Introduction to Amazon Alexa Healthcare Skills

Amazon's Alexa devices are now HIPAA-compliant, allowing healthcare companies to build Alexa voice-controlled applications that can securely transmit private patient information.

As part of this, Amazon is able to execute Business Associates Agreements (BAAs) with HIPAA-covered entities to guarantee protection of data in compliance with HIPAA guidelines. This opens up a world of possibilities to enhance patient interactions with healthcare payers and providers.

The new Alexa voice tools will allow consumers to use Alexa to access personalized information such as progress updates after surgery, prescription delivery notifications, locations of nearby urgent care centers, and booking urgent care appointments.

Example Interactions

Payer Examples

Example 1

User requests his/her latest explanation of benefits.

PATIENT: Alexa, ask ABC Health Plan to send me my latest EOB.

ALEXA: Your latest explanation of benefits is for a visit to Dr. Doe on May 14th. Is that the one you want?

PATIENT: Yes.

ALEXA: Great! You should expect to receive your EOB from ABC Health Plan in an email within the next 24 hours.

Example 2

User makes an appointment for an urgent care visit.

PATIENT: Alexa, ask ABC Health Plan to book an urgent care visit for me today.

ALEXA: ABC Health Plan found an urgent care appointment available at Acme Urgent Care Center at 10:00am. Would you like me to book the appointment? You can also choose a different facility or time.

continued...

PATIENT: Choose different time.

ALEXA: Okay, an appointment for 1:00pm is available. Would you like me to make the appointment?

PATIENT: Yes.

ALEXA: Your appointment has been scheduled for 1:00pm at Acme Urgent Care Center, located at 123 Main Street, Your Town. To make a change to your appointment, call the facility at 555-555-1212.

Example 3

User requests the co-pay amount for an upcoming provider visit.

PATIENT: Alexa, ask ABC Health Plan what my co-pay is for a specialist visit?

ALEXA: Your co-pay for a specialist visit is $50 after your deductible has been met. You are currently $428 from meeting your deductible.

Provider Examples

Example 1

User comes home and notices yellow light on his/her Alexa device, indicating a new notification.

PATIENT: Alexa, play my notifications.

ALEXA: You have one notification from XYZ Health System. Your prescription for [medication name] has shipped. The expected delivery date is Thursday, June 18.

Example 2

User asks about an upcoming doctor appointment.

PATIENT: Alexa, ask XYZ Health System when my next doctor appointment is.

ALEXA: Your next doctor appointment is scheduled for June 3 at 10:00am with Dr. Doe. Would you like the address?

PATIENT: Yes.

ALEXA: Dr. Doe is located at 123 Main Street, Your Town. To make a change to your appointment, call the doctor's office at 555-555-1212.

Example 3

User submits his/her current blood-sugar level to his/her doctor's office.

> **PATIENT:** Alexa, ask XYZ Health System to submit my daily stats.

> **ALEXA:** What is your current blood-sugar level?

> **PATIENT:** My blood-sugar level is 4.4.

> **ALEXA:** Would you like me to submit your current blood sugar level of 4.4 to Dr. Doe?

> **PATIENT:** Yes.

> **ALEXA:** All set. Dr. Doe has been sent a notification with your current stats.

Recommended Next Steps

Request Updates on the Alexa Healthcare Skills Program

Currently, Amazon is providing a HIPAA eligible environment to select skill developers as part of an invite-only program in the U.S. Companies can indicate interest and request updates regarding the Alexa Healthcare Skills program by completing the form here: **https://developer.amazon.com/alexa-skills-kit/healthcare-skills**

Register Invocation Names

An invocation name is the word or phrase used to tell Alexa which skill to run. The invocation name is used as part of the phrase to trigger the desired skill and action.

Alexa Commands Explained

<wake word>, <launch phrase> <invocation name> <action>.

Alexa, ask ABC Health Plan what my deductible is.

Wake Word	Launch Phrase	Invocation Name	Action
(to tell device to start listening)	(ask, tell, open, launch, enable, etc.)	(indicating which skill should be run)	(the action within the skill to be performed)

Developers utilize the Alexa Skills Kit to register invocation names:
https://developer.amazon.com/alexa-skills-kit
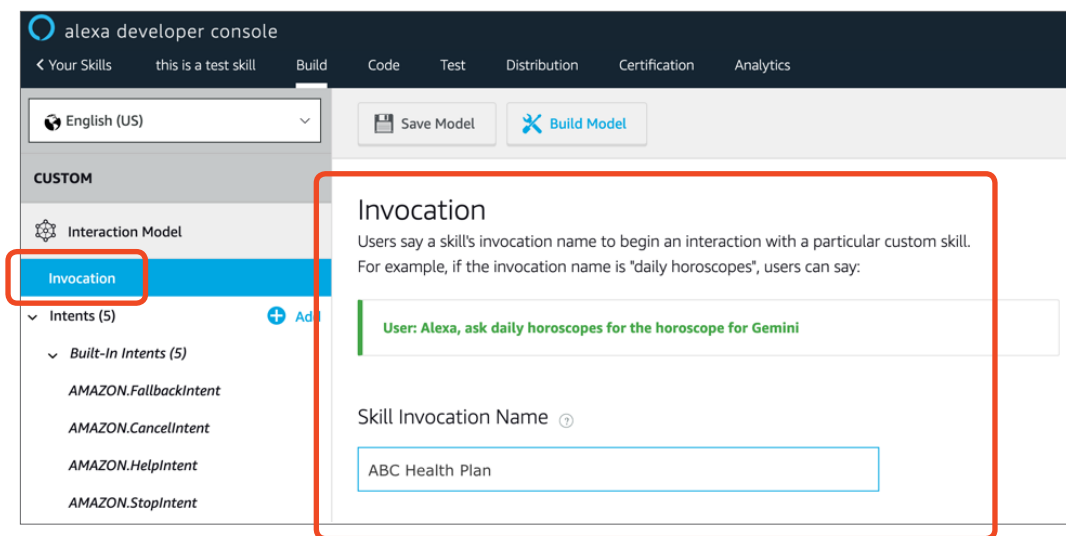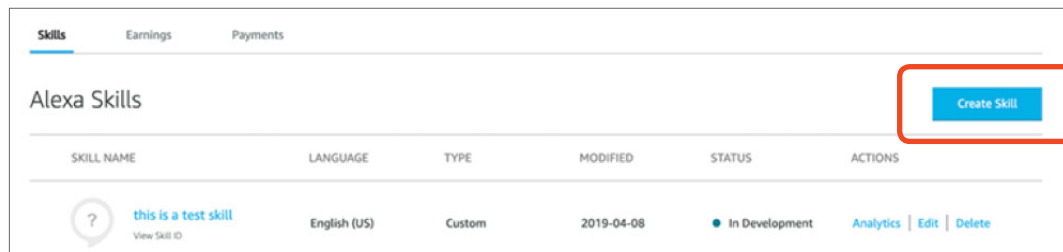
Once invocation names have been registered, developers next use the Alexa Skills Kit to define action words, along with the associated code to perform the requested action.

