

GET

The Economic Times to read 4 pages of **ET** Panache from Monday to Friday

Explore the hidden side of your smart assistant

Do you find that your smart speakers and displays are not as helpful as you thought? Here are six things you are probably not using

in.pcmag.com

Smart speakers are designed to have an invisible interface. Speak a command and your music starts playing, or your timer starts counting. This is great for using the commands you know, but it is difficult to discover the ones you don't. Check out some of the useful ways to use your smart hub that you might have missed:



Check your calendar on a smart display

Checking events on your calendar with a smart speaker is not the best experience in the world. It's easier to pull up your phone than listen to a speaker slowly say everything on your agenda. However, a smart display like Echo Show makes it more useful. You can see the day's events and reminders you have set at a glance without even asking for it.

Talk to family members in other rooms

If you have smart speakers in multiple rooms of your house, then you also have an intercom



system. The Amazon Echo accomplishes this with a feature called Drop In. You can use Drop In to call other Echo devices, just like making a phone call. You can send a message to your spouse in the kitchen, or broadcast to the whole house that dinner is ready. Google Home has a similar feature called Broadcast. But it can't target a specific speaker — it's every speaker in your house or nothing.

Turn your smart display into a photo album

The Echo Show and Home Hub can display your pictures. The Echo Show can create a slideshow of your own images



that will change at regular intervals. Google Home takes this a step further by letting you use a Live Album, which can automatically be populated by photos of specific people or pets.

Control your TV without a remote

With a Google Home speaker and a Chromecast, you can cast whatever you are watching to your TV and turn the display on or off on certain televisions. Amazon's Fire TV Cube goes further. Its IR blaster lets you control Blu-ray players, cable boxes and most of the other boxes in your living room.

Link to smart home devices

Smart home devices are getting cheaper and more useful by the day. And they all work better with a voice-controlled speaker. If you have compatible devices, you can turn off your bedroom lights from under the covers, pull up a video of the front door from the display in your kitchen, or ask whether the air conditioning is turned on. Having a smart speaker in your home gives you a central hub to control your smart home.



Use routines to perform multiple tasks at once

Both Amazon Echo and Google Home devices support a feature called Routines, which allows you to create a single voice command that performs multiple actions at once. For example, when it's time for bed, you could create a routine that turns off your lights, turns off the TV and starts playing some soothing music. Just tell your speaker 'good night' and let your voice assistant take care of the rest.



A CEO who admits his mistakes

Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon says that becoming a better listener has helped him open up to other points of view

businessinsider.in

David Solomon became the CEO of Goldman Sachs in October 2018, after nearly 20 years with the firm. He previously served as president and chief operating officer.

Solomon recently shared how his leadership style has evolved over time.



"I'd say I'm a much better listener at 57 than I was at 37," Solomon said during an interview. "I can be very strident, very opinionated, but I also change my mind. And I'm willing to change my mind and say that I'm wrong, even if I have been forceful about a point of view."

"I can be very strident, very opinionated, but I also change my mind"

Solomon spoke more generally about leadership: "You will get some things right and you will get some things wrong. You've got to be willing to learn, change your view, be open, and you've got to figure out how to listen."

Some experts agree that the willingness to change your mind is an important trait of a successful leader.

Solomon said a leader's response to learning that they were mistaken is key. He said, "How you adapt and adjust to the things you get wrong is really important, how you respond to adversity is really important, and so there's no right way. And I'm still learning."

Eleven ways to stand up to back pain

Only one in five people will ever shake off back pain, says the Krembil Research Institute in Toronto. This essential guide gives you things that will give you the best possible chance of being one of them:

Forget bed rest

Bed rest is outdated advice that could, in the long term, make pain worse as your muscles become weaker. Physiotherapist Nicola Ayres says, "The key to easing pain and preventing reoccurrences is to strengthen the spine." Gentle exercise—swimming, brisk walking and cycling—help, while classes such as pilates work on core muscles that support the spine.

Swap surgery for physio

A Harvard University study found physiotherapy was as good as surgery—and less risky—to treat the most common types of lower back pain.

