Stop Paying £10/Month for Your Own Front Door

23 PAGES 15 MIN READ

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01

Most smart homes aren't smart. They're rented. And the moment you stop paying, they stop working.

Introduction

You're tired. I know the feeling. You see ads for smart doorbells that require a £5 monthly subscription just to watch a video of your own front door. You see lightbulbs that stop working when your internet goes down. You see thermostats that are smarter than you but somehow leave the house freezing at 6 AM.

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This book is the antidote

I am not selling you a dream of a futuristic Jetson-style house. I am giving you a blueprint for a house that works *for* you, not against you. A house that saves you money on energy, secures your family without broadcasting video to the cloud, and handles the boring stuff so you can spend time with your kids.

We are going to build a rock-solid smart home system. It will cost under £300. It will take less than an hour to set up the core system. And most importantly: **Zero monthly fees.**

Let's get to work.

01

WHY MOST SMART HOMES ARE A SCAM

The "Smart Home" industry is currently broken. Big Tech companies don't want to sell you hardware; they want to sell you subscriptions.

02

THE SMARTDAD.ONLINE METHOD

To keep things reliable and affordable, we follow a strict framework. Before buying a single gadget, check it against the SmartDad Method™

03

THE SMARTDAD STARTER STACK (£300 BUILD)

This is the exact shopping list I use in my own home in Woking. No guesswork.

04

ONE DASHBOARD TO RULE THEM ALL

Now that you have the hardware, you need the software. We use **Home Assistant(free)**.

05

SMARTDAD AUTOMATIONS THAT ACTUALLY MATTER

Don't automate things just because you can. Automate to save time or money.

08

COMMON MISTAKES THAT WASTE MONEY

WiFi bulbs and gadgets

06

NO-SUBSCRIPTION HOME SECURITY

Stop paying commercial brands

09

MY EXACT REAL-WORLD SETUP

This isn't theory. This is what runs my house in Woking right now.

07

SMART HOME FOR KIDS (SAFE, SIMPLE, RELIABLE

Kids love buttons. They hate voice assistants that don't understand them.

10

THE 60-MINUTE SETUP PLAN

You have the boxes. Here is the hour of power:

Take back control

01

TAKE BACK CONTROL

WHY LOCAL CONTROL MATTERS

If the internet goes down, your house should not break.

Most off-the-shelf smart homes rely entirely on the cloud. That means when your internet provider has a wobble at 2 AM, your "smart" lights turn into dumb bricks. If the company shuts down—or decides your hardware is too old—your devices stop working overnight.

Local control fixes this.

Your devices talk to a hub inside your home, not a server in California. Your data stays local. Your automations run instantly. And your house keeps working even when the internet doesn't.

The result:

 Lightning-fast response (no cloud lag)

 Works even if the internet is down

🔒 Private by default

TAKE BACK CONTROL

02 THE SMARTDAD.ONLINE METHOD™

LOCAL CONTROL MEANS:
⬜INSTANT SPEED (NO LAG SENDING DATA TO THE CLOUD AND BACK).

🔒 PRIVACY (JEFF BEZOS DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW WHEN YOU GO TO BED).
⬜ RELIABILITY (WORKS PERFECTLY EVEN WHEN THE INTERNET IS DOWN).

1. PROTOCOL FIRST
Wi-Fi is for Netflix and Zoom calls. It sucks for smart switches. We use Zigbee.
Why? It creates a "mesh." Every plug you add acts as a repeater, making your network stronger, not weaker.
Bonus: It keeps your family Wi-Fi unclogged for gaming and streaming.

2. WAF (WIFE ACCEPTANCE FACTOR)

If your partner cannot turn the light on with a normal switch on the wall, the system has failed. Smart homes must work like normal homes first, and smart homes second.

3. NO CLOUD DEPENDENCY

If the internet cable is cut, the automation must still run.

ONE APP ONLY

We do not open five different apps to turn off the house at night. We use one dashboard.

03

This is the exact shopping list I use in my own home in Woking.

No guesswork.

THE BRAIN: HOME ASSISTANT GREEN

What is it? The central hub. Plug-and-play.

Why this one? Raspberry Pis are fiddly. Proprietary hubs (like Philips Hue) lock you into expensive ecosystems. This little green box talks to everything.