Need help getting started? Media Logic is here to help! Contact your account manager for details.

FAQs

When should invocation names be registered?

Alexa skill invocation names are not required to be unique, meaning multiple skills by different developers could potentially utilize the same invocation name. Therefore, it's okay to wait on registering an invocation name for Alexa devices until the skill is ready to be developed.

How does Alexa know which skill to use if there are duplicate invocation names?

Alexa users need to enable each individual skill they want to utilize. Only the invocation names for the enabled skills will be active on their device.

Can someone register my trademarked term as an invocation name?

Before trademarked terms can be used within an Alexa skill, it must be indicated that usage is authorized. This is done by going to *Distribution > Privacy & Compliance* and completing the *Test Instructions* form within the Alexa Developer Console.

How do I register invocation names for Amazon Alexa?

The Alexa Developer Console can be accessed here: **https://developer.amazon.com/alexa/console/ask**

Do other voice assistants, such as Google Assistant, offer similar HIPAA-compliance functionality?

Of the top consumer-level voice assistants available today, Amazon Alexa is the only one to offer HIPAA compliance. Other virtual assistants, such as Google Assistant (the most widely used virtual assistant on the market), have the potential to become useful for healthcare, but lack the BAA agreements needed for HIPAA compliance. Some features on these devices, such as the ability to record audio or video, could present a patient privacy concern in a healthcare setting. Such features would need to be disabled or restricted to authorized personnel only.
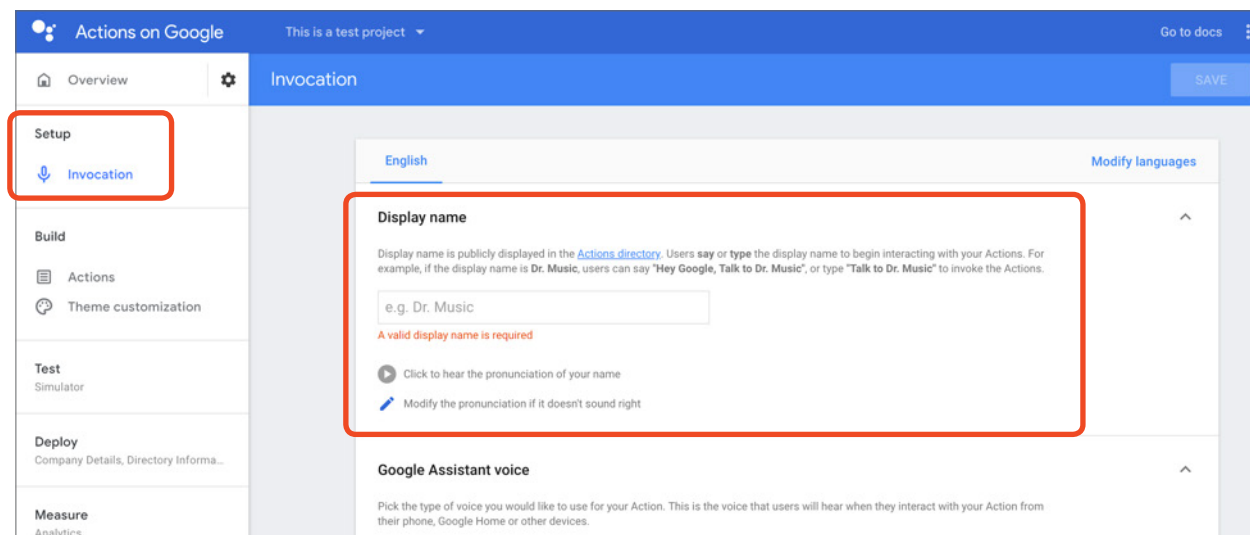
Should I take any actions at this time regarding Google Assistant?

Google Assistant is included with Android-based phones and Google Home devices. Currently, the Google Assistant platform is not HIPAA-compliant, but this is likely to change in the future. Even if you have no immediate plans to develop a Google Assistant skill, invocation names should be registered early, as they must be unique. The unique invocation names allow for all skills to always be available; users do not need to activate individual skills as they do with Amazon Alexa.

The Google Actions Center for registering invocation names can be accessed here: **https://console.actions.google.com**

Invocation Name Setup for Google Assistant