



Home Tips



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Q & A

SimpliSafe Security System

By Wendy Sheehan Donnell



Like many new homeowners, I like the idea of securing my family and my house, but I don't like the idea of locking myself into a multi-year service contract during which I have to pay a high monthly monitoring fee. Also, drilling into my newly painted walls to install a complicated wired system isn't terribly appealing. As its name implies, SimpliSafe is a wireless security system that's truly simple to set up and use, and keeps your home safe from intruders and environmental threats like fires and floods. It's a seamless DIY system that succeeds quite well at what it sets out to do—secure your home easily and flexibly, letting you monitor everything remotely with an affordable monthly monitoring plan.

Hardware and Monitoring Plan Pricing

One of the nicest things about SimpliSafe is that it's a completely configurable system, with five packages available. I tested the soup-to-nuts Ultimate Security package (\$539.85), which includes 16 hardware components including the base station, a wireless keypad, a keychain remote, two motion sensors, four

door/window entry sensors, a panic button, a 105-decibel siren, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, water and freeze sensors, and a SimpliSafe yard sign and window decals. The least expensive (\$229.96) Starter Package, which focuses on basic home security, includes the base station, a wireless keypad, one motion sensor, one entry sensor, a keychain remote, and

the yard sign and decals. If you want the camera too, tack on another \$99. Currently, Simplisafe doesn't offer any packages with the camera included. However, additional components can be purchased separately to create your own package, or expand on one.

If you want a one-stop home monitoring solution that encompasses more than just security, adding environmental sensors makes sense. Smoke detectors are \$29.99 each, and you can hook them into your monitoring plan, which will alert you via email or SMS when an alarm is triggered and send first responders to your door in the event of a fire.

The same goes for carbon monoxide detectors, which are \$49.99 each. Freeze sensors (\$29.99 each) alert you when the temperature falls below a certain point to prevent burst pipes, and water sensors (\$19.99 each) detect and alert you of leaks and floods.

For monitoring, there's a basic \$14.99 per month Standard plan that includes 24/7 coverage. If a sensor is triggered, SimpliSafe will



contact you, and if you don't provide a safe word that you designate during setup, police will be dispatched. For \$10 more per month, the Interactive plan adds SMS and email alerts, the ability to use the Online Dashboard for finer control of the system, and the smartphone app to arm and disarm the system.

If you don't want to pay the monthly fees, SimpliSafe can be used as a local alarm. So when a sensor is triggered, it's up to you to contact the authorities. There aren't any contracts or commitments and you can start and stop service or change plans at any time.

With the monthly Interactive Plan, you can use



SimpliSafe's Online Dashboard to control the system, including arming and disarming it. The Dashboard also lets you view your System Event Log, change your PIN, assign up to four guest PINs, and choose an optional Duress PIN, which you can use if an intruder is coercing you to disable the alarm. Enter it, and the alarm will stop sounding, but SimpliSafe will immediately send the police. You can also tweak settings like siren volume, entry and exit delay time, and manage and rename sensors in the Dashboard.

I was concerned by one odd thing in testing. I had the Online Dashboard open in a tab in my browser, came back to it several hours later, and I was still logged in and able to change my system settings. The site had failed to log me out after a period of inactivity. I even closed the browser tab, reloaded it, and I was still logged in. Leaving your home's security

settings available to anyone who happens to access your browser is potentially dangerous. I hope SimpliSafe remedies this quickly.

The free mobile app, available for Android, iOS, and Windows Phone, is very basic. Using it requires the Interactive plan, and it simply lets you turn the system on or off and view your System Event Log. It's unclear why SimpliSafe doesn't provide the fine system controls it offers in the Online Dashboard in the app itself. Still, if you can swing the extra \$10 over the Standard monitoring plan, the ability to customize and control your system from anywhere, offered in the online dashboard and app are well worth the price.

Source: <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2495173,00.asp>

If you have a question, comment, or home tip, send it to us at rod@cbiga.com. We reserve the right to edit published questions for length.

Thought For The Month

“WHEN I STARTED COUNTING MY BLESSINGS, MY WHOLE LIFE TURNED AROUND.” - WILLIE NELSON

A Tip Of The Hat To:

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******* Thank You *******

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