

**2013 BUYING GUIDE**

# HOME SECURITY SYSTEMS



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# Introduction

So you're searching for a new home, or maybe you've already purchased one. Let us first say congratulations on this exciting endeavor! Now, how are you going to protect your new residence? How are you going to make sure that your family and belongings are safe from theft or disaster? Take a look at some of the benefits of a home security system and how we can help you get the safety you deserve.

## Our Mission

- First and foremost, our mission is to help you find the best security system for your home and family. There are several ways we can help you get there.
- Provide expert reviews of the top home security systems and companies nationwide – making your search easier.
- Explain security system pricing so you know what to look for and what to expect.
- Seek out the best coupons and deals to help you get the most for your money.
- Teach you about security system basics and what each type of security is and how it differs from others.
- Describe security system features and extras so you know exactly what you're getting and why.

## Your Benefits

- Cut down your research time dramatically so you can focus on finding the best security system faster and easier.
- Learn everything there is to know about security system companies and customer service.
- Know the pricing before you call so you know exactly what your system will cost.
- Get the best deals and learn how to negotiate to get the best price.
- Gain knowledge about security systems in general so you know what to look for and what's best for you.
- Learn about the newest security system features like online access and home automation and why it's beneficial.

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✓ **A home security system** is the absolute best way to protect your belongings, home, and most importantly your family. By reading this **Buying Guide** you'll learn about the different types of security systems, how they can benefit you, and how you can use this knowledge to get the best possible price.

# Why a Security System?

Home security systems are the best way to make sure your home and family is protected from possible burglary, fire damage, CO poisoning, and medical emergencies. You can also easily manage your home with home automation and keep an eye on things with online and remote access. Security systems are built for protection and making daily home life easier.

## ✓ Interesting Statistics

### 300%

- Homes without a security system are 300% more likely to be broken into.

### 9 of out 10

- 9 of out 10 convicted burglars admit they would avoid stealing from houses with monitored security systems.

### 550%

- Homes without a security system and worth over \$600,000 are 550% more likely be broken into than homes with an alarm system.

## Additional Benefits of a Security System

**Keep Tabs On Your Home** with online & remote access to your security system. The top security companies offer free smartphone apps and an online interface to easily manage your system and receive alerts about system activity.

**Cut Down Your Energy Bills** by adding home automation features to your home security system. With automated door locks, thermostats, and lighting controls you can control every aspect of your home whether you're home or away.

**Save Money On Your Homeowner's Insurance** by installing a monitored security system. Most insurance companies will give a discount off of your insurance premium if you have a monitored security system installed. Depending on the discount you receive, the security system could pay for itself!

## Common Myths About Security Systems

### Living In A "Safe" Community Means You Don't Need A Home Security System.

This is a big myth with home security systems. No matter where your home is a burglary, or worse, could happen at any time. It doesn't mean it will, but you're better off safe than sorry.

### Security Systems Don't Work If You Have Pets

We all love our furry little friends, and it's important they get the protection they need as well. While motion sensors may not be the best fit if you have large pets, there are many alternatives for pet-friendly homes. Plus, with cameras you can even keep an eye on your pet while at work!

### You Must Have A Phone Line To Install A Security System

The 'traditional' phone line is becoming a thing of the past in most homes. Security companies took notice and came up with different, and much better, ways of monitoring your home security system – such as cellular based monitoring which does not require a home phone line.

# Important Things to Consider

Not all home security systems and companies are created equal. One company may be known for having the best customer service while another is known for its quick and easy installation. Others may be a combination. Below are several things to keep an eye out for while looking for your new security system.

## Installation Method

There are generally two types of installation methods. The most well known is the “professional” or technician installation where a representative from the security company comes to your home to install your system. The other is a Do It Yourself security system installation, which is becoming the most common method.

Do It Yourself installations are extremely quick and easy. Your system is pre-programmed and shipped to your door. All you need to do is plug in your Control Panel (the “brain” of the system), place your wireless sensors, and call the company to have your system activated. This usually takes about 30 minutes. Unless you’re physically unable to perform a DIY installation this is the recommended method.

