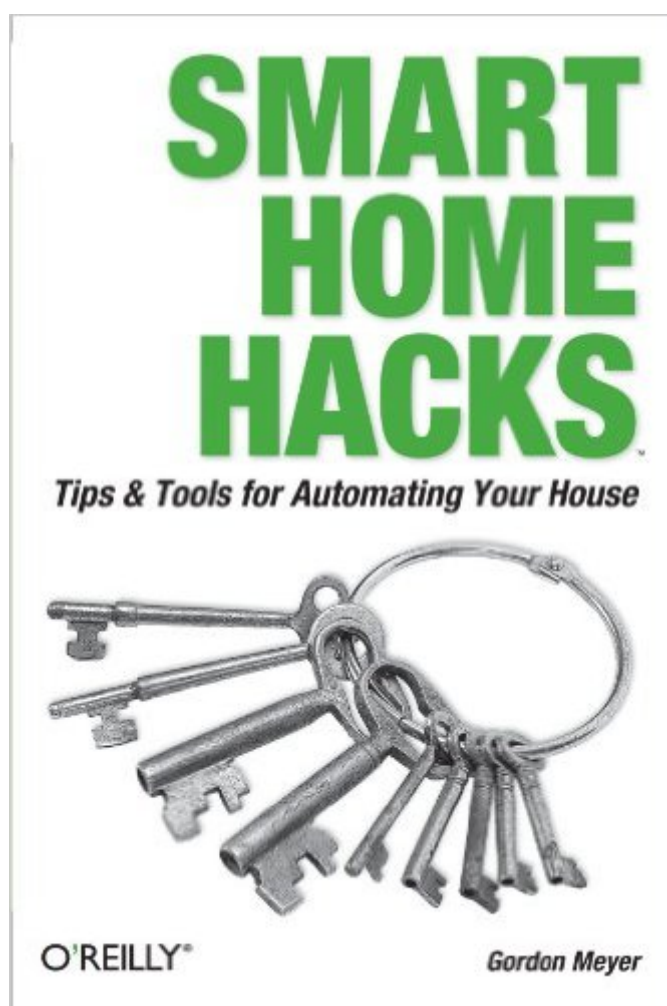# Smart Home Hacks: Tips & Tools For Automating Your House

Synopsis

So much of what is commonplace today was once considered impossible, or at least wishful thinking. Laser beams in the operating room, cars with built-in guidance systems, cell phones with email access. There's just no getting around the fact that technology always has, and always will be, very cool.But technology isn't only cool; it's also very smart. That's why one of the hottest technological trends nowadays is the creation of smart homes.At an increasing rate, people are turning their homes into state-of-the-art machines, complete with more switches, sensors, and actuators than you can shake a stick at. Whether you want to equip your home with motion detectors for added security, install computer-controlled lights for optimum convenience, or even mount an in-home web cam or two purely for entertainment, the world is now your oyster. Ah, but like anything highly technical, creating a smart home is typically easier said than done.Thankfully, Smart Home Hacks takes the guesswork out of the process. Through a seemingly unending array of valuable tips, tools, and techniques, Smart Home Hacks explains in clear detail how to use Mac, Windows, or Linux to achieve the automated home of your dreams. In no time, you'll learn how to turn a loose collection of sensors and switches into a well-automated and well-functioning home no matter what your technical level may be.Smart Home Hacks covers a litany of stand-alone and integrated smart home solutions designed to enhance safety, comfort, and convenience in new and existing homes. Kitchens, bedrooms, home offices, living rooms, and even bathrooms are all candidates for smart automation and therefore are all addressed in Smart Home Hacks.Intelligently written by engineering guru and George Jetson wannabe, Gordon Meyer, Smart Home Hacks leaves no stone unturned. From what to purchase to how to use your remote control, it's the ultimate guide to understanding and implementing complete or partial home automation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Technical people are always looking for ways that technology can improve and enrich their lives. Smart homes-or home automation-has always seemed like something more from science fiction than science fact. However, after reading this book, the truth is that creating a smart home is easier and far less technical than most people think. This book provides the reader with 100 tips or things that can be done (some quite easy, some might take longer to complete) to automate your home.Contrary to what you might think, much of what you can do with home automation doesn't require your home to be re-wired. Instead, much of what you might want to accomplish (like having your computer automatically turning on or off lights in the house while you're on vacation) can be done very easily through X10 modules. X10 modules are relatively inexpensive components which can send signals over power lines. Once you understand X10, many of the more straightforward hacks in this book make a lot of sense.Other projects you'll find in this book include a home monitoring system, a smart sprinkling system, sending messages of what's happening at home to a cell phone or pager, and even controlling your home from a web browser. While some of these projects may sound a bit Orwellian, they are actually very interesting and can make your home a safer place to live. Instead of becoming a victim when a toilet or washing machine overflows, you can put preemptive measures in place to be alerted before a problem occurs.This is a very interesting book and a must read if you've ever considered home automation. Not only will this book step you through some projects, but it will give you some excellent ideas for the future. I enjoyed reading this book and would highly recommend it.

