




tech trends '09

Today's Homes and Appliances Are **Built Smart.**



Here are some ways you can integrate new technology into your home so you can both relax and increase its value.

The Future: Whole-House Remote Control.

With home automation, the ability to control every aspect of your home — from lighting and room temperature to entertainment center — can be held in your hand. A “smart home” uses a single centralized controller to integrate various systems, so that with the push of a button, you can turn on lights, open or close blinds, adjust multiple rooms to your desired temperature or even activate or deactivate your security system. You can set a group of actions to happen at pre-set times or to activate when certain events occur. Just about anything you plug in can be networked into your home automation system. This makes your life easier and provides a great selling point if you decide to put your home on the market.



Be Smart. Save Energy and Money with Efficient Appliances.

Cut your monthly utility bills while helping the environment by purchasing appliances — refrigerators, dishwashers, laundry machines, etc. — that are energy efficient. The planet (and your wallet) will thank you.

LOOK FOR THE ENERGY STAR® LABEL
ENERGY STAR products exceed the minimum energy efficient requirements set by the federal government. In addition, utilities and state governments may offer rebates on ENERGY STAR-rated models.

Pay attention to the Energy Guide label as well. This label allows you to compare the typical annual energy consumption and operating cost of different models of the type of appliance you're thinking of buying.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SIZE
Why buy an oversized appliance when a smaller counterpart will get the job done? When you choose the appliance that fits your needs, you'll save money and reduce your energy bill.



CHOOSE NATURAL GAS
Look for dryers and water heaters that run on natural gas, rather than electricity.

THINK LONG TERM
Energy efficient appliances last for years and will lower your monthly utility bills over the lifetime of the appliance. The long-term savings will help offset the appliances' higher initial purchase price.





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BATHROOMS ARE GETTING SMARTER BY THE DAY.



Technological advancements are now available for bathrooms. An intelligent showering system allows users to store their preferred water pressure, temperature and hydro-massage settings for each showerhead, and save the settings as a custom program. Family members can then select their personalized shower experience from the digital display. Bathroom floors can be installed with heating systems that warm themselves at pre-set times each day. Even towel bars can be heated to make your towels more soothing.

Smarter toilets are also on the horizon. One new toilet seat can sense users based on weight, and it will heat or cool the seat to their preference using in-line water flow. In Japan, one company has designed a toilet that can measure weight, body fat, blood pressure and blood sugar levels and transmit the data to your computer.

A SMART HOME IS A GREEN HOME.

One of the most important trends in modern home design is incorporating environmentally friendly amenities. A recent National Association of Realtors® survey of members showed there is increased demand among potential homebuyers for homes with green features. Nearly nine out of ten agents said their clients are very interested in energy-efficient features and their potential cost savings.

Here's a look at the green housing trends that will not only bring an older home to the new millennium, but also attract younger buyers when it's time to sell.

COPPER ROOFS. These roofs tolerate inclement weather and will last 100 years versus a composition roof that lasts only 30 years. Copper elements can also be completely recycled.

LOW-EMITTANCE (LOW-E) WINDOWS, DOORS AND SKYLIGHTS. This glass lets in natural light but blocks the sun's UV rays that heat up the inside of a home. This glass will reduce energy consumption, and its special low-E glazing also stops the sun from fading fabrics, wall coverings and artwork.

CHEMICAL-FREE LIGHTING. LED (light emitting diodes) lighting contains no hazardous chemicals, uses 80 percent less energy than a traditional incandescent light bulb and can last up to 20 years.

GREEN TOILETS. Green toilets conserve water (which can save you 30 to 50 percent on your annual water bill) in different ways: low-flow toilets use about 20 percent less water per flush, dual-flush toilets with two buttons give home owners the option of flushing with a half or full tank and pressure-assist toilets reduce water usage by half.

INDUCTION COOKTOPS. The coils of an induction cooktop release their energy directly to the pot or pan and its contents. This means less energy is diffused in the cooking process.

RECLAIMED WOOD. Fast-growing plants (e.g., bamboo) and unused pre-cut wood find new life as gorgeous, affordable countertops. Cork flooring is a great alternative to hardwood because it is extremely durable yet inexpensive.

NONTOXIC PAINT. To keep indoor air clean and cut down on landfill pollutants, use paints that don't contain toxic volatile organic components (VOCs).

HOW HIGH TECH IS YOUR HOME?

If the latest technology or entertainment options are important in your next new home, add the following questions to your checklist:

1. Are there enough jacks in every room for cable TV and high-speed Internet hook-ups?
2. Are there enough telephone extensions or jacks?
3. Is the home prewired for a home theater or multi-room audio and video?
4. Does the home have a local area network (LAN) for linking computers?
5. Does the home already have wiring for DSL or another high-speed Internet connection?
6. Does the home have multi-zoning heating and cooling controls with programmable thermostats?
7. Does the home have multi-room lighting controls, window-covering controls or other home automation features?
8. Is the home wired with multi-purpose in-wall wiring that allows for reconfiguration to update services as technology changes?

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