Try a smart posture gadget

"Whether it's the head-down position we use to stare at phones or the slouch while standing, poor posture can strain the muscles from neck to lower back," says Nicola. Try to consciously correct your posture and not spend more than 20 minutes in any one position.

Invest in rocker shoes

A Spanish study found 'rocker bottom' shoes (thick soles and rounded heels) help ease chronic back pain by strengthening the muscles and improving the spine's natural curve.

Learn how to sneeze

Sneezing is a common pain trigger because of its release speed of up to 100mph—and that we tend to turn away sharply when we sneeze out of politeness. Smart Guide to Back Care author Janet Wakley says this can wrench the back in a split second. She recommends turning your whole body so your back remains straight.

Sit right

A lot of time sitting means your spine is curving forward, straining



the vertebrae. An ergonomically designed chair encourages your spine into a less stressful shape.

Sleep tight

Disturbed sleep is common among back-pain sufferers, and can worsen inflammation. Invest in a good mattress and experiment with sleep positions. A pillow under your body can help maintain the spine's natural curve.

Sort stress

Back muscles tense up when under stress and can eventually spasm, triggering pain. It causes cortisol levels to soar, increasing inflammation.

Sweat it out

A 30-minute stint in the sauna triggers your body to make 142 per cent more of bone bolstering human growth hormone, linked to stronger muscles and less pain. A study found the heat boosted circulation, sending extra blood and nutrients around the skeletal system.

The right bag

A rucksack or wide-strap bag that crosses over the chest to evenly distribute weight is best, says the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

Boost vitamin C

Vitamin C helps you make collagen that strengthens the cartilage and ligaments which support the spine. Good sources are fresh fruit and vegetables, especially peppers, broccoli, citrus and berries.

— DAILY MIRROR

HOT TOPIC

Breaking the bond

Here's how to spot the signs that you are in a relationship that may not be working for you

mensxp.com

If you're in love with someone, it's either because you're attracted to their outward beauty or you've fallen for certain traits the person has. Whatever the reason is, you find a way to justify what love means to you. Sometimes, people may be truly rolling in the symphony of love without realising the person they're in love with, is absolutely wrong for them. Here are some tell-tale signs that indicate you need to cut the cord:

Mental health starts taking a toll

If you feel heaviness within you and you seem to be unhappy most of the times, maybe the feeling is a derivative of the relationship you're in. This is the first sign of unhappiness and is absolutely non-negotiable. Your mental state is the most important thing and if you feel it's slipping away circumstantially, you need to either step up and change things around or cut the source off.

Always compromising

While we all have our individuality, in a relationship it's always best to work as a team. That's because both sides have needs. But if you're constantly stepping forward and compro-



mising all the time, maybe it's time to rethink.

No resolve

No relationship can survive without fights, but the unhealthiest thing partners do is to shove the fights under the rug. Sooner or later, they crop up again, fiercer, and ready to damage your relationship. A healthy fight is the one that can be resolved.

It's not supposed to accumulate into something bigger in the future. If that happens often, and there's no solution to it, the relationship or the person isn't really the right fit.

Don't let social media envy drag and drop you into debt

The friends making you jealous on social media may not actually be able to afford the vacations they post

When was the last time scrolling through Instagram made you feel better?

The puppy photos on your feed may momentarily boost your mood, but the parade of carefully selected and artfully edited experiences leave you feeling depleted. How can these people afford to travel to New Zealand? When will it be your turn to road trip along the Pacific Coast Highway, drinking wine on sunlit rooftops along the way?

You know by now that social media leaves out the fender benders, arguments and weather mishaps essential to any vacation. You can add financial faux pas to that list.

You can't really know how much money your friends have. But it's safe to say that at least some of them may not be able to afford the trips that make you feel inferior without going into credit card debt. Here's how to keep Instagram from bullying you into overspending.

