



HCA Tech Note 131

What to do if Alexa stops answering device control commands: A self-help guide

A very common question of technical support has to do with a voice assistant not working. Here is a procedure to follow to check all the parts that could be causing a problem.

First off, if something was working yesterday and now doesn't, and nothing (you think) changed, then there is either an outage, or something you don't know about has changed. It could be a windows update, or some anti-spam or anti-virus, or similar application updated.

Remember to check the most obvious things first. It may sound super obvious, but check that the HCA Server application is running and that you have your design file loaded. It could have failed, or Windows could have updated and rebooted and the server didn't start.

As you work through this procedure it is best to remember that there could be something "helpfully" now blocking your access to the internet for "security" reasons. Always look at firewalls and "anti bad stuff" applications as many times they are the reason things are not working. Unfortunately, only you can deal with that. HCA technical support can't help with those sorts of problems.

Also, it is best to proceed in an orderly fashion. Don't assume anything. Maybe it is your internet. Maybe your cloud account subscription ended. Maybe your router lost its settings. Don't make any assumptions and don't contact HCA support until you have tried it all. Remember we can't know the specifics of your network nor are we network experts.

Step 1: Do you have internet access?

Check that you, in general, have some sort of internet access by starting a browser on any machine on your in-house network. Browse to a news site or something whose contents changes frequently so you don't get something out of the browser cache.

Step 2: Is your HCA Cloud account ok?

Browse to cloud.hcatech.com. Login to your cloud account. If you have forgotten your username or password, support can help find it if you can tell us what email address you used with the account. Check that the subscription is still active. If the subscription has expired, you will have to renew. There is a button for that.

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HCA Cloud Account

Account Information

Account detail	Value
First Name	Kimberly
Last Name	Harms
Email	test103@hcatech.com
Subscription	Active
Subscription Expiration Date	2024-11-01 
HCA Multi-Instance	Add instance name after friendly name for all instances

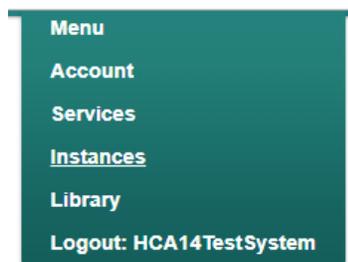
[Edit Account](#)



[Renew Subscription](#)

Step 3: Does the HCA Cloud get updates from your server?

While logged into your cloud account, open "Instances" from the menu. Click on the instance name to expand:



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HCA Cloud Account

HCA Server Instances

Instances

unregistered



Click on the instance name to expand...

HCA Cloud Account

HCA Server Instances

Instances

unregistered	
Host	<None>
IP	63.225.185.224
HCA Port	2005
Web Port	0
HCA Cloud Connected	No
Version	16.0 Build 29
Registration ID	unregistered
State	Active
Default	Yes
Last Updated	2019-12-15
Created On	2019-03-18

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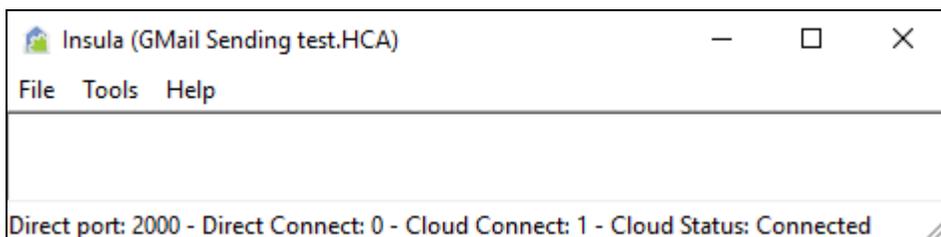
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Lots of useful info on this page and the most important I have highlighted in the red boxes. The two icons that start connectivity tests are shown in the 1st red box. Their use is explained below.

The external IP address of your home is shown in the 2nd red box. The version of HCA that the cloud last heard from is shown in the 3rd red box and the date of that last update from the server to the cloud is shown in the final red box. What it shows should make sense for your installation. That is, do the version and update date seem right?

Step 4a: Can the HCA Cloud connect to your server if it is cloud connected?

