

The Amazon Halo Rise would be a neat sleep tracker, if it weren't for my cat

I am stuck in a vicious cycle. My cat is an asshole who likes waking me up at 3AM. In pursuit of a more peaceful slumber (and a new life as an early riser), I turn to all sorts of gadgets and sleep tech. It works for a while, until my cat adopts a new strategy.

I drowned out his late-night yowls with the Bose SleepBuds II, until he started batting my face with his paws. I bought him a cat fountain so he'd stop knocking over the cup on my nightstand; he was pleased until he decided it was more fun to drink condensation in the bathtub and then scream. Inevitably, I wake up late and exhausted. Rinse and repeat.

I had hoped to break the cycle with the Amazon Halo Rise, a \$139.99 smart alarm clock, sunrise lamp, and contactless sleep tracker rolled into one. And I think it might've worked if it weren't for my pugnacious purry boy Pablo.

7Verge Score

Amazon Halo Rise

\$ 139.99

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The Bad

- Has a \$4 monthly subscription
- Light may be a bit dim for waking up
- Not great for sleep tracking if you have pets
- Smart home integration only works with Alexa

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a:hover]:shadow-highlight-franklin      [&>a]:shadow-
underline-black  dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-highlight-
franklin      dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-white
md:text-30">A sleepy jack-of-all-trades
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I decided to review the Halo Rise because I'm struggling to transform from a night owl to an early bird. Outside a bout of insomnia, my talents include sleeping through three iPhone alarms, multiple vibrating smartwatch alarms, and most of my spouse's nightly pilgrimages to the kitchen. (They seem unaware that potato chip bags crinkle 1,000 times louder at night.) I read somewhere that sunrise lamps can be an effective yet gentle way to wake up and was literally in the middle of researching which one to buy when my editor mentioned the Halo Rise.

On paper, the Halo Rise is an efficient option. It helps you wake up gently by mimicking natural morning light during your lightest sleep stage and has sensors to monitor ambient temperature, light disturbances, and humidity. You can link it with an Echo device,

effectively turning it into another voice-controlled smart light. It's small enough to fit on a crowded nightstand, and its minimal design is versatile enough to go with a variety of bedroom decor.

I was most wary of the Halo Rise's contactless sleep tracking. Wearable or mattress-based sleep trackers tend to use a combination of motion sensors and heart rate data to determine which stage of sleep you're in. There is no accelerometer or optical heart rate sensor in the Halo Rise. Instead, like the Nest Hub, it tracks sleep via a low-energy radar that analyzes your movement and breathing. Unlike the Nest Hub (and some smartphone sleep tracking apps), there's no microphone, so it doesn't record your snores or voices. There's no camera, either. That's great for privacy, but it also eliminates another data source. This ultimately means the Halo Rise's radars and algorithms have to be on point for the sleep tracking to be accurate – and in my experience, radars in sleep gadgets can be hit or miss.

`a:hover]:shadow-highlight-franklin [a]:shadow-underline-black dark:[a:hover]:shadow-highlight-franklin dark:[a]:shadow-underline-white md:text-30">Operation: sleep no meow`

Setting up the Rise is easy peasy, but positioning it is tricky. Because it's a contactless tracker, you need to aim it in the right direction. The app walks you through it, but the gist is that you have to:

- Place it on a nightstand such that the Rise's

metal stand is either the same height or up to eight inches above your mattress.

- Point it at your upper body.
- Ensure there's about one arm's length of distance between you and the Rise.
- Remove any objects between you and the Rise (though bedding is okay).

The hard thing is making sure that it stays this way. For me, that meant checking that my books, water bottle, and phone weren't obstructing any part of the Rise before bed. You can set nightly reminders in the Halo app to check that everything's positioned correctly, but that's just one more notification for you to ignore on your phone. But even though *I* did everything right, there was one factor I couldn't control: Pablo.

