



An Extended Guide · No. 1911

A Craft-Fair and Farmers' Market Kit — Reader, Signal, Power and Signs

Everything to take cards at a
table — plus Ohio's vendor license

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✓ Pack the kit, win the weekend

A craft fair or farmers' market is no place to discover your reader won't connect or your phone's dead. The vendors who sail through weekends all have one thing in common: a packed, tested kit. This guide is that kit, laid out piece by piece — cards, signal, power, and signs — plus the Ohio vendor license nobody tells you about.

Let's build your market kit

Selling from a folding table is its own little world — spotty signal, battery power, and a line of customers who'd love to pay by card if only you could take one. A good kit handles all of it.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30+ years of helping folks with technology, I've set up plenty of market vendors, food trucks, and craft-fair sellers to take cards without fuss. The gear is simpler than you'd think — the trick is packing it right and testing before you go.

I'll be straight with you: I run my own shop on Square, so I know its little reader best, but Shopify and Clover make fine pocket readers too, and I'll name them fairly. I earn no commission from any of them — just honest advice from one small operator to another.

★ The license part surprises people

Here's the bit most new vendors miss: selling around Ohio usually needs a vendor's license, and there are two kinds. We'll cover which one you need and where to get it — and I'll point you to the Ohio Department of Taxation to confirm, since I'm a tech helper, not your accountant.

The whole kit, on one page

If you remember only these, you'll be ready for your next market.

- ❑ A card reader — a pocket reader or phone reader (Square Reader, Shopify Tap and Chip, Clover Go) paired to a CHARGED phone.
- ❑ POWER: a charged phone plus a power bank, because a dead phone means no sales.
- ❑ SIGNAL: cell data, a hotspot, or a signal booster — fairgrounds are often weak.
- ❑ An OFFLINE plan as a backup, knowing the risk is on you (see our offline-mode guide).
- ❑ A cash float and plenty of small bills for the folks who pay cash.
- ❑ Clear SIGNS: 'Cards Welcome' and your prices, where customers can see them.
- ❑ Ohio: a TRANSIENT vendor's license to sell at shows around the state (\$50, confirm current), and you collect and remit sales tax.

✓ One rule to hold onto

Test the whole kit at home the night before — reader paired, phone charged, a practice sale rung and refunded. The market is the worst place to find a problem.

The card reader — your register in your pocket

At a table, your phone is the register and a little reader does the card. Light, cheap, and plenty for a market.

The common pocket readers as of late 2026 are the **Square Reader**, the **Shopify Tap and Chip Reader**, and **Clover Go**. Each pairs with your phone over Bluetooth and takes a tap or a chip. If you already use one of these systems at a shop, use its matching reader so your items and sales all land in one place.

Some vendors prefer an all-in-one handheld — a Square Terminal or Clover Flex — that has its own screen and doesn't lean on your phone. It costs more but frees your phone up and feels sturdier in a busy line. Our card-readers guide compares the shapes in plain terms.

✓ Match the reader to your system

Don't mix a bargain off-brand reader with your main system — stick to the listed reader your provider sells. It pairs cleanly, keeps your card-security simple, and puts every sale in one place.

Power — a dead phone is a closed shop

Everything at your table runs on battery. Run out of power and you run out of sales, so this gets its own page.

Start the day with a fully charged phone, and bring a **power bank** big enough to recharge it at least once. Running the card app, the screen, and Bluetooth all day drains a phone faster than you'd expect, especially in cold or hot weather. A cable to match your phone goes in the bag too.

If you use a handheld terminal, charge it overnight and bring its charger. Some markets offer a power outlet — don't count on it. Pack as if there's no outlet and treat one as a bonus.

! Heat and cold eat batteries

A phone left in a hot car or a freezing morning market loses charge fast and can shut off entirely. Keep your phone and power bank out of direct sun and extreme cold, and top up whenever there's a lull.

Signal — the thing fairgrounds are worst at

A card reader is only as good as its connection, and a field full of vendors all on their phones is the hardest place to get one.

Your reader usually connects through your phone's **cell data**. When a crowd packs a fairground, everyone's phones fight for the same towers and data crawls. Options: a dedicated **hotspot** on a different carrier than your phone, or a **signal booster** to pull in a weak signal. Scope out your spot's signal ahead of time if you can.

A simple trick: run your card app on one device and your hotspot on another carrier, so if one network is jammed the other may still get through. It isn't foolproof, but at a crowded market two carriers beat one.

✓ Scout the signal before the crowd arrives

If you can visit or ask other vendors, find out how the signal holds up when the field is full — not at 7 a.m. when it's empty. That tells you whether you need a hotspot or a booster before the day you actually need it.

Your offline backup — and its catch

Even with a good hotspot, the signal can drop. An offline plan keeps the line moving — but you need to understand the risk you're taking.

Most systems have an **offline mode** that lets you accept a card when there's no connection and process it once you reconnect. That keeps a sale from walking away. The catch: the risk is **on you**. If an offline card later declines or expires before you reconnect, you eat the loss — there's no one to collect from.

