New Amazon hardware: Ring drones, Echo Dot 4th Gen, Wi-Fi 6 Eero, and more

Enlarge / One of many devices introduced today, the 4th-generation Echo device is a cloth-covered sphere with a halo at the base, contrasting with the squat plastic cylinders of earlier-generation Echoes.

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Today at Amazon’s hardware launch event, the company announced new Ring, Echo, Eero, and Fire devices. Amazon also announced a new gaming service called Luna, which we’re covering in its own article.

Ring Always Home Cam

Enlarge / The Ring Always Home Cam is a tiny, self-docking drone that flies around inside your house.

The Ring Always Home Cam is the newest device in the Ring family, which is better known for doorbells with cameras in them. The Always Home Cam is a tiny, self-docking drone designed to fly around *inside* your home, streaming video off to the cloud for review in smartphone apps. Ring founder Jamie Siminoff says the Always Home Cam is intended to provide multiple interior viewpoints without the need for multiple interior cameras and that it's an "obvious product that's very hard to build."

The drone operates fully autonomously, but the setup procedure involves mapping areas of the house in which it's allowed to fly and what paths it's allowed to take. After setup, the drone can be asked to fly directly, or it can fly on its own to visit disturbances detected by Ring alarm systems. Its 1080p camera is blocked by the dock itself, so if the drone is not in flight, it's not streaming or recording. Like most small drones, it integrates automatic obstacle avoidance and uses propeller shrouds to protect both the blades themselves

and any objects, persons, or pets that might otherwise encounter them.

[embedded content]
Foiling burglary over a pseudo-funk bassline… aw yeah.
The Ring Always Home Cam is expected to cost $250 and begin shipping sometime in 2021.

Wi-Fi 6 Eero, Eero Pro

Enlarge / These are Eero 6 Router and Eero 6 Extender. The Eero 6 Pro Router is lower profile, with a wider base.
The Wi-Fi 6 Eero systems we spotted FCC certifications for earlier this month were announced officially today. The new kits are available for preorder today, with shipping expected to begin in early November.

The three models being released are Eero 6 Router, Eero Pro 6 Router, and Eero 6 Extender. The Eero Pro 6 is a tri-band device (one 2.4GHz radio, with two 5GHz radios); both non-Pro devices are dual-band. All three SKUs feature built-in Zigbee functionality for home automation.

Both of the Router models feature two gigabit ports and one USB-C power port; the Extender has only the USB-C power port and does not offer wired connections. The Eero 6 Router can be preordered solo for $130 or with one Eero 6 Extender as a kit for $200. The Eero 6 Pro Router is available for preorder at $230. It took a bit more digging, but we also found options to preorder a three-piece Eero 6 kit for $280 or a solo Eero 6

extender for $90.

We’re disappointed at Amazon’s decision to go back to separate device designs for “routers” and “extenders”—and at the apparent step backward of making the base kit a two-piece, rather than a three-piece. Wiring devices such as game consoles or PCs directly to a satellite node is a big win for overall Wi-Fi network quality and reliability, and we liked the company’s earlier decision to go with Ethernet jacks on all products. We also think the vast majority of homes are better served with three pieces rather than two.

New Echo generation

- One of many devices introduced today, the 4th-generation Echo device is a cloth-covered sphere with a halo at the base, contrasting with the squat plastic cylinders of earlier-generation Echoes.
- This variant of the 4th-generation Echo Dot features a built-in clock.
- Echo Dot 4th-gen is also available in kid-friendly motifs, such as this panda.
- The Echo Show 10 is, effectively, the perfect 10-inch tablet to display the *Mona Lisa*—since her eyes really *will* follow you around the room.

Amazon’s Echo series got a refresh today, moving from the earlier, prosaic “squat plastic cylinder” designs to rather fancier cloth-covered spheres. The full-sized Echo fourth-gen runs $100 and will be available October 22 in Charcoal, Glacier White, or Twilight Blue. Amazon tells us to expect better sound than previous generations delivered, with a 3-inch woofer and dual tweeters that deliver “clear highs, dynamic mids, and deep bass that automatically adapts to any room.”

The Echo Dot also gets a fourth-gen makeover, sporting the new

spherical design in a smaller size and in several variants. The base model, with the same Charcoal, Glacier White, or Twilight Blue covering option, is half the cost of its big siblings at $50. There are also upscale variants of the Dot for $60, including versions with a built-in clock (in Glacier White or Twilight Blue only), and two Kids Edition Dots—one Panda and one Tiger.

The Kids' Edition Dots also feature an included year of the Amazon Kids+ (formerly known as Freetime Unlimited) curated subscription service for all-you-can-consume kid-oriented content, and a two-year "worry-free" replacement warranty like the one offered on Kids' Edition Fire tablets.

Finally, there's the Echo Show 10—a 10-inch tablet mounted on a motorized gimbal that automatically aligns itself to detected human bodies. The AI "human detection" is all onboard rather than cloud-based, and it does not look for specific human faces—instead, it looks for human-shaped outlines around the room.

We envision the $250 Echo Show as the perfect setting for a *Mona Lisa* print whose eyes really *do* follow you all around the room, but Amazon mentions a more prosaic use for video conferencing. As useful as this feature might be, we expect there will be some getting used to it—and a new round of "Zoom fail" videos in which conference participants forget the camera is (still) on them. The Echo Show is available for preorder today, but there is no concrete shipping date yet.

Fire TV Sticks

Enlarge / This year’s Fire TV Stick brings HDR support, Alexa Voice Remote capable of controlling your TV itself, and a faster processor—but no 4K video.

A new Fire TV Stick Lite is available for $30, and a non-Lite Fire TV Stick for $40. Both devices include Alexa Voice Remote functionality and 8GB storage, with faster processors than previous models, and offer a max resolution of 1080p. If you want full 4K video, you’ll need the $50 Fire TV Stick 4K, which has not received any updates this year.

The difference between this year’s Lite and non-Lite Fire TV Sticks lies in Dolby Audio (pass-through HDMI only on the Lite, full Atmos on the non-Lite) and remote control—Alexa Voice Remote only controls the stick itself on the Lite, but it can control the entire TV on the non-Lite.

Although both the new Fire TV Stick and Stick Lite are 1080p only, both devices do support HDR (High-Dynamic Range) video, which is more frequently found on 4K devices and displays, and offers higher contrast and color gamut than non-HDR video.

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