Technician installations are certainly easy on you. You don’t have to do anything! However, you may end up waiting around for the technician to arrive and it could take him all day to install the system depending on whether it’s wireless or hard-wired. If it’s a hard-wired system there could also be accidental damage to your home. Lastly, technician installations will cost extra most of the time. Money you can save by performing a free DIY installation.

## Wireless vs. Hard-Wired

For years many people thought wireless security systems were less reliable and took too much maintenance. While this may have been true ten years ago, it isn’t today. Wireless systems are extremely simple to install and even easier to manage.

You won’t have to worry about running wires, damage to your home, or having a technician come out to replace a sensor if it goes bad. Replacing parts is a breeze and few and far between, as many wireless security systems are designed to last ten years or more.

Hard-wired security systems are certainly reliable, or else they wouldn’t have been used for so long! However, like we said above they can be intrusive and be more trouble than they are worth.

## Cameras vs. No Cameras

Before the rise of wireless security systems cameras were a bit of a luxury when it came to home security. Only the rich and famous could have high quality, remotely viewable cameras. These days, installing wireless cameras is a breeze.

All that is required to have cameras is a high speed, wireless Internet connection. After installing cameras you will be able to view them while away from home on a computer or even your smartphone! Want to keep an eye on the dog? Want to check in on the kids after school? Wireless cameras make it simple and easy.

While cameras are not a security device per se, they are extremely helpful. They are by no means a necessity when it comes to securing your home, but can add an extra layer of comfort knowing you have the ability to look in on your home from anywhere, anytime.

## Cellular vs. Phone/Broadband

When talking about a cellular, phone line, or broadband security system we’re talking about the way the system is monitored. Your security system needs a way to communicate to the monitoring station, and these are the three main methods. Cellular security systems are by far the most reliable.

Most cellular security systems have a built in cellular device that transmits alarm signals to the monitoring station in the event of an emergency. These signals are sent in a matter of seconds, and also allow you to “connect” with your security system from your smartphone or a computer so you can alter settings or check on things. Most importantly, intruders can’t simply cut a phone line or internet line outside of your home to easily defeat your security system.

Phone line security systems are monitored using your home’s standard landline phone. With many newer homes the phone line is underground, yet may still be accessible outside of your home. Broadband systems may be the most unreliable, as your Internet can go out at any time.

# Types of Security Systems

Having options when it comes to your home security system purchase is always a plus. Good thing for you that security companies have stepped up their game. There are a few different types of security systems you can choose from all with their own unique benefits.

A few aspects of these security systems may roll together as well, meaning you can have a DIY security system that is also a wireless security system and uses cellular monitoring. Below are the main types of security systems.

## Wireless Security Systems

Wireless security systems cover a good portion of the security system market. In this case the word “wireless” pertains to the system having no wires between the alarm sensors. Generally, with a wireless security system the only actual wire is the power cord used to power the main Control Panel.

- Most reliable in the industry
- Extremely easy to install
- Great for condos, apartments, and dorms
- Easy to uninstall and install after a move

All in all wireless security systems are some of the best out there. If you're going to go with a wireless security system, make sure that you choose a provider that offers brand name equipment like GE and you won't go wrong.

## DIY Security Systems

Do It Yourself security systems are somewhat new to the security industry. A DIY security system is one that you can install yourself. This also means that the system will be wireless, since it would be a bit silly to install a hard-wired system on your own!

- Take about 30 minutes to install
- No tools, hardware, or experience necessary
- Typically are shipped preprogrammed

How do you maintain a DIY security system? That's simple too. If a sensor ever goes bad or you run in to an issue simply call your security company for help. They can usually assist you over the phone, and will send you a new sensor if one needs replacing.

Overall DIY security systems are simple to install and the fastest growing segment in the home security industry.