Cost: ~£30-40

[Affiliate link](#)

THE EARS: HOME ASSISTANT CONNECT ZBT-2

What is it? A chunky USB stick that acts as the antenna.

The Superpower: It creates a universal language. It lets you buy cheap IKEA bulbs and expensive sensors and makes them work together seamlessly

Cost: ~£50-60

Affiliate link

THE BASICS: ZIGBEE SMART PLUGS (PACK OF 4)

Use them for: Lamps, heaters, coffee machines.

The Secret Feature: They act as signal repeaters. Put one in each corner of the house to blanket your home in a rock-solid signal.

Cost: ~£44 (3 -pack)

Affiliate link

THE EYES: MOTION & DOOR SENSORS

Use them for: Security and triggering lights.

Real-world use:Hallway: Lights fade up to 10% when you walk to the bathroom at night.Front Door: Get an alert if it opens while you're at work.

Cost: ~£34

Affiliate link

04 THE DASHBOARD: Two Taps Max

ONE DASHBOARD TO RULE THEM ALL

Now that you have the hardware, you need the software. We use Home Assistant

THE DASHBOARD CONCEPT

You don't want a screen full of toggles. That is messy. You want a dashboard based on *rooms* or *status*.

HOME ASSISTANT

It is free, open-source software. The "Green" hub mentioned above comes with it pre-installed.

THE CONTROL GRID:

Only the things you use daily. Living room lights, heating boost, garage door.

Stop digging through menus. If you have to tap more than twice to turn on a light, the automation is wrong.

SmartDad Automations That Actually Matter

Don't automate things just because you can. Automate to save time or money. Here are the big three:

✓ 1. THE "GOODNIGHT" PROTOCOL

TRIGGER YOU PLUG YOUR PHONE IN TO CHARGE AFTER 10 PM, OR PRESS A PHYSICAL BUTTON ON YOUR BEDSIDE TABLE. **ACTION:**ALL LIGHTS TURN OFF.

THE THERMOSTAT DROPS TO 16°C. THE FRONT DOOR LOCK CHECKS ITSELF (AND NOTIFIES YOU IF IT CAN'T LOCK). THE TV PLUGS POWER DOWN TO STOP STANDBY DRAIN.

✓ 2. THE HUMIDITY DEFENDER

TRIGGER: BATHROOM HUMIDITY SENSOR GOES ABOVE 75% (SOMEONE IS SHOWERING). **ACTION:** EXTRACTOR FAN TURNS ON. IT STAYS ON UNTIL HUMIDITY DROPS BELOW 60%. **WHY?** PREVENTS MOULD. SAVES REPAINTING THE CEILING.

✓ 3. THE "WASHING DONE"

TRIGGER THE SMART PLUG ON THE WASHING MACHINE DETECTS POWER USAGE DROPPING TO 0W FOR 2 MINUTES. **ACTION** A NOTIFICATION IS SENT TO YOUR PHONE, OR A SMART SPEAKER ANNOUNCES: "WASHING IS READY." **WHY?** NO MORE DAMP CLOTHES SITTING IN THE DRUM FOR SIX HOURS SMELLING OF MILDEW.

06

No-Subscription Home Security

Stop paying Ring or Nest.

✓ THE CAMERA SOLUTION: REOLINK,BLINK OR TAPO

USE CAMERAS THAT RECORD TO A LOCAL SD CARD OR A SIMPLE NVR (NETWORK VIDEO RECORDER).

✓ THE SETUP

BUY A CAMERA THAT SUPPORTS RTSP (REALTIME STREAMING PROTOCOL). THIS ALLOWS HOME ASSISTANT TO SEE THE VIDEO FEED WITHOUT SENDING IT TO THE INTERNET.

✓ REMOTE ACCESS

USE A SECURE VPN (LIKE TAILSCALE) OR NABU CASA (A SMALL OPTIONAL FEE SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPERS) TO VIEW YOUR CAMERAS FROM YOUR PHONE WHEN YOU ARE AWAY.

RTSP-Compatible CCTV Cameras

REOLINK (£424)

- Top Models: RLC-820A, E1 Outdoor, RLC-510A

AFFILIATE LINK

TP-LINK TAPO (£17)

- Top Models: C225, C320WS, C120

AFFILIATE LINK

AMCREST (£160)

- Top Models: IP8MT2599EW, IP4M-1041

AFFILIATE LINK

HIKVISION

- Top Models: DS-2CD2386G2, ColorVu Series

AFFILLIATE LINK

- Battery Cameras: No RTSP support.
- Settings: Must enable RTSP/ONVIF in the mobile app/web UI first.
- Avoid: Analog AHD/TVI cameras.

