**Google launches video doorbell with facial recognition in UK**

**Nest Hello promises to recognise friends and family at the door, but could provoke privacy concerns**

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Google’s facial recognition video doorbell, the Nest Hello, is launching in the UK to challenge Amazon’s Ring.

Initially released in the US in March, Nest Hello is the first of Google’s new home security product lineup to make it to the UK, ahead of its Nest Secure alarm system.

Nest Hello is a £229 wifi-connected smart doorbell with a wide-angle camera that captures high definition HDR video with night vision after dusk. It will send alerts with pictures from the camera to users’ phones and allows them to talk to visitors through the doorbell from anywhere with an internet connection. Users can also opt to have the doorbell say one of three quick phrases, such as “we’ll be right there”.

Nest’s big differentiating feature, however, is its machine-learning technology that analyses video from the front door, which [Google](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/google) claims can differentiate between people walking by, visitors or delivery people approaching and loitering burglars, only alerting users when necessary.

Lionel Guicherd-Callin, head of EMEA product marketing for Nest Labs, said: “Your front door is where home begins. It’s the entryway to special moments with family and friends – but also the most common way burglars enter your home. So we’ve designed a doorbell experience that makes your front door more safe and secure, yet still feels friendly.”

With an optional Nest Aware subscription starting at £4 per month, Google goes one step further with cloud video recording and face recognition, which allows users to name visitors and then have them automatically identified on subsequent arrivals at their door.

“Instead of just alerting you that there’s someone at the door, we can tell you that your kids are at the door, or there is someone you don’t know standing at the door,” said Guicherd-Callin.

The Nest Hello can also connect to other smart home devices, including Google Assistant speakers so that users can get alerts through them. If the face of the visitor is recognised the speakers can announce the name of the person at the door, for instance, or Nest Hello can trigger a smart light.

Ben Wood, head of research at CCS Insight, said that a recent survey by the analysis firm of smart home device owning UK consumers put connected doorbells in the top three next purchases.

Google’s facial recognition system first launched in the UK in April, but the same technology in a doorbell, which primarily faces the street and is more likely to capture neighbours and passers-by, is more likely to raise privacy concerns.

“Facial recognition on smart home cameras is not something new – but the Nest Hello will likely raise awareness among consumers that could spark a deeper debate about the implications of such technology being deployed by people’s front doors,” said Wood. “This could be a major challenge for Google given the broader unease around privacy at present.”

Nest warns about the implications of capturing others on video and the fact that such cameras facing into public spaces could face regulation under [data protection laws](https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/cctv-on-your-property/). The company does not offer a free trial of the service for the doorbell, unlike its [IQ cameras](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/31/nest-smart-camera-no-sex-please-tech-company-simone-de-beauvoir), and stores video and facial-recognition data within Irish data centres for those in Europe.

But it remains to be seen whether facial recognition technology at the front door will prove the killer feature or simply create a privacy headache for Google. [Amazon’s Ring](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/feb/01/ring-video-doorbell-2-review-deal-with-doorsteppers-from-your-own-sofa) specifically does not offer such a system, relying simply on motion detection and video capture for security purposes.

“There maybe some nervousness from others given the privacy concerns the technology will likely generate, but ultimately it comes down to how the data is used and how useful consumers find it,” said Wood.