LOCATE THE SOURCE OF YOUR FOMO

If a friend's vacation photo really got under your skin, explore why. The destination or trip itself may



not be the source of that FOMO, or fear of missing out. Has it been a while since you've taken time off work, and you're resentful of how relaxed this person seems? Are you jealous of how close they appear to their partner or friends? There could be ways to ease your anxiety for free, without vacationing at all. Consider scheduling a mental health day and going to a local museum on a day with free or reduced-price admission to get your mind off work. Round up friends interested in starting a book club or hiking group that meets monthly so you can feel part of a community.



VACATION FOR CHEAP

If travelling is what you crave for, plan a debt-free vacation by estimating how much you'll spend on transportation, lodging, meals and activities and saving that amount in advance. Some online savings accounts let you create sub-accounts for specific purposes, so setting aside money each month for travel means you save passively over time.

But if you haven't been saving and need a getaway, stay flexible on dates and locations and use price-tracking apps to find hotel and flight deals. Consider staying local and taking a short road trip to an attraction in your area you've never been to.

CUT BACK ON SCROLLING

There's another, potentially nuclear-sounding option to prevent social media-influenced spending: Don't look at Instagram at all. You don't have to go cold turkey. You can continue to post your own photos or communicate with friends via direct message, but rein in mindlessly perusing other people's feeds. The ideal

outcome? Making plans and choosing travel experiences based on what makes you happy, not on a highly filtered version of someone else's life.

— AP

Low carb? Low fat? What the latest dieting studies tell us

Two major studies in 2018 offered some insight into the role carbs play in making us fat, but unfortunately, they don't settle the question of how best to lose weight in 2019

Bacon and black coffee for breakfast, or oatmeal and bananas? If you're planning to try to lose weight in 2019, you're sure to find a fierce debate online and among friends and family about how best to do it. It seems like everyone has an opinion, and new fads emerge every year.

Two major studies in 2018 provided more fuel for a particularly polarising topic — the role carbs play in making us fat. The studies gave scientists some clues, but, like other nutrition studies, they can't say which diet — if any — is best for everyone. That's not going to satisfy people who want black-and-white answers, but nutrition research is extremely difficult



and even the most respected studies come with big caveats. People are so different that it's all but impossible to conduct studies that show what really works over long periods of time. Before embarking on a weight

loss plan for the new year, here's a look at some of what was learned last year.

Fewer carbs, fewer pounds?

It's no longer called the Atkins



Diet, but the low-carb school of dieting has been enjoying a comeback. The idea is that the refined carbohydrates in foods like white bread are quickly converted into sugar in our bodies, leading to energy swings and hunger.

By cutting carbs, the claim is that weight loss will be easier because your body will instead burn fat for fuel while feeling less hungry. A recent study seems to offer more support for low-carb proponents.

David Ludwig, the paper's lead

author and a researcher at Boston Children's Hospital, said it suggests limiting carbs could make it easier for people to keep weight off once they've lost it. He said the approach might work best for those with diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Do I avoid fat to be skinny?

For years people were advised to curb fats, which are found in foods including meat, nuts, eggs, butter and oil. Cutting fat was seen as a way to control weight, since a gram of fat has twice as

many calories than the same amount of carbs or protein. Many say the advice had the opposite effect by inadvertently giving us license to gobble up fat-free cookies, cakes and other foods that were instead full of the refined carbs and sugars now blamed for our wider waistlines. Nutrition experts gradually moved away from blanket recommendations to limit fats for weight loss. Fats are necessary for absorbing important nutrients and can help us feel full. Bruce Y Lee, a

professor of international health at Johns Hopkins, said the lessons learned from the anti-fat fad should be applied to the anti-carb fad: don't oversimplify advice.

So, what works?

In the short term you can probably lose weight by eating only raw foods, or going vegan, or cutting out gluten, or following another diet plan that catches your eye. But what will work for you over the long term is a different question.

Zhaoping Li, director of clinical nutrition division at the University of California, Los Angeles, says there is no single set of guidelines that helps everyone lose weight and keep it off. It's why diets often fail — they don't factor into account the many factors that drive us to eat what we do. To help people lose weight, Li examines her patients' eating and physical activity routines to identify improvements people will be able to live with.

—AP