## Cellular Security Systems

When talking about a “cellular” security system we're talking about the way it is monitored. As many homeowners are ditching their home phone lines for cell phones and internet based phones that leaves a gap for security systems that mainly used the phone line for monitoring. This is when cellular monitoring came about.

- The most reliable method of monitoring
- Intruders can't cut phone lines to disable it
- No longer have to pay for a phone line

A cellular system sends cellular signals to local cell towers for monitoring in case of emergencies. It's also used to communicate with your smartphone app and online access so you can instantly change settings no matter where you are.

## Home Automation Systems

Home automation is a great add-on that can offset the cost of a home security system with energy savings. It allows you to automate your home with door locks, thermostats, or lighting controls.

- Save on energy bills
- Adjust temperature and turn off lights remotely
- Unlock or lock doors remotely
- Use smart phones to manage your home

Other benefits of home automation include increased security with devices like keypad door locks or automatic door locks. No longer worry about losing your keys knowing you can simply unlock your door with your smartphone. No key required!

Home automation systems is one of the best ways to get more out of a home security system, be more environmentally friendly, and lower your costs.



## Types of Security Systems:

# Do It Yourself (DIY)

Do It Yourself security systems have taken the security world by storm. By utilizing wireless alarm sensors with easy plug and play monitoring methods a DIY security system can be installed by almost anyone in well under an hour.

All systems come to you pre-programmed so you don't have to worry about anything but plugging in your Control Panel, placing your wireless sensors, and calling your security company to activate your system. DIY security systems installations are almost as easy as snapping your fingers!

## Can You Do It Yourself?

The simple answer is, yes! You can! There is absolutely no experience necessary when it comes to installing a DIY security system. In fact, most people who install a DIY system have never installed one before, much less ever used a security system in the first place!

DIY security installations are not time consuming so even the busiest of people can take 30 minutes to an hour to set their system up and have it activated. What's more is a DIY security system doesn't require any tools. While you do have the option to screw your wireless sensors in, most people simply use strong double-sided adhesive to attach their devices.

Still having doubts? It's perfectly natural so don't worry. Keep in mind that many security companies offering DIY installation also offer a 30-Day Trial Period or Money Back Guarantee. If you find you can't install the system for whatever reason, simply send it back for a refund - or ask your security company to have someone come out.

## Tips for Buying A DIY Security System

Purchasing a DIY security system is pretty straightforward. There aren't a whole lot of things you need to look out for or be aware of. Although there are a few things you should keep in mind.

First, remember to make sure that the system is wireless. You'll almost never find a DIY security system that is hard-wired, but it's good to make sure. Second, many security companies have videos of their installations on their website. It's good to check these out before calling so you have an understanding of how it all works.

Finally, just make sure that the company is not charging you anything extra for the installation. Since you're doing it yourself there should be no extra charge when it comes to installation or activation. That's actually one of the perks of a DIY system!

## Best DIY Security System Companies



**FrontPoint Security**  
Call: 1 (855) 436-2405

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**Protect America**  
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**LifeShield Security**  
Call: 1 (877) 446-5487

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## Types of Security Systems:

# Cellular Security Systems

Cellular security systems are at the height of popularity and for good reason. Remember, when we talk about cellular security systems we're talking about the way the system is monitored. Some systems use your home phone line while others may use your high-speed Internet connection.

While these options may be cheap by comparison you do get what you pay for. Cellular security monitoring is, by far, the most reliable method of monitoring a security system today. Cellular security monitoring requires no wires and simply communicates via cellular towers, meaning you don't have to worry about cut lines or a lost Internet connection.

## Why Choose Cellular?

If you haven't learned why already then we'll tell you again! Cellular security systems are the most reliable on the market today. Remember that we're talking about the way the system is monitored. Cellular security modules can be installed in almost any security system as well.

Cellular security systems are extremely difficult to defeat. Of course there are no wires to cut and no lines to connect. Not to mention that the speed at which signals are sent to the monitoring station is much faster as well. This turns into a faster response time by your local authorities.

