home function more efficiently, there are instances where, if you're not prepared, relying fully on smart devices can be inconvenient. But by knowing what to look out for, you can keep your smart home running smoothly.

Prepare for Internet Down Time

A driver crashes into the telephone pole that supports your internet cables, a storm causes a power outage, your internet provider experiences a service outage—all these incidents can affect your Internet connection, and therefore, impact your smart home devices. During severe

outages, your Internet could be down for hours—or even days. When you can't connect to Wi-Fi and your smart devices, you'll need a plan B.

First, try rebooting your router and modem and contact your internet provider. If there's an outage, the following tips can help prepare you for an emergency.
- Battery backup: A battery backup will enable you to perform most functions without a data connection. If your power supply is on, but your Wi-Fi is down, remove smart plugs to use lights.
- Manual key support: If you use smart locks, a power outage might disable them from working. Most smart locks include manual keys for emergencies, in the same way that a car remote key fob contains a manual key inside for when the battery dies. Even if you have a smart lock, it's a good idea to always keep a spare key with you when you leave the house. For extra security, give an extra copy to a family member for safekeeping.

Protect Your Smart Home From Hackers

With any Wi-Fi connection, there's a risk for hackers to gain access to data. Practice the following tips to strengthen your internet security when setting up your smart devices, making it harder for hackers to break in.
- Create hard-to-guess passwords
- Use two-factor authentication when available
- Download security and service updates immediately
- Change your default router password

How to Set Up Your Smart Home Network

To set up your smart home network, you'll need your voice assistant, hardware and smartphone. To get started, follow these steps
- Plug your assistant or smart display into a wall socket
- After installing the smart product, such as Google Thermostat, download and open the Google Nest, Alexa or Siri app
- Wait for the program to pull up the product and add the new device
- Choose your preferred settings
- Test your product with a command, such as "Google, turn off the AC.

4. Smart Lighting Solutions to Improve Your Living Space

Beyond illuminating your living spaces and elevating their aesthetic appeal, smart lighting can transform your home into an energy efficient, dynamic and adaptable environment.
Smart lighting technology can be integrated into your home design to cater to your task and ambience oriented needs and circadian rhythms, improving wellbeing, comfort and offering a more holistic approach to modern living.

Our experts have explained the benefits of smart lighting and their five favorite ideas you can implement to reap the rewards of this smart home must-have.

Ways smart lighting can improve your living space wellbeing

'In the realm of modern interior design, the integration of smart lighting transcends mere illumination, fostering an ambiance that seamlessly blends technology with functionality and aesthetics,' explains Elizabeth Grace, interior designer and founder of Dream Home Making.

'As experts from the interior, lighting, and smart tech fields concur, the strategic implementation of innovative lighting solutions can fundamentally transform your living space, imbuing it with an unparalleled sense of sophistication and convenience.'

The benefits of smart lighting

There is a wide range of different smart light options, all with individual benefits that can elevate your home and improve your wellbeing.
'Many people may feel sleepy during the day and notice that they become more energetic towards the end of the day when it's finally time to sleep. The reason for this may be artificial lighting,' explains Kraig Edelman, CEO of electrical services company, Edelman. 'When natural light becomes insufficient, we begin to rely on artificial lighting, which can interfere with our biological rhythms.'

'One of the key benefits of some smart lights is their ability to mimic natural daylight patterns, helping regulate your body's circadian rhythms for better sleep and overall well-being,' advises Robert Soler, co-founder of SKYVIEW Light.

'Adjusting the light intensity depending on the time of day can help those who have sleep disorders,' says Kraig Edelman.

Smart lighting systems can also adjust brightness and color temperature based on natural light levels and time of day to reduce energy consumption and lower your electricity bills.
Another benefit of some smart lighting is its ability to assist with basic daily tasks, increasing your productivity. Adjustable color temperature can provide the ideal lighting conditions for tasks, helping you stay focused and be more productive.

Dara Greaney, CEO and founder of LED Light Expert also explains that smart lighting can: 'Aid in home security, and help people with mobility or vision issues. Smart lighting can be combined with a camera to trigger flood lights for home security.'

Voice commands and app controls offer easier access to lighting adjustments and allow you to make adjustments even when you're not at home. Smart lights can be programmed to simulate your presence when you're away from home, deterring potential intruders. Motion sensors can trigger lights to turn on when someone approaches, improving safety.
You can set up schedules for your lights to turn on or off at specific times, helping you secure your home when you're away, maintain a routine, and save energy.

