



Home Theatre Speakers Buying Guide Quick Reference Handout

If you want to upgrade your home audio system your speaker choice comes down to how much space you have and how much power you need.

Table of contents

1. How to choose the right speakers for your home
2. Types of home theatre speakers
3. Key technical specs to look for in a home speaker
4. Other features to consider in a speaker
5. How do I choose the right speakers for my home?

The size of your room will help you determine how much power and how many speakers you might need. A big room will need more power and potentially more channels, while a smaller room may only allow for the placement of two speakers and a subwoofer.

1. Speakers for condos or small apartments

If you live in a very small space, something like a smaller bookshelf mounted speaker on a stand is a good choice.

2. Speakers for dedicated home theatres or bigger spaces

If your home is large enough for a dedicated home theatre space, you can select bookshelf, tower speakers or ceiling speakers that are perfect for large, open spaces.

Speaker system options

If you want to buy individual components like a receiver or a new subwoofer you're likely interested in building your own custom home theatre system.

1. Should I get an All-in-One speaker system?

If you want a simple set up that already works together, you may be interested in an all-in-one home audio solution like an all-in-one home theatre audio kit or home theatre in a box. You can also opt for a speaker package where all the speakers are designed to work together in harmony.

2. Should I choose an À-la-Carte speaker system?

With an à-la-carte system you can choose the features and components you'd really like. When buying individually you'll want to do your research to make sure your receiver and speakers will work together.

How many channels do you need for great home audio?



One of the first choices you should make when choosing speakers is how many channels you want. "Channels" is a technical way of describing the number of speakers you'll have in your system. The number of channels you choose depends on how many speakers you'd like to connect and there are variety of configurations - 2.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, and even 7.1.2.

The first number is the number of speakers and the second number is the number of subwoofers. If there is a third number, that would refer to the speakers providing sound from the ceiling. Common surround sound systems have 5.1 channels, with five speakers (two in the front and two in the rear, plus a centre channel) and a subwoofer.

Types of speakers for your home theatre

There are an enormous number of speaker choices out there. Here are a few types you'll find when shopping for speakers for your home theatre.

1. Bookshelf and rear speakers

Bookshelf speakers to be compact and are great for smaller spaces where you still want to pack in some audio punch. They also make ideal rear speakers.

2. Tower speakers

Tower speakers are freestanding and are usually built to stand right on the floor. They provide a much deeper, richer bass sound than bookshelf speakers.

3. Centre channel speakers

Centre channels speakers are made to provide some balance to your system. The volume level of the centre channel speaker can often be adjusted independently of the other speakers in your home theatre system to balance the overall sound.

4. Subwoofers

Subwoofers or subs, are dedicated to reproducing low-pitched audio frequencies, and they're necessary to round out the range of speakers that cover the higher frequency bands.

5. Wall and ceiling speakers

Wall speakers keep things tidy and out of the way while ceiling speakers will contribute to your home theatre's Dolby Atmos ecosystem, supplying the additional overhead channels to create 3D sound.

Key features to look for when buying speakers

1. High-resolution audio

If you want the best sound quality from your speakers, you'll want ones designed to deliver high-resolution audio. This refers to sound with a higher than 44.1 kHz sample rate and/or



higher than 16-bit linear bit depth.

2. Frequency response

Frequency response is all about the range of audible frequencies the speaker can reproduce that humans can hear, usually between 20 Hz (that's the deep bass) and 20 kHz (a screeching high-frequency sound).

3. Impedance

The specification for impedance is measured in ohms. This measures how much power the speakers can handle. You want to make sure your speakers' ohms are matched by the receiver you choose.

4. Power handling

Speaker power is measured in watts, and the power specification on speakers denotes how much power the speaker is designed to safely receive from a receiver before it starts to distort.

5. Smart features on home speakers

If you're looking for a home audio speaker for your home theatre, you may want to choose a set with smart features like voice control with Google Assistant and Alexa support.

6. Turntable connection options

To connect your compatible turntable to your home audio speakers you can connect it to a receiver that will stream audio to wired speakers, pick up accessories that let you plug your turntable directly into a portable, or choose a wireless connection if your turntable has Bluetooth or Wi-Fi on board.

Other features to consider when choosing home speakers

Your new speakers may have a variety of special sound features including Dolby Atmos, DTS:X and Auro-3D. They may also be enabled to work with various smart home components, like Apple HomeKit and Siri, Airplay, Google Assistant, Chromecast, and Amazon Alexa.

1. Do you need Dolby Atmos?

Dolby Atmos will provide the most immersive sound possible. A Dolby Atmos system usually is noted as a 5.1.2 or 7.1.4 system. The extra digit represents ceiling speakers, so a 7.1.4 has seven-floor level speakers, one subwoofer, and 4 ceiling speakers.

2. Do you need DTS:X for your home speakers?

DTS:X is object-based surround sound, and having a system with DTS:X is different than



other surround sound systems in that it has no requirements for ceiling speakers.

3. Wireless vs. wired speakers

Choosing a wired vs. wireless speaker solution will depend on how difficult it is to place the wiring for all the speakers in your home theatre room and how much flexibility you want with your system. Wireless systems are easier to install and you can easily move the speakers into different rooms. Wired solutions offer generally better sound quality and a wider variety of speakers to choose from.

4. Multi-room audio

Multi-room audio lets you use an A/V receiver to provide independent sound in another room. This can maximize the usefulness of your receiver by using it to deliver music elsewhere in the home, so you get a bigger bang for your buck.

5. Sound bars

If you don't want to fuss around with components and just need better audio for your TV, you can opt for a sound bar. Sound bars are an ultimate all-in-one solution that keeps things tidy and compact.

6. Outdoor speakers

Outdoor speakers set the right tone by the lake, hot tub or just on the cool green grass outside. Look for wired and wireless versions. Most are waterproof and durable and meant to withstand all kinds of weather.

7. Portable wireless speakers

A portable Bluetooth speaker is great for outdoor activities or for when you don't have access to power. These speakers are battery powered or rechargeable, and wireless, making them a great temporary audio solution.

8. Party speakers

Party speakers are all-in-one speaker or a speaker and light combo. This type of speaker is the perfect choice for backyard or indoor parties as it can stream your favourite playlists via Bluetooth.

9. Premium speakers

Premium speakers are often made of more durable materials with better finishes and they deliver better sound. High-end speakers usually reproduce sounds more accurately, without overpowering bass or high-frequency noises.