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The Ultimate Guide to a Sonos Home Theater

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With the lights dimmed, a bowl of freshly popped popcorn, and the family cuddled beneath a blanket, there's nothing quite like the experience of watching a movie from the comfort of your own couch. But to truly get that immersive theater experience, the sound needs to be brilliant. In this blog post, we'll walk you through the process of creating a home theater setup that's right for your budget, space, and viewing habits—from choosing the right soundbar, to adding deep impact bass, to creating a complete 5.1 surround sound setup.

The idea of setting up a "home theater" may conjure visions of tangled wires drilled into walls, stacks of complicated receivers, multiple remotes, and a price tag in the thousands. While this might have been true in the 80s, getting theater-quality sound in your home has never been easier or more valuable. (As TVs have become thinner and thinner, the sound they're able to produce has gotten worse and worse.)

And yet, the number of decisions you have to make in order to set up a home theater that works for you can be overwhelming. With that in mind, we put together this guide to walk you through a few simple decisions you can make in order to experience theater-quality sound at home.

01
Soundbar

Start with a soundbar

The single most dramatic improvement you can make to how your favorite shows, movies, and games sound on your TV is to add an external speaker. The sound will be fuller, the dialogue crisper, and the bass bolder.

All of our home theater speakers were tuned by Oscar- and Emmy-winning sound engineers to ensure that you're hearing your favorite films and shows as they were meant to be heard, by the people who created them.

Arc

For cinematic sound that surrounds you in the story, choose Arc. Arc's upward-firing drivers allow you to experience shows, movies, and games with the precise and immersive sound of Dolby Atmos. When you're not watching TV, you can use Arc to stream music from more than 100 music services including Apple Music, Amazon Music, and Spotify. And with a soft profile and seamless facade, Arc blends in beautifully, either mounted underneath your TV or placed on furniture. Arc automatically pairs with your remote and can be controlled with the Sonos app, Apple AirPlay 2, your favorite music app, or your voice. Shop Arc here.

Beam

For smaller rooms, consider Beam. This smart, compact soundbar does it all. It provides high-definition sound for TV shows and movies. And, like Arc, when you step away from the screen, Beam can play your favorite music, podcasts, and more with rich, room-filling sound. It also has built-in support for Audible and Calm for quieter moments. It's simple to set up, automatically pairs with your remote control, and is incredibly easy to control—use the Sonos app, Apple AirPlay 2, music apps, or your voice. Beam can be placed on furniture in front of your TV or mounted on the wall. Shop Beam here.

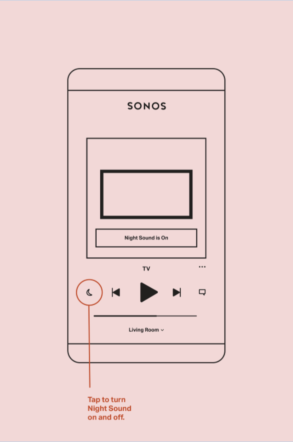
To make sure your TV is compatible with Arc or Beam, click here.

Theater Tip

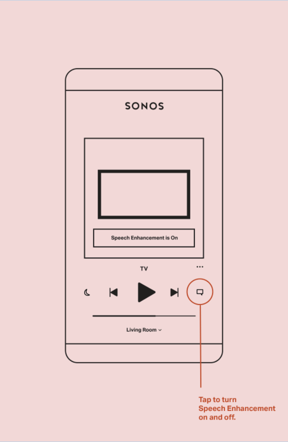
All of our home theater speakers come equipped with Speech Enhancement and Night Sound:

Speech Enhancement: Tap the speech bubble icon on the Now Playing screen to prioritize dialogue so you won't miss a word—even when the action gets intense.

Night Sound: Tap the half moon icon to even out the sound so you won't wake the rest of the house (or your neighbors). No more turning up the volume when characters whisper and then frantically turning it down when things explode.



Tap to turn
Night Sound
on and off.