In the end, cellular security system monitoring is what will keep your home and family the safest it can be. Plus you won't have to worry about an intruder easily defeating your security system. It's a win-win!

## Tips for Buying a Cellular System

There are a few things to keep an eye out for when purchasing a security system with cellular monitoring capabilities.

First and foremost you want to make sure you have cellular service at your home. These days most people won't have this problem, unless you live in a rural area.

Second thing you will want to look for is what service provider the security company uses. They will likely use the same providers as we use for our cell phones such as AT&T, Verizon, or T-Mobile. You want a reputable cellular provider.

Lastly, make sure the security company is not charging you extra for cellular monitoring - meaning they are not charging you a fee for using cellular connections like your phone company does. The security company should already have a relationship with these providers and have the costs built in to their monthly fee. Don't pay extra!

## Best Cellular Security System Companies



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**Vivint Security**  
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**LifeShield Security**  
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**ADT Home Security**  
Call: 1 (888) 352-3304

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## Types of Security Systems:

# Wireless Security Systems

Ah, our old friend the wireless security system! As we've said previously in this buying guide wireless security systems are the be-all-end-all of home security. Well, mostly at least. While hard-wired security systems are still around many homeowners are turning to wireless security systems because of the ease of installation and use.

The homeowner can install most wireless security systems by combining a DIY installation. What's more is wireless security systems are ideal for cellular security system monitoring as well. Wireless security systems are reliable, easy to install, and easy to use. Simple as that!

## Why Choose Wireless?

If you haven't figured it out already wireless security systems are the easiest to use, easiest to set up, and easiest to maintain. They won't interfere with any other wireless electronic devices in your home and won't be susceptible to intruders cutting wires.

Most wireless security systems have a main Control Panel and wireless sensors. The Control Panel simply plugs in for power (and has a backup battery as well) while the wireless sensors use small lithium batteries that can last up to five years. On top of that wireless systems are easy to set up, and just as easy to take down. Should you move to a new home and want to take your wireless security system you'll have no issues whatsoever.

Adding to a wireless security system is also extremely easy. Simply call your security company to purchase the new devices you want and easily pop them in to place when they arrive. No sending someone to your house, no waiting around all day, and certainly no paying more than you should!

## Tips for Buying a Wireless Security System

Wireless security systems are pretty straightforward when you think about it, but there a few things to look out for.

First, make sure to ask who the manufacturer of the security system is. Security companies that use equipment from manufacturers like GE and Honeywell are the best bets.

Ask about the warranty on the Control Panel and sensors. Some companies offer lifetime warranties (that you usually pay extra for) while others offer the standard manufacturers warranty.

Finally, it's best not to pay for things you don't need. Have the security consultant guide you along the way to configure the best system for your needs to avoid paying too much for stuff you don't need.

## Best Wireless Security Systems



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## Types of Security Systems:

# Home Automation Systems

Like we said before a home automation system and a home security system don't always go hand in hand. More often than not they are combined into one, but not always. In this case we'll talk about how home automation can add to your security system and make your life much easier.

Home automation technology has come a long way in a short time. Now many home automation devices are wireless and can be easily integrated in to your home security system. One of the most prominent technologies in home automation is Z-Wave. Many of the top security companies are now utilizing Z-Wave home automation devices to add to their list of devices and features.

## Why Choose Home Automation?

You do like to make your life easier, right!? Well, home automation can certainly help you in that regard. Home automation devices allow you to automate appliances in your home such as door locks, thermostats, and lighting controls. Using your security system's online or mobile interface you can manage these devices with the touch of a finger.

You'll have the ability to check on the temperature in your home, even change it. You'll also be able to turn lights on and off if you forget before you leave. Too lazy to get out of bed to shut the garage light off? No problem. Do it from your smartphone!

What's even better than doing things easily? Doing things that save you money! Home automation can help you save money off of your energy bills by being able to manage your energy sucking appliances no matter where you are.