If it says “Cloud Connected: Yes” then click on the “cloud” icon to run a connection test. If it fails, then check the HCA Server. The application status bar should say “Cloud Status: Connected”.



If it doesn't say “Status: Connected” try restarting the server application. If after a minute, it still doesn't say “Connected” then check that the computer running the HCA Server can get to the internet and you don't have something blocking that.

Step 4b: Can the HCA Cloud connect to your server if not cloud connected?

If it says “Cloud Connected: No” then click on the “checklist” icon to do the connection test. If it fails, the HCA Cloud could have the wrong IP address. At the computer running the HCA Server, from the HCA Server menu select “Tools – HCA Cloud Update” and then try the test again.

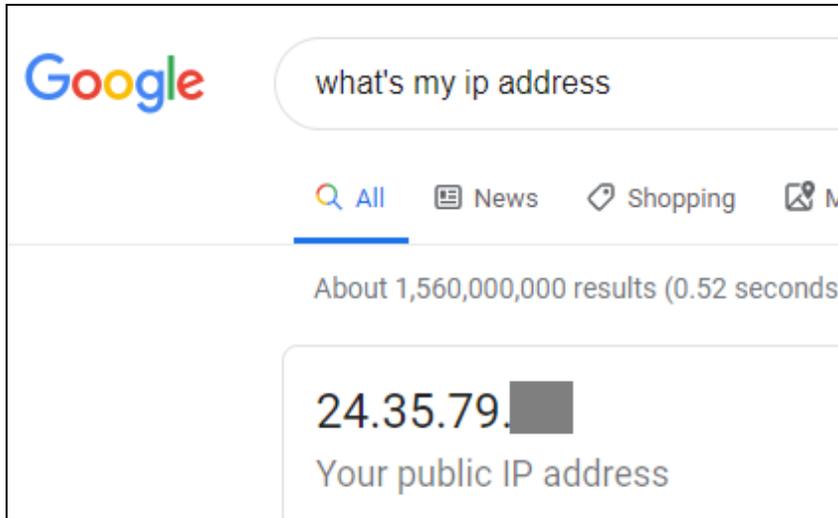
Back in the Cloud Account Instances page, check that the IP address it shows is really your external IP address. Start a browser on some computer and type “What's my IP address” into a search. Some browsers (Chrome) show it to you. Others (Bing) shows you links to various sites that when clicked on will show your IP address. What the HCA Cloud instances page shows – step 3 – should be that same IP address. You can tell the HCA Server to update the cloud. From the HCA Server menu, select “Tools – HCA Cloud Update”. Then try the connectivity test again.

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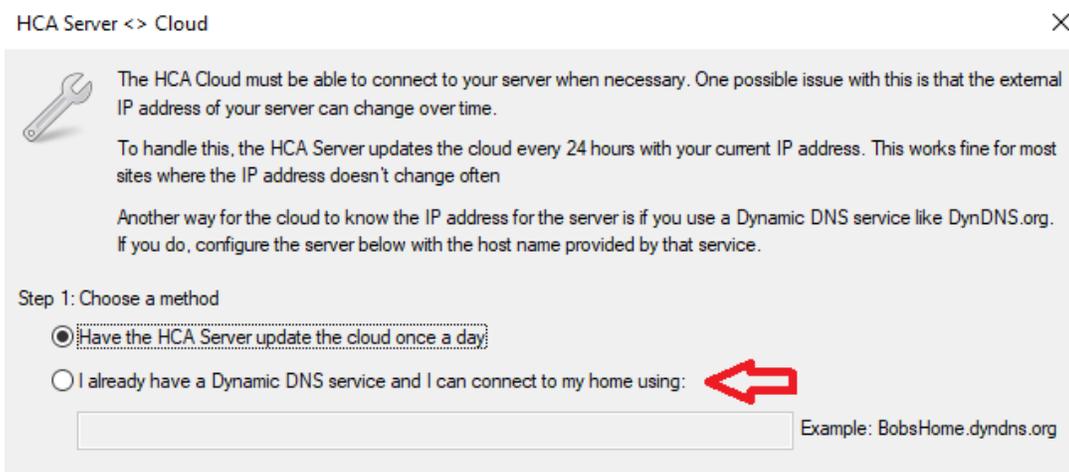
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The HCA Server tells the cloud about once a day what your IP address is. If yours changes more frequently, then you should subscribe to a “Dynamic DNS” service (www.dyndns.org is one) and follow its directions for creating an account, choosing a host name, and installing an application on your computer or settings to change in your router. This is to pass the IP address on to the dynamic DNS service whenever it changes. Then give that host name you use to HCA in the “HCA Cloud” ribbon category, “HCA Server <> Cloud” panel, “Configure Connection” button. Then do the “Update Connection” in the same ribbon panel.