07

Smart Home for Kids (Safe, Simple, Reliable)

Kids love buttons. They hate voice assistants that don't understand them.

1. THE WIRELESS BUTTON

STICK A ZIGBEE BUTTON AT KID-HEIGHT. ONE PRESS TOGGLES THEIR LAMP. DOUBLE PRESS STARTS A 30-MINUTE READING TIMER (LIGHTS DIM, THEN GO OFF).

AFFILIATE LINK

2. THE "WAKE UP" LIGHT

IF YOUR KIDS WAKE UP AT 5 AM, THIS IS A LIFESAVER. USE A SMART BULB IN THEIR LAMP. RED LIGHT STAY IN BED. GREEN LIGHT (AT 7 AM) ALLOWED TO GET UP. THIS TRAINS THEM VISUALLY AND BUYS YOU TWO HOURS OF SLEEP ON A SATURDAY.

AFFILIATE LINK

3. INTERNET SAFETY

THIS IS ADVANCED, BUT ESSENTIAL. USE YOUR ROUTER OR HOME ASSISTANT TO CUT INTERNET ACCESS TO THE KIDS' TABLETS AT 7 PM AUTOMATICALLY. NO ARGUMENTS, THE WI-FI JUST "BREAKS."

Common Mistakes That Waste Money

Kids love buttons. They hate voice assistants that don't understand them.

SMART SWITCHES VS SMART BULBS IF YOU PUT A SMART BULB IN A CEILING FIXTURE, SOMEONE WILL FLICK THE WALL SWITCH OFF, CUTTING THE POWER. THE SMART BULB IS NOW DEAD. THE FIX:USE "SMART RELAYS" BEHIND THE SWITCH (SHELLY RELAYS ARE GREAT) OR PUT A COVER OVER THE SWITCH AND USE A WIRELESS BUTTON. **RELAY LINK**

1. STOP BUYING WIFI BULBS

USE ADJUSTABLE ZIGBEE WHITE/WARM WHITE, DIMMING, AND LINKAGE TO SMART SCENES WITH OTHER ZIGBEE SENSORS OR SWITCHES.

AFFILIATE LINK

3. IGNORING NEUTRAL WIRES

IN THE UK, MOST LIGHT SWITCHES DO NOT HAVE A NEUTRAL WIRE. IF YOU BUY US-STANDARD SMART SWITCHES, THEY WON'T WORK. YOU MUST BUY "NO NEUTRAL" VERSIONS OR USE CAPACITORS. CHECK YOUR WIRING BEFORE BUYING!

09

My Exact Real-World Setup

✓ 1. SERVER

DELL OPTIPLEX RUNNING HOME ASSISTANT (OVERKILL, BUT ROCK SOLID)

[LINK](#)

✓ LIGHTING

SONOFF ZIGBEE SWITCHES - WIRING FLEXIBILITY: SUPPORTS BOTH "NO NEUTRAL" AND "WITH NEUTRAL" WIRING SETUPS, MAKING IT COMPATIBLE WITH MOST HOME ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS.

[AFFILIATE LINK](#)

✓ ENERGY

LINK YOUR METER TO THE BRIGHT APP, INSTALL THE HILDEBRAND GLOW (DCC) AND ADD THE RESULTING SENSORS TO YOUR ENERGY DASHBOARD

10

"The hour of power"

✓ **0-15 MINUTES**

- **POWER UP THE BRAIN**
- PLUG IN THE HOME ASSISTANT GREEN
- CONNECT IT TO YOUR ROUTER WITH ETHERNET
- POWER IT ON (THERE IS NO "ON" BUTTON — IT JUST STARTS)
- WAIT FOR INITIAL SETUP AND UPDATES TO COMPLETE

THAT'S IT.
DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING ELSE YET.

✓ **15-25 MINUTES**

CONNECT THE ZIGBEE NETWORK
- PLUG IN THE ZIGBEE COORDINATOR
- WHEN PROMPTED, CLICK CONFIGURE

CREATE A NEW ZIGBEE NETWORK YOU NOW HAVE A PRIVATE, LOCAL DEVICE NETWORK INSIDE YOUR HOME.