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[>a: hover]: shadow-underline-black
dark: [>a]: shadow-underline-gray-63
dark: [>a: hover]: shadow-underline-gray-63">*Three nights where I have concrete memories of Pablo wrecking my sleep. You can see the discrepancies in awake times. In each instance, my memory aligns more with the data recorded by the Oura Ring. The Halo Rise was accurate at recording light disturbances, however.*

I asked Dr. Michael Miyamoto, medical director for Amazon Halo, why that might be. Could my spouse's

midnight snacking confuse the Rise? According to Miyamoto, while it can't be ruled out, it's highly unlikely, as the Rise is programmed to focus on the body closest to it. Miyamoto also told me that people generally wake up several times during the night but only for a few seconds. The Rise only records it as a disturbance if it's an instance lasting longer than five minutes. That's about when I put two and two together. I asked if it were possible that a cat could wreck my results.

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dark:[&a: hover]: shadow-underline-gray">Photo by Victoria Song / The Verge

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dark:[&a: hover]: shadow-underline-gray">Photo by Victoria Song / The Verge

Here's what you need to know about Night Pablo. Night Pablo loves chaos, nightstands, and creating chaos on my nightstand. A few times a week, I wake up to the sound of my glasses, books, phone, Nintendo Switch, or water bottle clattering across the floor. Why? It took

us a long time to figure it out. It's not that he's hungry or thirsty; he has an automatic feeder *and* a fancy cat fountain. It turns out this crepuscular demon wants someone to *witness* him eating kibble. It's beneath him to dine alone.

Night Pablo loves chaos

Pablo doesn't always knock stuff off of my nightstand. He parks his fluffy butt there for myriad reasons. He loves playing with my charging cables. He loves sniffing my stuff. He likes having a launching pad for catapulting himself onto my spouse's chest. Sometimes, he'll sit right next to my head and demand scratches. (And if I don't, he'll bite.) It's not every night, and I don't remember every instance because I usually sleep like the dead. That said, I've sleepily witnessed it enough times over five years to know it happens.

In short, because the Halo Rise zeroes in on the closest body, it likely confused Pablo's mischief-making as *me* being awake. I now have an inadvertent record of all the nights Pablo entered chaos mode. That, in itself, was startling. I knew Pablo *sometimes* made it difficult to get decent shut-eye – I just wasn't aware of how much that added up to over time. I've since caught him in the act and corroborated it with the data the next morning.

Needless to say, if you want to use it as a sleep tracker, the Halo Rise is better suited to people who *don't* have rambunctious kitties (or bed partners).

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All your Halo Rise alarm options:
TKTKTKTKTKTK(opens a new window)

On the flip side, the simulated sunrise didn't help me much. I sleep on my side, so when I'm turned away from the Rise, I don't get any benefit. My back does. I also found it a little dim, but that's a me problem. Most sunrise lamps are between 100 and 300 lux, and the Halo Rise is right in that range with a maximum of 300 lux. I simply didn't find it bright enough because I apparently need a floodlight shining down on me to wake up. If you're more sensitive to light (or sleep on your back), you might have greater success

than I did.

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dark: [>a]: shadow-underline-gray-63
dark: [>a: hover]: shadow-underline-
gray-63">There are only two buttons
to remember: the snooze button (top)
and the on / off button. The snooze
button also contains the light
sensor. I had a hard time remembering
which was which when sleepy and ended
up hitting both until it shut up.
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Amazon also sent me an Echo Show to try using alongside the Rise. You can, for instance, ask Alexa to show your sleep data on the Show. It

worked when I tested it, but I didn't find it useful. I preferred using the Rise as a smart light with my other Echo devices. The fact that you can use it in Alexa Routines and control it with voice commands is neat, especially if you've already invested in the Amazon smart home ecosystem. (It's only compatible with Alexa.)

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gray-63">Pablo, smug and
napping after a hard
night of making sure the**

**Halo Rise can't track my
sleep accurately.**

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