## Tips for Buying a Home Automation System

First and foremost, home automation is a luxury and not a necessity. Your home security system should be the first thing you think about before moving on to home automation, but that doesn't mean it's not useful and extremely helpful.

When purchasing home automation devices, think of times you may have left the lights on or turned the temperature way up - then forgot to change it back. In short, think about your daily life and how these devices can make it simpler for you.

You don't need to go overboard, but find things that will make life easier for you and your family. Also keep in mind that most security system Control Panel's can handle well over 100 home automation devices - so you don't always need to go crazy off the bat. You can always add stuff later as well.

## Best Home Automation Systems



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**FrontPoint Security**  
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**Protect America**  
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# 2013 Best Security Systems

The following is our list of the best security companies for 2013. After extensive research into each company our experts came up with this list of the top security companies based on factors such as quality, price, features, and most importantly customer service.

## Best Home Security System Companies

Compare Instant Quotes from All Companies >>



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**LifeShield Security**  
Call: 1 (877) 446-5487

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**Vivint Security**  
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## ✓ How to Get a Great Deal

**Always Call First:** Calling the companies directly allows you to get a quick quote and gives you the ability to ask questions that can lead to greater savings.

**Always Ask for Current Promotions:** All companies offer promotions, but they won't give them out to you unless you ask. It's always a good idea to ask right up front to save yourself extra time and money.

**Make Them Compete:** Tell the sales rep that you are shopping around and that you have other options. Make them compete for your business by giving you a better deal than their competitors.

**Always Ask for More:** Sales agents have some flexibility when it comes to pricing and special offers. If you're interested in a home security system with a specific company, don't be afraid to ask the sales agent to sweeten the deal to earn your business.

**If Interested, Let It Be Known:** Sales agents may want to demo the software or waste time trying to sell you, when you might already be sold. If this is the case, tell them that you are interested and just need to get a good deal. It'll save everyone time and definitely money.

**Stick to the Best:** There are thousands of home security companies, but sticking to the top companies we have reviewed will ensure that you don't get caught in a scam and that you get the best service possible.

# About The Top Companies for 2013

When it comes to the top home security system companies, our experts selected the best based on dozens of factors. Our recommendations are highly respected in the industry and our endorsements are widely accepted by consumers. Here is a little information about the companies, but please read the review to learn more about each company.

**FrontPoint Security**  
Call: 1 (855) 436-2405



FrontPoint is the nation's leading wireless security system provider. They offer 100% wireless GE security equipment that is designed for simple do it yourself installation. FrontPoint also provides a free cellular module with every security system so you know you're getting the most reliable monitoring along with online access and home automation. Their up-front costs and monthly fees are some of the best, and with a 30 Day Risk Free Trial period you can even test out your system before committing to it long term. Finally, FrontPoint has the highest customer satisfaction rating in the industry.

**LifeShield Security**  
Call: 1 (877) 446-5487



LifeShield Security, formerly known as Ingrid, provides 100% wireless security systems. They offer their own proprietary equipment that is designed for simple do it yourself installation. Professional installation is also offered for an additional fee. LifeShield's up-front costs are some of the most competitive along with low monthly rates while offering multiple monitoring methods including cellular and broadband. LifeShield operates nationwide and serves one of the largest customer base of any security company.

**ADT Home Security**  
Call: 1 (888) 352-3304



Most know ADT as the largest and longest standing security company. ADT services customers throughout the world and is a staple in the United States. ADT offers security systems through its Authorized Dealer program, which means local security companies become ADT affiliates and sell their equipment and service to you. There are also several national ADT dealers as well. ADT dealers offer wireless and hard-wired systems that are generally installed by a technician. ADT offers online access capabilities, home automation as well as surveillance. Pricing varies based on the dealer you go through, but pricing is generally competitive with the other top security companies. As mentioned, ADT is the longest standing alarm company, a testament to their customer service and quality.