'For people who work nights, smart lighting can help them maintain a normal sleep schedule. Waking up in darkness can be eliminated with smart lighting timers,' says Dara Greaney.
Finally, smart lighting can be integrated with other smart devices, such as your thermostat or security system, for a more holistic and automated home experience.
Each of our top smart lighting ideas incorporates at least one of these benefits and can be a simple but effective way to improve your daily routines.

5. How Long Does It Take to Deep Clean a House After Smart Upgrades?

Deep cleaning is one of those housekeeping chores that can leave you exhausted. It can be tiring to thoroughly spruce up every nook and cranny of the premises, including hidden spots, greasy electronic appliances, clogged garbage disposal, grout lines, air vents, etc. This can take a lot of time, a serious issue in today's busy schedules.
Working professionals and busy individuals often procrastinate house cleaning tasks, risking their family's health. Thus, it is good to create a proper timeline and deep-clean your house on a frequent basis.

If you are wondering how long it takes to deep clean a house, keep reading this article to understand the influencing factors. It also includes the estimated time to deep clean different sizes of houses in Perth like a pro.

1. Factors Influencing the Duration of the Deep House Cleaning Session

There are several factors that need to be considered when calculating the exact time for deep cleaning a house. It can vary based on the following aspects:

- **The Size of a House:** The bigger the property, the longer it will take to deep clean and sanitise. Professionals also consider the number of bedrooms and bathrooms and the size and layout of the kitchen and other areas before providing the final quotation for a budget vacate cleaning in Perth. So, the duration of cleaning largely depends on whether you have a million-dollar mansion or a studio apartment.
- **The Current Condition of Your Home**: This refers to how dirty or clean your house is. The level of cleanliness also plays a crucial role in determining the estimated time it takes to finish deep cleaning tasks. If your kitchen surfaces, fans, or bathroom fixtures are laden with a thick layer of dirt and grime, it could take hours to achieve the desired results.
- **Cleaning Expertise/Skills:** The duration depends on your cleaning skills or efficiency. You can complete the session much faster if you know how to perform tasks like scrubbing stains, vacuuming carpets or mopping floors. In fact, hiring professionals for a thorough house cleaning Perth can save you a lot of time and energy.
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Tip: Also, remember that performing solo housekeeping chores also takes a lot of time. So, involve your family in the process and cut down cleaning hours.

2. A One-Bedroom, One-Bath Unit (up to 500 Sq ft.) Would Take 2 Hours

Though the actual duration depends on the other factors mentioned in the above point, make sure you assess the condition of your house and create an estimated timeline.

According to professionals, a one-bedroom apartment in Perth can take around 2 to 2.5 hours to do a thorough cleaning of a house. The tasks may include:

- Eliminating dust from fans and ceiling Walls
- Vacuuming air vents
- Washing windows inside and outside
- Cleaning cabinets and shelves
- Vacuuming blinds
- Cleaning kitchen surfaces and appliances
- Unclogging and disinfecting garbage disposal
- Cleaning an entire bedroom
- Cleaning and disinfecting bathroom surfaces, such as toilet seats, faucets, showerheads, etc
- Removing carpet stains
- Sweeping and mopping floors

To save time and energy, invest in quality cleaning gadgets, such as a robotic vacuum or follow time-saving cleaning hacks for working parents.

3. Two-bedroom, 2 Bathroom Would Take 2.5 to 3 Hours

If you have a two-bedroom, 2-Bathroom house (1000 sq ft.), it would take around 2.5 to 3 hours to complete the deep cleaning session. Cleaning an extra bedroom requires 1 hour to 40 minutes, especially if it is a kid's room. Plus, a bathroom is one of the dirtiest rooms in a house. You need to scrub the soap scum, rust stains, grime and mould- which also require time and elbow grease.

Make sure you include your kids in the cleaning process. Use eco-friendly products, such as vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, and essential oils, to remove stubborn stains, grime, and grease from surfaces.

Tip: Make sure you safely handle cleaning chemicals in your home if using store-bought products.

4. 3-Bedroom, 2-Bathroom Property (1500-1700 sq ft) Would Take 3.5 Hours

Maintaining a 3-bedroom residential property is not an easy task. According to Vacate Cleaning Perth experts, it would take 3.5 hours to 4 hours to finish the deep cleaning session.

This also depends on your home's current condition and your expertise. It is good to create a proper cleaning checklist and keep all tools handy to achieve desired results.

Tip: It is good to set aside an extra hour when sprucing up your spacious apartment.

5. Four-Bedroom, Three-Bathroom House Would Take 4-5 Hours

If you have a four-bedroom house (2000 sq ft.), it is recommended that you hire a professional house cleaning Perth expert. Sprucing up the entire property would take around 4-5 hours. However, it is good to take an extra hour for attention-to-detail cleaning of three bathrooms, even if you are using new-age cleaning gadgets.