Check the port forwarding in your router to see that the port forward to your server port # (usually 2000) is forwarded to the internal IP address of your computer running the HCA Server. The computer running the HCA Server could have its internal network IP address changed. Some routers have what are called “IP Reservations”, “sticky IP”, or “manually

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assigned IP” that provide each device that starts up and connects to the network the same IP address as it got last time. If the IP address in the port forward is wrong, then investigate this router feature. All routers are different but most modern ones have this feature. To see the IP address of the computer running the HCA Server application, open a Windows “Cmd” prompt and type in “ipconfig” from the command line and it will show – someplace in the gibberish – the IP address.

```
Command Prompt

Wireless LAN adapter Local Area Connection* 4:

    Media State . . . . . : Media disconnected
    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :

Wireless LAN adapter Local Area Connection* 6:

    Media State . . . . . : Media disconnected
    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :

Wireless LAN adapter Wi-Fi:

    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :
    Link-local IPv6 Address . . . . . : fe80::accd:6a2e:9997:c8c0%3
    IPv4 Address. . . . . : 192.168.1.189
    Subnet Mask . . . . . : 255.255.255.0
    Default Gateway . . . . . : 192.168.1.1

Ethernet adapter Bluetooth Network Connection:

    Media State . . . . . : Media disconnected
    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . :
```





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The popular ASUS router has a page in the LAN section for the DHCP Server for what they call “manually assigned IP”

ASUS RT-AC66U Logout Reboot English

Operation Mode: **Wireless router** Firmware Version: **3.0.0.4.376.3707**
SSID: **ConradStation ConradStation_5G**

LAN IP DHCP Server Route IPTV Switch Control

LAN - DHCP Server

DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) is a protocol for the automatic configuration used on IP networks. The DHCP server can assign each client an IP address and informs the client of the of DNS server IP and default gateway IP. RT-AC66U supports up to 253 IP addresses for your local network.
[Manually Assigned IP around the DHCP list FAQ](#)

Manually Assigned IP around the DHCP list (Max Limit : 64)

MAC address	IP Address	Add / Delete
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="⊕"/>
00:0C:1E:01:AA:9E	192.168.1.13	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>
28:18:78:57:9B:51	192.168.1.252	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>
00:CE:39:CC:07:37	192.168.1.99	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>
AC:37:43:DC:AE:71	192.168.1.149	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>
00:CE:39:CE:9F:05	192.168.1.136	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>
00:CE:39:CC:EB:57	192.168.1.77	<input type="button" value="⊖"/>

Enable Manual Assignment Yes No

Finally, Some routers during a firmware update can lose port forwarding. Keep this in mind. It is just something that some routers do and there is little we can do about it.