NO CLOUD. NO ACCOUNTS. NO SUBSCRIPTIONS.

✓ **25-45 MINUTES**

ADD YOUR FIRST DEVICES WALK AROUND THE HOUSE AND PLUG IN YOUR SMART PLUGS.
FOR EACH ONE:
- PUT IT INTO PAIRING MODE
- ADD IT TO THE SYSTEM
- NAME IT IMMEDIATELY (E.G. "LIVING ROOM LAMP")

DO NOT SKIP NAMING.
FUTURE-YOU WILL THANK YOU

✓ **45-60 MINUTES**

CREATE YOUR FIRST DASHBOARD
NOW THE PAYOFF.
- OPEN THE DASHBOARD EDITOR
- ADD SIMPLE TOGGLES FOR THE DEVICES YOU JUST ADDED

TEST IT FROM YOUR PHONE
TURN A LIGHT ON.
TURN IT OFF.
SMILE.

YOU NOW OWN YOUR SMART HOME.

NO SUBSCRIPTIONS. NO CLOUD DEPENDENCY. NO MESS OF APPS.

YOU'RE OFFICIALLY A SMARTDAD.

Let's Keep It Simple

SmartDad is built on real-world use, not hype. If you have questions, feedback, or ideas – I read every message.

Email
hello@smartdad.online

Use email for questions, corrections, or collaboration ideas.
I can't guarantee instant replies – but I do read them.

Follow SmartDad

Instagram
@smartdad.online
Daily tips, quick wins, real setups

TikTok
@smart.dad4
Short, practical automations

Onboarding section

STEP 1

✓ FIRST BOOT & ONBOARDING

WHAT YOU'RE DOING
- **PLUGGING IN THE HUB**
- **CONNECTING IT TO YOUR ROUTER**

OPENING THE DASHBOARD
THAT'S IT.

YOU ARE NOT ADDING DEVICES. YOU ARE NOT CHANGING SETTINGS.

✓ THE HANDSHAKE (2MIN)

WAIT 2 MINUTES ON YOUR LAPTOP (CONNECTED TO THE SAME WI-FI), OPEN A BROWSER. TYPE: `HTTP://HOMEASSISTANT. LOCAL:8123`

✓ THE "WELCOME" SCREEN

CREATE ACCOUNT: NAME, USERNAME, PASSWORD. WRITE THESE DOWN. LOCATION:DRAG THE PIN TO YOUR HOUSE. THIS IS CRITICAL FOR SUNSET/SUNRISE TIMINGS.

STEP 2

✓ **THE ZIGBEE BACKBONE**

GO TO SETTINGS (GEAR

(ZHA) ICON)

✓ **DEVICES & SERVICES**

FIND "DISCOVERED: SONOFF ZIGBEE 3.0..." AND CLICK "CONFIGURE".

✓ **"CREATE A NETWORK"**

YOU NOW HAVE A PRIVATE ZIGBEE NETWORK

STEP 3

✓ **ADDING YOUR FIRST DEVICE**

LISTENING MODE: SETTINGS > DEVICES & SERVICES > ZIGBEE HOME AUTOMATION > "ADD DEVICE".

✓ **PAIRING MODE:**

HOLD THE BUTTON ON YOUR SMART PLUG FOR 5-10 SECONDS (LED FLASHES).

✓ **RENAME**

NAME IT IMMEDIATELY (E.G., "LIVING ROOM STANDING LAMP"). DO NOT SKIP THIS!

STEP 4

✓ **THE "GOODNIGHT" AUTOMATION** SETTINGS > AUTOMATIONS & SCENES > CREATE AUTOMATION

✓ **TRIGGER**

TIME > **23:00**

✓ **CONDITION**

TIME > **AFTER 21:00**

✓ **ACTION**

LIGHT > **TURN OFF (ALL LIGHTS) AND CLIMATE** > **SET TEMP (16°C)**

STEP 5

✓ **REMOTE ACCESS (FREE WAY)**

SETTINGS > **ADD-ONS** > **SEARCH FOR TAILSCALE**

✓ **INSTALL AND START IT.**

✓ **INSTALL TAILSCALE ON YOUR PHONE.** TURN ON THE TAILSCALE VPN ON YOUR PHONE TO ACCESS YOUR HOME SECURELY FROM ANYWHERE.