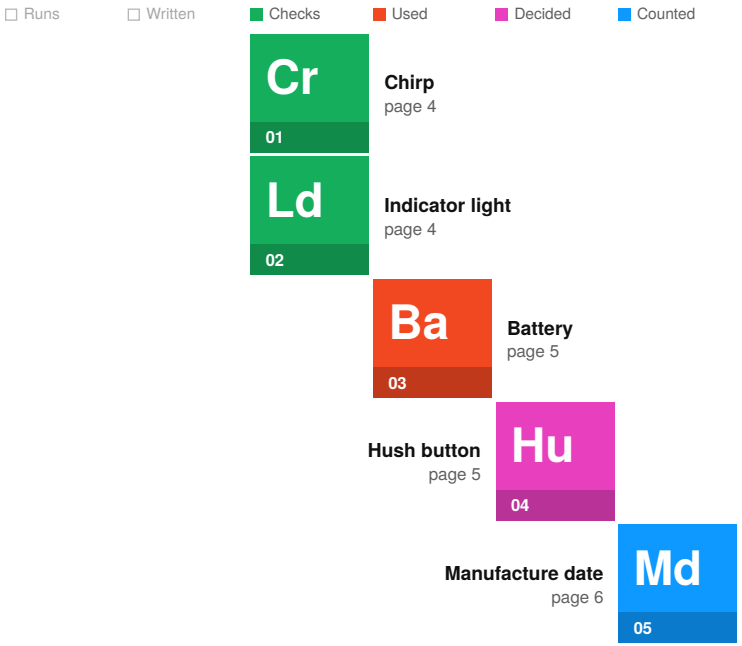
Smoke Detectors That Chirp

A pocket-sized guide to finding the smoke alarm that's chirping, and making it stop.



My friend has a lot of questions.

Why is my smoke alarm chirping?

One short chirp every 30 to 60 seconds or so means a smoke alarm wants attention, not that there's a fire. The usual cause is a low battery.

A weak battery struggles as the house cools, and most homes are coolest between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. That's why the chirp so often starts in the middle of the night.

Chirp	A single short beep that asks for attention.
Indicator light	The small light, or LED, whose blinking shows the smoke alarm's condition.
Battery	Main power, or backup power in a hardwired smoke alarm.
Hush button	Quiets the smoke alarm for a while without fixing anything.
Manufacture date	When the smoke alarm was made. Replace it 10 years later.

Which one is it?

A chirp is hard to place by ear. The smoke alarm with the problem may blink differently, so use your eyes as well.

Wait	Stand still until the next chirp. A minute can feel long at night.
Look	Check each indicator light. The one that needs attention may blink differently from the rest.
Narrow it down	Move room by room between chirps until the sound is loudest, then look at that smoke alarm's light.
Check the date	If it's hardwired, turn off its breaker. Then take that smoke alarm down and read the date on the back.

Watch out. Never take out the battery or disconnect a smoke alarm to stop a chirp. A smoke alarm with a dead or missing battery is the same as none at all.

Chirp

Cr
01

Identify by A short, high beep with a long pause.

What **A chirp is the smoke alarm asking for attention.** A low battery is the usual cause, and other patterns vary by model.

So what **A chirp that stops by morning can return the next night.** Change the battery anyway.

Field marks

Found on	Fixed by	Cannot
One smoke alarm, usually.	**Battery or smoke alarm.**	**Warn you of smoke.**

Confused with **Alarm sound**
A chirp is one short beep with a long pause. The alarm sound is loud and repeating, and means get out.

Indicator light

Ld
02

Identify by A small light on the cover, often red or green.

What **An indicator light shows the smoke alarm's condition.** Some models blink a special pattern when the battery is low.

So what **When you can't place the chirp, compare the lights.** The odd one out may be the one to fix.

Field marks

Found on	Fixed by	Cannot
The front cover.	**Fixing what it shows.**	**Mean the same on every model.**

Confused with **Standby blink**
A standby blink is a regular flash, on some models every 40 seconds, that means all is well. Compare the lights side by side.

Battery

Ba
03

Identify by A battery under a door or the cover, of the type on the label.

What **A battery powers the smoke alarm, or backs up a hardwired one.** Change it at least once a year.

So what **A new battery usually stops the chirp.** Some smoke alarms keep chirping until they're reset.

Field marks

Found on	Fixed by	Cannot
Under the cover.	**A new battery.**	**Fix an old smoke alarm.**

Confused with **Sealed battery**
A replaceable battery comes out. A sealed battery lasts the smoke alarm's whole life, so when one chirps, replace the smoke alarm.

Hush button

Hu
04

Identify by A button marked Hush or Silence, often the test button too.

What **A hush button quiets a nuisance alarm, such as cooking smoke, for a few minutes.** On some models it also quiets a low-battery chirp for some hours.

So what **A hush may buy a night's sleep but fixes nothing.** The chirp comes back.

Field marks

Found on	Fixed by	Cannot
The cover.	**Battery or smoke alarm.**	**Remove the cause.**

Confused with **Test button**
Many smoke alarms use one button for both. Press it during a chirp to hush, and at other times to test, at least once a month.

Manufacture date

Md
05

Identify by	A date printed on the back or outside.
What	**The manufacture date is when the smoke alarm was made.** Sensors wear out, so replace it 10 years after that date.
So what	**An old smoke alarm can be slow to sense a fire.** If there's no date, replace it now.

Field marks

Found on	Fixed by	Cannot
The back or outside.	**A new smoke alarm.**	**Be reset.**

Confused with

Ba **Battery**

The manufacture date never changes. A replaceable battery wears out much sooner.

What does the sound mean?

Sound	Means	Do this
One chirp about every 30 to 60 seconds	Usually a low battery	Replace the battery, then press test.
Chirping after a new battery	End of life, or a stored fault	Reset it: breaker off if hardwired, battery out, hold test 15 seconds, then put it back. Still chirping means replace it.
Three long beeps repeating	Smoke or fire	Get out, call 9-1-1 and stay out.
Four beeps repeating on a combination alarm	Carbon monoxide	Go outside, call 9-1-1 and stay out.

Other patterns vary by model, so check the label or manual.

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Cr Ld Ba Hu Md

An Accidental Guide to…

Smoke Detectors That Chirp

A pocket-sized guide to finding the smoke alarm that's chirping, and making it stop.

Written and reviewed by a person. AI does the grunt work. Set in TeX Gyre Heros and Newsreader.

Leave a star: accidental.info/star

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