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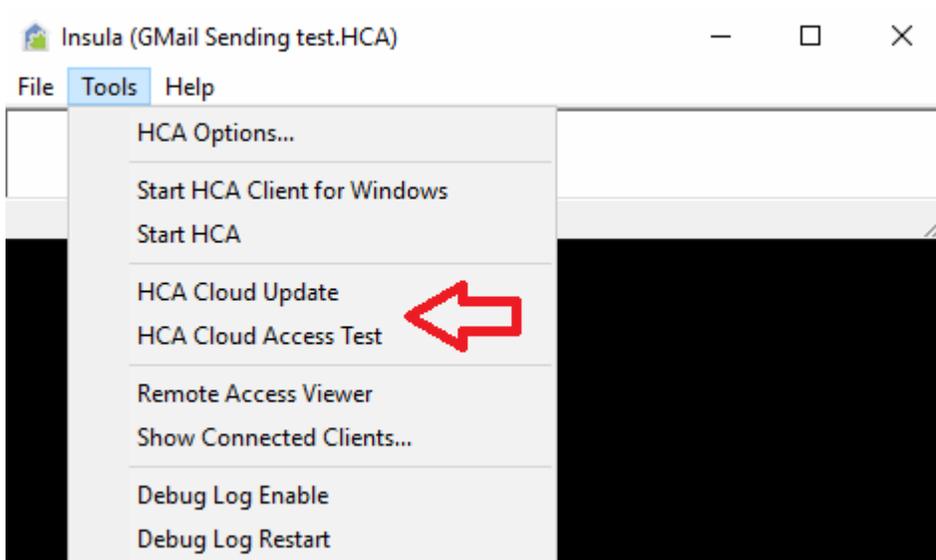
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Step 5: Check connectivity from server to cloud.

Check connectivity the other direction. Step 4 checked from the HCA Cloud to the server. If that works, it is probably ok the other way - from HCA Server to cloud - but worth checking too. From the HCA Server application menu select “Tools – HCA Cloud Access Test”. If this fails, try “Tools – HCA Cloud Update” and then the test again.