Cleaning Tip: Spray the solution and leave it for a few minutes. Meanwhile, scrub the pre-treated areas. This will help you manage the tasks more efficiently.

6. Five-Bedroom, Four-Bathroom House Would Take 6-8 Hours

There is no denying that cleaning a five-bedroom apartment or a house of 2000+ square feet would take a lot of time and energy. It would take 6-8 hours or even 10 hours to complete a detailed cleaning.
So, it is best to take each room a day and pay attention to intense cleaning using quality products and tools.
If you are at the end of your tenancy, book experts for a quality vacate cleaning Perth. They come fully equipped with a pre-approved cleaning checklist to transform a property into a spotless beauty and help secure your full bond money.

Wrapping Up
Estimating the accurate duration of a deep house cleaning session can be tricky. Make sure you consider all the factors shared above in the article and the rough estimate to help you create a timeline efficiently.

6. How Do Smart Home Systems Contribute to a Healthier Living Environment?

Smart home systems, with their extensive automation, sensing, and remote control capabilities, offer a lot of environmental benefits. If you're not yet sure why this matters, consider that making your home more efficient will save you money as well as affect your carbon footprint. There are many ways to go about reducing your carbon footprint, and implementing smart tech in your home is a good place to start. Here are some of the ways you can use smart home devices to conserve energy and natural resources.

Temperature regulation

Smart thermostats are programmable, but the most advanced ones go beyond that, actually sensing what's happening in the environment and adjusting to your behaviors. Simple programmable ones will help you save energy by kicking on the heat or AC only when you need it and adjusting the temperature when no one's home. They offer more advanced programming than previous generations of programmable thermostats so you can set them for both weekday and weekend schedules, and you can also control them from your phone as plans change. Some smart thermostats can sense if a door is left open and turn off the system in response, or even learn your heating/cooling preferences. Others can be connected to sensors in your home to trigger them to start or stop the HVAC system.

Home sensors

Speaking of sensors, there are various types of smart home sensors available for almost anything imaginable, such as light and temperature sensors, which will turn off lights and

thermostats in case you forget. Leak sensors can be placed in out-of-the-way locations to catch leaks before you'd see evidence of them, saving you money in repairs and preventing water from being wasted.

The SmartThings motion sensor, for instance, can be placed anywhere in your home and programmed to turn on lights, set security alarms, adjust portable heating or AC, and other things based on your motion. Devices like this make forgetting to turn the heat down, the lights off, or the alarm on a thing of the past. Contact sensors can be placed anywhere something opens and closes to alert you if someone has accidentally left a window open or the fridge door isn't shut.

Irrigation

Have a garden to water? Studies have found that smart irrigation systems can conserve from 30% to 50% of water used for this purpose. They do this by tailoring watering schedules to the needs of the landscaping and sensing environmental changes (an unexpected rainshower, for instance) that changes a garden's needs, among other things.
There are a couple of types of smart irrigation systems, weather-based and soil moisture sensor systems. Weather-based controllers get hooked up to a network so they can monitor local weather conditions. Soil moisture sensors, as the name indicates, measure soil moisture content and transmit this information to a controller that determines when and for how long watering will happen.

Lighting systems

Smart lighting has a couple of components: the bulbs themselves and networked systems that provide automated or remote control of the lights being on or off. Start with smart lighting by replacing regular bulbs with something like Philips Hue bulbs. They're LEDs, which are much more energy efficient, and offer remote control. Many of them offer temperature ranges, as well, so you can adjust the lighting environment as your needs change throughout the day. What's more, LED bulbs are mercury-free; even efficient CFLs still contain this hazardous substance.

Window treatments

Sometimes people forget how much of an effect passive cooling and heating via your windows can affect the indoor temperature. Smart window treatments can be hooked up to systems like Alexa and Google Home so they automatically adjust based on the time of day and your needs. Such devices can provide energy conservation by taking some of the load off the HVAC system to maintain a steady temperature as well as helping out in other ways. For instance, if you have trouble getting out of bed in the morning, smart blinds can open when your alarm goes off so the morning sun can help wake you up. Blinds adjust themselves to block out sun in the summer and let it in during the winter. You can buy custom sets or upgrade your current window treatments with a kit.

Wrapping Up
Smart home upgrades can transform your living space into a more functional, efficient, and convenient environment. By incorporating technology that suits your lifestyle, you'll not only enhance your home's comfort and security but also increase its value. Whether you start with small changes like smart lighting or go big with a fully automated system, the key is to make thoughtful upgrades that align with your needs. Embrace the possibilities, and enjoy a home that works smarter, not harder, for you.

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