Tap to turn
Speech Enhancement
on and off.

02
Subwoofer

Add a subwoofer

Adding Sub to your home theater setup extends your viewing experience into a new dimension. With Sub, you'll get bass you can feel.

More than just "more bass"

In addition to providing bolder bass for your shows, movies, and music, adding Sub to one of our home theater speakers actually improves that speaker's performance. (Bear with us, we're going to get a bit technical here.) Our home theater speakers play high frequency sounds (like dialogue) through a "tweeter." And they play both midrange and bass frequencies through a "woofer." By offloading the bass frequencies to Sub, the speaker is freed up to deliver more midrange sound through the woofer. So when you add Sub, not only will you experience deeper bass, but you'll also experience better sound from your home theater speaker.

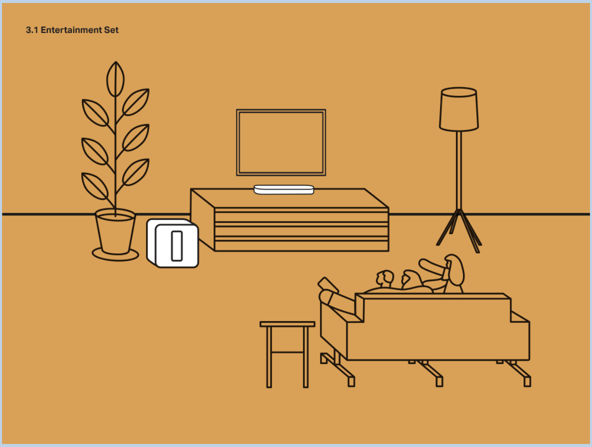
Bass without buzz

One of the biggest concerns we hear about with Sub is that people are worried it's going to rattle. Sub was specifically designed to eliminate the vibration associated with traditional subwoofers. The rectangular hole at the center of Sub isn't just aesthetically pleasing—it eliminates rattle by allowing those vibrations to dissipate into open space.

Sub was recently updated with increased memory and processing power, ensuring the best possible performance. Shop Sub here and 3.1 Entertainment Sets here.

Theater Tip

A setup with both a home theater speaker and a subwoofer is called 3.1. The "3" represents the three channels of the speaker—left, right, and center—and the ".1" represents the addition of the subwoofer.



03
Surround sound

Connect two rear speakers for 5.1

surround sound

You have a home theater speaker. And Sub. How much of a difference can two more speakers make? Plenty. To completely immerse yourself in the drama of TV shows, the action of movies, and the joy of music, 5.1 surround sound is the way to go. When you add two matching speakers (Sonos One, One SL, Move, or the new Sonos Five) to your home theater setup, you allow the sound to completely expand to its full potential. You'll discover new elements of songs you've been listening to your entire life. And you'll find yourself completely enveloped in what you watch. You can even control whether the rear speakers provide full sound or ambient sound when you're playing music. And, like all Sonos products, it can be set up in minutes. Want to add voice control to your setup? You only need a single Sonos One—pair it with a One SL (a voiceless speaker) to unlock voice control with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant for your entire system.

Shop rear surrounds and 5.1 Surround Sets here.

One of the tricky parts of adding rear speakers to a home theater setup is where to place them. We've made it easy with a variety of speaker stands and mounts. Choose what works best for your viewing room here.

Theater Tip

A setup with a home theater speaker, subwoofer, and two rear surround speakers is called 5.1. Without the subwoofer it's called 5.0.

Once you've set up your home theater, it's easy to make sure it sounds its best in your unique space by fine-tuning it with Trueplay™. It's also easy to add additional speakers in other rooms of the house. That way, you won't miss any of the action when you head to the kitchen for more popcorn. In fact, the most difficult thing to do is decide what you want to watch or listen to next.

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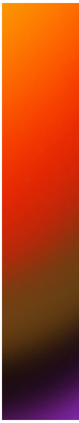

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