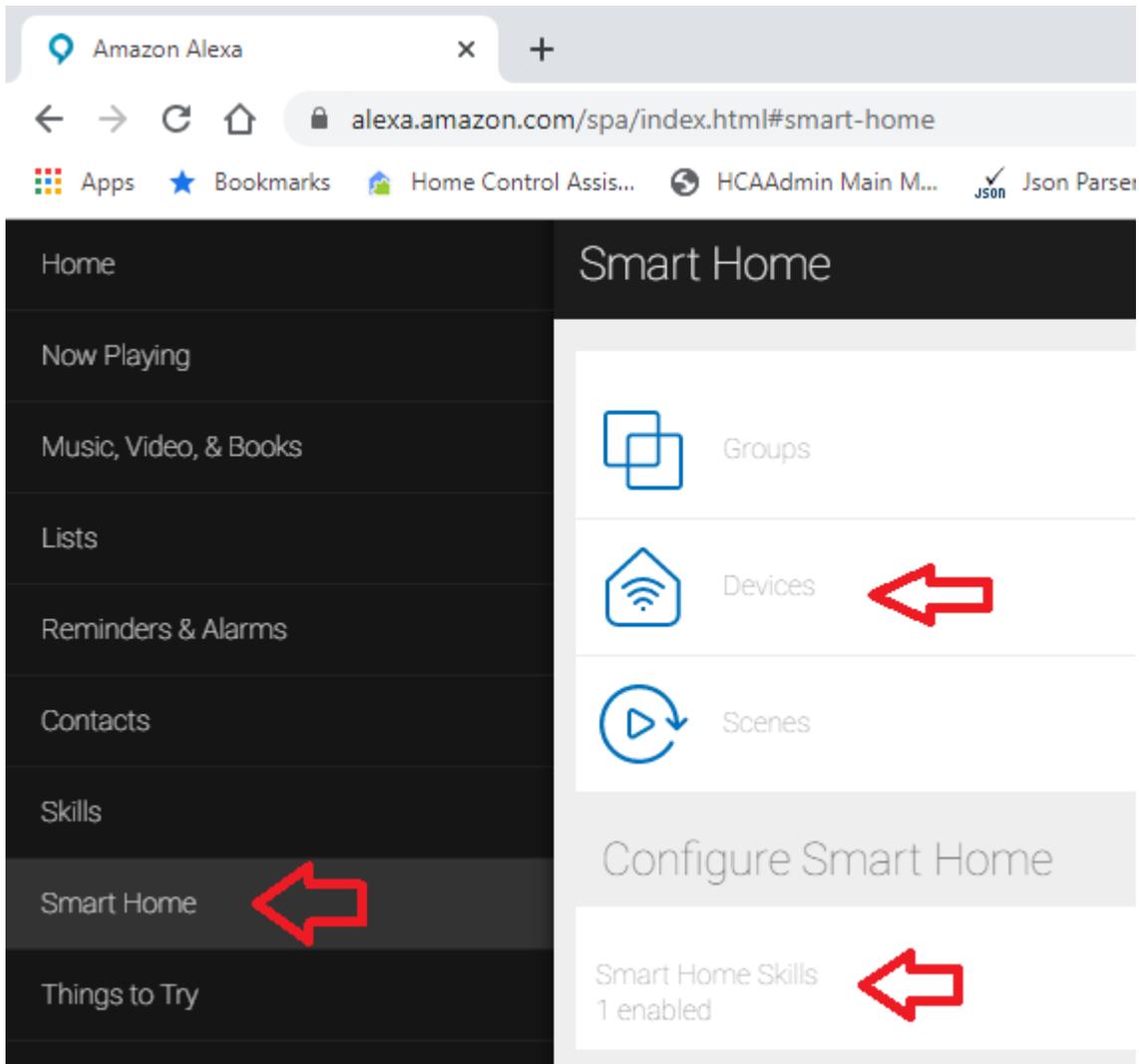


Step 6: Check Alexa

Once you know that you have connectivity from the HCA Cloud to your server – either by direct or cloud connection – then check Alexa. The easiest way to do that is to start a browser on a computer – not on a phone or tablet – and go to alexa.amazon.com. Login with your Amazon account username and password. Click on “Smart Home” in the left menu.



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Check to see if the HCA Skill is enabled. If not, find it – search for “HCA” - and then enable it. During the enabling process it asks you to login to your HCA cloud account and then allow access. When it completes it will ask if you want to discover devices. You should do that.

If the skill is already enabled, then click on devices. Scroll to the bottom and do “forget all” then “discover” it should find all your voice enabled devices. Note that there is a display bug with some browsers and the list of devices doesn’t show until you change pages and go back to devices.

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If the skill was already enabled and the discovery didn't work, go to the "Devices" page and scroll to the bottom and press the "forget all" button, then on the skills page, disable the HCA skill, then find the HCA Skill again, reenable, and then discover.

Step 7: Check your HCA design to see if you have the devices voice enabled that you think you do

If Alexa discover finds no devices, then check that you really have devices voice enabled. In the "HCA Cloud" ribbon category, the "External Assistants" button opens a tool that shows all devices and programs that could be voice enabled. Make sure there are some.

The screenshot shows the HCA Cloud ribbon with the "External Assistants" button highlighted in red. Below it is the "External Assistant" configuration window, which contains a table of HCA objects and their status.

HCA Object	Enabled?	Friendly Name
Library - Lamp One	Yes	Library Lamp One
Home - Lamp Three	Yes	Home Lamp Three
Library - Lamp Two	Yes	Library Lamp Two
Kitchen - Lights	Yes	Kitchen Lights
Theater - Strip Lights	Yes	Theater Strip Lights
Office - GE In_Wall Smart Dimmer	No	
Kids room - Honeywell Z_Wave In_Wall Smar...	No	
Kids room - Honeywell Z_Wave In_Wall Smar...	No	
Library - Lamp Three	No	
Living room - Outlet	No	
Icon Tests - Test for new ceiling fan light	No	
Icon Tests - Test for new icon fan	No	

The table shows five devices that are currently enabled for voice control, highlighted with a red box. Below the table are buttons for "Select all", "Devices", "Go", "Enable all selected", "Disable all selected", and "Make Assistant names". A note at the bottom explains how to enable or rename devices.

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If nothing appears, then make sure you are running what you think you are by starting HCA as a client, connecting to the server, and then on the “HCA Cloud” ribbon press the “Link File and Account”. It should say “already linked” and when you press the “Account info” button it should show the cloud username that you should be using when you link HCA and Alexa (step 6a).

Linked cloud account

This file is already linked to an account. To get the account info, press the Account Info button.

User Name:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Last account update by server:

Step 9. Take a break and wait

There are many parts from your Alexa enabled device to your server, some of which we control and some we don't. If all else fails. Wait 24 hours and try again.

##end##

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