**Vivint Security**  
Call: 1 (855) 300-1752



Vivint is a fast moving security company based out of Utah. They recently switched to using 2Gig Security equipment, which is known as some of the most advanced in the industry. All Vivint systems are 100% wireless and are installed by a technician most of the time. Vivint is also well known for its stellar home automation and energy management products, as well as its video capabilities and online access. Vivint's pricing is extremely competitive and they offer a range of options from security combined with home automation, to home automation only, to solar power offerings. Vivint will be a major player in the security sector for many years to come.

**Protect America**  
Call: 1 (877) 459-7557



Protect America is another top security company offering 100% wireless GE equipment that is designed for easy do it yourself set up. Protect America is based in Texas and serves customers nationwide. Protect America's staple is their low up-front cost, often times offering systems completely free of charge. Their monthly fees are a tad higher than other companies, but it evens out by not paying for equipment. Protect America provides multiple monitoring methods including cellular and phone line monitoring with online access and home automation capabilities.



# Buying Tips & Ways to Save

Now that you know a lot more about security systems and the best companies out there it's time to help you find the best possible price for your new security system. Here we'll tell you how to scope out the best deals and negotiate the best pricing. We'll make sure you get the best security system for your hard money.

## Tips for Shopping

The first thing you should do when shopping for a security system is read expert and consumer reviews. This buying guide has links to expert reviews conducted by industry experts covering all aspects of the top security systems and companies. These reviews can give you great insight into each company and what they offer which will help you narrow down your list of candidates.

Once you've read reviews it's best to call a few companies to ask questions, get pricing and compare quotes. It's not best practice to only call one company. Unless you are completely blown away by what they're offering you should always call at least one other company.

Finally, once you've gone over pricing and asked your questions you should always ask for a discount – even if you've already gotten one. Asking for a discount is not a bad thing, and even if you've already been presented one asking for more money off can't hurt.

## Coupons & Discount Codes

Finding security system coupons and discounts can be a challenge. Luckily we're here to help you find them! Security System Reviews not only reviews the top security companies but seeks out online deals and coupons for these companies as well. Here you can find the latest incentives and coupons for your security company of choice.

Once you've found the coupon it's best to keep it in your back pocket until after you've called the company and talk about price. The sales rep may offer you an even better deal than the one you found, so you don't want to jump the gun talking about a coupon or discount until you've gone through the process of learning more and pricing a system. It can work to your advantage in the end.

Finally, don't go searching near and far for a better deal. Once you've found a coupon, keep it and move on. Like we said the sales rep may offer you a better deal, and you can always ask for one too. If the company really wants your business and knows you want them too, they'll work with you, we promise!

## Things to Ask When Calling

When calling to learn more about the system, configure it and receive pricing there are a few things you should remember to ask.

First, make sure to ask how long the security monitoring agreement is. The length shouldn't really matter in the end as you'll have your system for much longer, but it's definitely good to know.

Second, ask about a trial period or money back guarantee. Many companies offer a period of 30 Days to try your system to see if you like it. If not, you can simply send it back for a full refund.

Lastly, it's probably a good idea to ask to see the security-monitoring contract before committing or making the purchase. While you often don't actually sign the agreement until after you have paid, it's best to look it over beforehand so you're not put on the spot when the time comes. Most of the stuff in the contract won't mean much to you, but at least you'll have a chance to glance over it before making your decision.

## Comparing Quotes

Comparing security system quotes can be like reading two different maps of the same area and still getting lost. The first thing to remember when comparing quotes is that you are comparing apples to apples. If one company is quoting you for a hard-wired system with phone line monitoring while another is quoting you on a wireless system with cellular monitoring it would be tough to really compare the two.

Focus on the things you really want like wireless, cellular, DIY, etc. before making your calls. This way you'll know that you're not only calling the right company first, but also comparing systems that are similar.

Lastly, don't be afraid to use one company's quote against another. This is one of the finest arts in negotiation. A lot of company's offer price-matching guarantees or will give you a little bit more discount to get you closer to the price you're looking for.