"Smart Home Hacks" provides a basic introduction to X10-based home automation, a technology that's been around since the 1970s. For the most part, the book just scratches the surface of the subject and often goes off on unrelated tangents, such as an example of how to build a robot lawnmower. What's missing is a more comprehensive overview of X10-compatible modules and the different ways they might be used to solve home automation problems. For example, irrigation is a very practical application that's ideal for a computer, and there are X10-based models, such as the Rain8 made by WGL designs. But the author chooses to ignore irrigation because of a perceived

flooding hazard, even though the Rain8 has an internal limiter that shuts off the water even if no X10 "off" signal is received. Many pages are devoted to computer automation systems sending text-base messages, but no mention is made of voice-based solutions which are much more practical and cost-effective. The newer software applications that are available are impressive but it's amazing how primitive the available hardware is. The book fails to mention one of the biggest obstacles to X10 deployment: the need for a "neutral" (white) wire in household wiring. Since most light switches are wired with a simple 2-wire loop-back for economic reasons, it would require expensive re-wiring to use X10 switches. And, unless I missed it, it fails to discuss the problem of X10 signals not being passed to the "other side" of typical 2-phase house wiring. Only a passing mention is made to the new INSTEON technology that improves upon the old X10 protocol. So, although the book appears to be "current" it reads like it was written five years ago. "Smart Home Hacks" works best as sort of an idea cookbook. You'll find yourself bouncing around from one "recipe" to another but often finding most cool ideas can't be cooked up because of various obstacles (cost, permits, electronic expertise, obscure hardware, and so on).

The author covers HA from the prospective of the MAC, OSX, XTension HA software and mostly X10 but don't hold that against him as it's not the goal of the book. I treated this book as more of an idea book and almost all the ideas are portable to other scriptable/extendable software. It's for those of us who have a little imagination, some programming experience and the willingness to put a little effort into programming. It is in no way a recipe book where you follow the directions step by step to build a project. I really like the book and I really find it perfect for bathroom reading (you can read a section pretty quick to get your ideas). :-)And I forgive the author for not cover Linux better. :-)

This is the first quality book that I have found on X10. It's invaluable. Both the hardware and software (for PC and Mac) are covered in depth here. There is coverage of the basics; turning on and off lights, using control boxes and timers, and using a PC as your control hub. But, as with the other Hacks books there are other more esoteric topics as well. Such as heating your toilet seat, managing your sprinkler system, and using X10 for security. An excellent book. A must buy for X10 users.

This book presents a great variety of ideas for using the X10 protocol. I'm sure every reader will find several ideas or projects interesting enough to try.Although I've been using X10 products for over five years, I have found this book to be a very useful reference. What I like about it is that it starts off

with the very basics and move through to the esoteric ... something for everyone.I recommend this book to the beginner or to the experienced. I'm glad I bought it: I refer to it all the time.

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