

## Amazon Alexa to answer questions on health

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Technology has taken another step in helping us with our healthcare. We can now ask the digital device Alexa for advice if we are worried about our health.

Alexa is a virtual assistant created by the website Amazon.com. It is capable of listening to people and answering their questions. As well as voice interaction capabilities, Alexa can make to-do lists, play music upon voice request, and give us the latest news. Now Alexa can answer our health queries. Amazon has linked up with the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK to add a health advice capability to the software. Alexa will be able to search the NHS website for information and find an answer that is agreed on by many health experts.

Alexa's new health advice capability has been met with a mixed response. The UK Health Secretary said: "Technology like this is a great example of how people can access reliable, world-leading advice from the comfort of their home, reducing the pressure on our hardworking doctors and pharmacists." He added: "We want to empower every patient to take better control of their healthcare." Other people say we need to be careful about trusting the advice of a piece of software. They say we must go to a human doctor if we have serious health problems. Other people are concerned about privacy. The group Big Brother Watch is worried about hacking. It said: "It's a data protection disaster waiting to happen."

Sources: [thesun.co.uk](http://thesun.co.uk) / [bbc.com](http://bbc.com) / [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)

## Writing

It is very dangerous to use software to get healthcare advice. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

technology / step / healthcare / virtual / assistant / capabilities / software / experts / advice / response / reliable / pharmacists / patient / software / doctor / protection

## True / False

- a) The article said healthcare has taken a step towards helping technology. T / F
- b) We won't be able to ask Alexa for health advice. T / F
- c) Amazon teamed Alexa up with the UK's national health service. T / F
- d) The article said Alexa will search the world's health service databases. T / F
- e) Everyone praised the new Alexa health advice function. T / F
- f) Alexa could reduce pressure on doctors who are hardworking. T / F
- g) People said we should see a doctor for serious health problems. T / F
- h) A data protection group said Alexa could be a disaster for privacy. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. <b>step</b>      | a. trustworthy |
| 2. <b>worried</b>   | b. specialists |
| 3. <b>latest</b>    | c. major       |
| 4. <b>linked up</b> | d. advance     |
| 5. <b>experts</b>   | e. reaction    |
| 6. <b>response</b>  | f. stress      |
| 7. <b>reliable</b>  | g. concerned   |
| 8. <b>pressure</b>  | h. most recent |
| 9. <b>serious</b>   | i. catastrophe |
| 10. <b>disaster</b> | j. combined    |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about Alexa?
- b) How useful is technology in healthcare?
- c) Where do you go for healthcare advice?
- d) Would you ask Alexa for health advice?
- e) What problems are there in asking Alexa for health advice?
- f) What is on your to-do list for today?
- g) When was the last time you asked for health advice?
- h) Do you ever use the Internet for health advice?

## Phrase Match

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Technology has taken another       | a. many health experts |
| 2. if we are worried                  | b. response            |
| 3. listening to people and answering  | c. waiting to happen   |
| 4. give us                            | d. every patient       |
| 5. an answer that is agreed on by     | e. about our health    |
| 6. met with a mixed                   | f. the latest news     |
| 7. people can access reliable, world- | g. step in helping us  |
| 8. We want to empower                 | h. the advice          |
| 9. be careful about trusting          | i. their questions     |
| 10. It's a data protection disaster   | j. leading advice      |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Do people need health advice from their home?
- Do doctors need less pressure?
- Will software be better than doctors one day?
- What is healthcare like in your country?
- What do you think healthcare will be like in the future?
- Would you worry about your privacy if you used Alexa?
- What questions would you like to ask Alexa?

## Spelling

- Alexa is a ilrvaut assistant
- baapecl of listening to people
- play music upon voice esqurte
- answer our health queiser
- caehsr the NHS website for information
- agreed on by many health sterxpe
- met with a mixed nseropse
- access aeiebllr, world-leading advice
- from the omrfcot of their home
- reducing the puessrer
- Other people are concerned about ypvcair
- a data octenotrpi disaster

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. g	3. h	4. j	5. b
6. e	7. a	8. f	9. c	10. i

## Role Play

### Role A – Health Advice

You think health advice is the best use for digital devices. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): home security, homework or exercise.

### Role B – Home Security

You think home security is the best use for digital devices. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): health advice, homework or exercise.

### Role C – Homework

You think homework is the best use for digital devices. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): home security, health advice or exercise.

### Role D – Exercise

You think exercise is the best use for digital devices. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their uses. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): home security, homework or health advice.

## Speaking – Digital Devices

Rank these with your partner. Put the things digital devices are best for at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| • health advice    | • managing money |
| • telling the time | • playing music  |
| • videos of cats   | • homework       |
| • home security    | • exercise       |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.