

# Tech Talk

Navigating the world of technology one gadget at a time  
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## Alarm Clocks

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### My alarm clock is perfectly adequate. Why would I want something different?

For many people, a basic alarm clock is fine. Over the last several years, there has been a surprising amount of innovation in alarm clock technology. You might be surprised at some of the options available to buyers today:

- **Alarm Clocks Which Emphasize Sound Quality**

Music lovers are often dissatisfied with the tinny sound coming from the typical discount store alarm clock. It's hard to get full-range sound out of the small speakers most alarm clocks use. Stereo equipment manufacturers like Bose, Boston Acoustics and Tivoli Audio have engineered some surprisingly good-sounding solutions. The Bose Wave Radio is perhaps the best-known product of this type.

Tivoli Audio's ([www.tivoliaudio.com](http://www.tivoliaudio.com)) retro-styled Model Three (\$200) produces surprisingly rich sound from the speaker in its wooden cabinet. An optional second speaker provides stereo sound.



The Tivoli Audio Model Three clock radio.

- **Projection Alarm Clocks**

Imagine a lazy Saturday morning in January. You have errands to run but are ambivalent because of the forecast for cold weather overnight.

You reluctantly jump out of bed and peer out of your bedroom window at the outdoor thermometer. Drat. It's only 15 degrees.

The frigid temperature has removed all remaining motivation to run errands, but because you had to get up to check the temperature, you're fully awake.

By using a projection alarm clock with a remote

temperature sensor, you can avoid this unwanted wakefulness. These clocks use LED (light-emitting diodes) technology to display time and outdoor temperature on the ceiling. If you sleep on your back, you don't even have to turn your head to decide whether it's warm enough to get out of bed.

Sophisticated models allow you to adjust the angle and focus of the projected display. Staying in bed to check the outside temperature may seem like the height of laziness, but it's an easy way to pamper yourself or your spouse.

- **Alarm Clocks Which Gradually Awaken**

For light sleepers, a gentle reminder to wake up may be all that's needed. Starting the day with loud radio or jarring noises is overkill.



This projection alarm clock by Oregon Scientific features a wireless outdoor temperature sensor.

The Zen Alarm Clock by Now & Zen ([www.now-zen.com](http://www.now-zen.com)) is an example of a gentle alarm clock.

Instead of a harsh electronic noise, it uses a resonant tone to awaken you. The chime sounds infrequently at first, then increases in frequency until you awaken.



The Zen Alarm Clock gently awakens you with a chime.

Another gentle option is an alarm clock which emulates sunrise by using a light bulb which gradually increases in brightness over several minutes. This is purported by manufacturers to trigger a natural awakening response.

- **Alarm Clocks to Rouse the Deep Sleeper**

Some sleepers need more than a soothing chime to be awakened. If extreme measures are needed, try the aptly named Sonic Bomb alarm clock ([www.sonicalert.com](http://www.sonicalert.com)).

If its 113 decibel alarm doesn't get the job done, maybe the sensation of the entire bed shaking will.



The Sonic Bomb alarm clock uses a bed shaker (at left) to reinforce the 113 decibel alarm sound.

For all its raw power, the Sonic Bomb has a fundamental

weakness. It can be circumvented by a garden-variety snooze button. Some stubborn sleepers may slap the snooze button several times at nine-minute intervals to keep the morning at bay.

For the habitual snooze-slapper, an alarm clock which requires more interaction may be necessary.

One such alarm clock is the Clocky ([www.nandahome.com](http://www.nandahome.com)), which rolls off of your nightstand and onto your floor, making incessant electronic noises until you shut it off.

Similarly, the Flying Alarm Clock ([www.thinkgeek.com/homeoffice/lights/9171/](http://www.thinkgeek.com/homeoffice/lights/9171/)) forces you get up to turn the alarm off. When the alarm begins to sound, the propeller launches into the air. Until you retrieve the propeller and insert it into the top of the clock, the blaring noise will continue.

Whether the Clocky or the Flying Alarm Clock are durable enough to survive repeated hammer blows from annoyed owners is unclear.



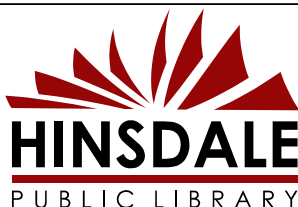
The Clocky is an alarm clock on wheels.



The Flying Alarm Clock's propeller acts as a key to turn off the alarm.

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