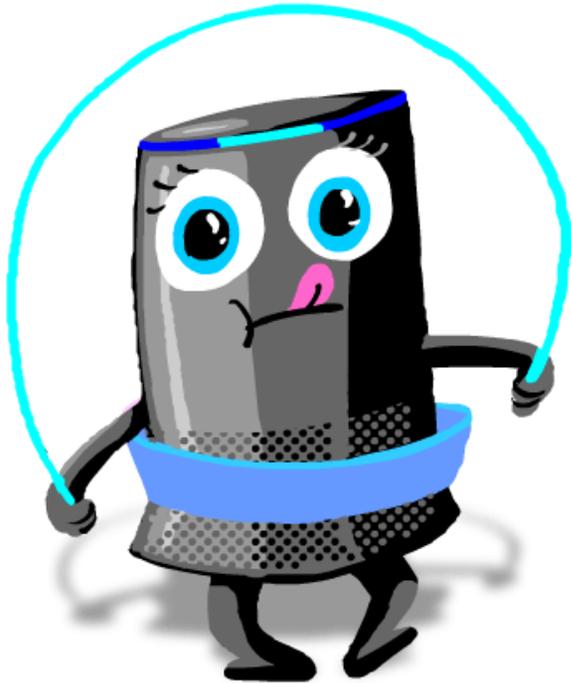


Which is the best digital assistant: Siri, Alexa or Google Home?



I'm hiring a new assistant. Requirements: must handle scheduling, take dictation, have flexible hours, be able learn on the job, and lack any corporeal presence.



I wanted to choose one the old fashioned way: a job interview. I asked the applicants -- Siri, Google Home, and Alexa (Echo) -- to complete the same basic tasks, judging them on accuracy, speed and style.

They rattled off weather reports, gave driving directions, told (bad) jokes and tried to field basic trivia questions. They reminded me to feed the bunny, play music, and frequently apologized for their shortcomings.



Here's how the interview went:

What is your greatest strength?

Siri:

Best at understanding natural language. I can pick up on multiple ways of asking the same questions, so you don't need to worry about remembering the exact phrasing for commands. And I am always with you on your phone!

Google Home:

I know you best. Impressive collection of personal data. Waffles between unsettling and super convenient. Feels natural that I know your daily commute, your interests, and details about your schedule. That information is used for the predictive 'cards' feature, which shows you what you're interested in before you ask.

Alexa (Echo):

My strength is that I'm not in a phone, tablet or computer. I'm inside the [Echo](#), a speaker you place anywhere you like. Always listening for my name and an impressive microphone that can pick up comments from across the room. Even though I can handle only a fraction of the tasks the other assistants can, users actually use me more than any of the other assistants.

What is your greatest weakness?

Siri:

I need to work better with third-party apps. Ideally I should be able to execute commands in other apps. "Siri, send a note in Facebook Messenger to Ricky." I work only on Apple phones and tablets

Google Home:

I seem to be the most likely to default to a web search -- unsurprising given that I'm built around a search engine.

Alexa (Echo):

I can't do nearly as much as the other assistants. I'm a simple creature. Sometimes I say, "Sorry, I can't find an answer". But many times when I'm lost, I just ignore you or don't say anything.

How well do you know the area?

"Where should I go for coffee?" Simple, right?

Siri:

I get right to the point, directing you to the nearest decent cafe so you don't have to choose.

Google Home:

I offer up a list of options, with ratings and distances.

Alexa (Echo):

Sweet, innocent Alexa isn't aware there's a world outside.



Comparable Costs

Siri: Must purchase an iPhone or iPad - **\$400** and up

Google Home: **\$130**

Alexa (Echo): **\$85.00**

Privacy and security concerns



Both the Echo and the Home feature always-on microphones, though each includes a mute button

The fact that these speakers are always listening concerns some users and privacy advocates. If all you're ever asking for are playlists, weather forecasts, and help with algebra problems, this may not be an issue for you. However, the speakers' tendency to mis-hear a wake word and record things that aren't actually commands could be an issue

All devices use their listening skills to accumulate data about you, not only for product-improvement purposes but also for marketing and advertising. Every time you ask your device to play Chopin or where the closest Ethiopian restaurant is, that data is being crunched with other data to create a profile of you (or your household, since devices can't discern individual voices yet).

Google is probably collecting more data overall than Amazon, because it has more tools to do so, including its main search tool, the Chrome browser, the Maps app, Gmail, and the calendar.