Each system sets its own limits — a per-transaction cap, and a window to reconnect before offline payments expire. Our offline-mode guide lays out how Square, Clover, and Toast each handle it, and how to confirm the current rules before you lean on it.

! Offline mode is a calculated risk, not free money

Taking a \$10 jar of jam offline is low risk; taking a \$400 order from a stranger offline is not. Set a sensible cap, reconnect as soon as you can, and know that any decline is yours to absorb.

Cash, a float, and small bills

Cards are grand, but plenty of market-goers still pay cash — and cash never loses signal. Come prepared for it.

Bring a **cash float**: a starting stash of small bills and coins so you can make change from your very first sale. Think ones, fives, and a roll or two of quarters, sized to your prices. A running-out-of-change vendor at 9 a.m. is a vendor losing sales.

Keep your cash secure — a zippered pouch or a locking box, not an open tin — and skim large bills into a safer spot as the day goes. Cash is the one payment nobody can decline, so it's your ultimate backup when signal fails entirely.

✓ Round prices make change easy

Prices that land on whole or half dollars (and include tax if you prefer) mean faster change and shorter lines. It's a small thing that adds up over a long market day.

Signs — the cheapest salesperson you'll ever hire

A clear sign does quiet work all day: it tells people they can pay how they like, and it answers 'how much?' before they ask.

- **'Cards Welcome'** — so nobody walks off thinking you're cash-only.
- **Clear prices** — big enough to read from a step back, so customers decide before they reach the table.
- **'We also take tap, Venmo, Cash App'** if you do — list what you accept so there's no guessing.
- **Your business name and a way to follow up** — a card or a QR code for repeat customers.

Keep signs weatherproof — a breeze and a drizzle are regulars at any market. Laminate them or slip them in a sleeve, and bring something to prop or clip them so they don't blow off the table.

✓ Price signs do more than card readers

A readable price sign shortens your line more than anything else on the table. People hesitate to ask a price; they don't hesitate to read one. Make them big and clear.

Receipts without a printer

You don't need a bulky printer at a market. A digital receipt is faster, cheaper, and builds your customer list for free.

Every pocket reader can send a receipt by **text or email** — the customer taps in their number or address and it arrives in seconds. No paper, no printer, no ink to run out. For the few who want paper, a small mobile printer is an option, but most vendors skip it.

There's a bonus: emailed and texted receipts can quietly build your customer list, so you can tell regulars where you'll be next. Just be respectful about it — only message people who want to hear from you.

✓ A receipt is a second hello

Sending a digital receipt costs nothing and gives you a polite way to stay in touch. Over a season of markets, that list of regulars becomes one of your most valuable assets.

Two kinds of small business, two setups

This guide is really about the on-the-go setup — but plenty of market vendors also keep a fixed table or a home studio, so here's how the kit shifts between the two.

If you sell from a fixed counter or shop

You also sell from a fixed spot — a studio, a shop corner, a regular stall with power and steadier signal. There you can run a little more gear and lean less on batteries.

- A stand or small terminal can live on the counter, plugged in.
- Steadier signal means less worry about offline mode.
- Keep your prices and 'Cards Welcome' sign up permanently.
- A fixed Ohio location needs a regular county vendor's license (more on that ahead).

If you sell on the go — markets, trucks, house calls

You work craft fairs and farmers' markets from a folding table — the heart of this guide. Everything runs on battery and your phone's signal, and it all has to pack into a tote.

- A pocket reader paired to a charged phone, plus a power bank.
- A hotspot or booster for weak fairground signal, and an offline plan as backup.
- A cash float, small bills, and a secure pouch.
- Selling at shows around Ohio needs a transient vendor's license (more on that ahead).

★ Do both? Pack one kit that travels

Lots of makers sell from a studio AND work the weekend markets. You can run one system for both so your items and sales stay in one place — just pack the mobile extras for market days. Tell me how you sell and I'll help you set it up. Call (330) 200-8042.

The Ohio vendor's license — the part people miss

Before you sell at a show in Ohio, there's a license to sort out. It's not complicated, but it's not optional either.

Selling at shows and markets around the state generally needs a **Transient Vendor's License** from the **Ohio Department of Taxation**. 'Transient' just means you move around and don't have a fixed spot in each county. That one license covers you selling at markets across Ohio.

If instead you sell from a **fixed location** — a shop or regular storefront — you need a regular **County Vendor's License** from your **county auditor** for that place of business. The application is **\$50** with no annual renewal fee as of late 2026 — but confirm the current fee and rules with the Department of Taxation, since I'm a tech helper, not your accountant.

! The license makes you a tax collector

A vendor's license comes with a duty: you become a trustee of the state for collecting, reporting, and paying Ohio sales tax on what you sell. It's not just a permission slip — it's a responsibility. Our Ohio-sales-tax guide walks through the collecting-and-remitting part.

Which license do you need?

It comes down to one question: do you sell from a fixed place, or do you travel to shows? Here's the plain version.

If you...	You generally need
Travel to shows and markets	A Transient Vendor's License
Sell from a fixed shop/location	A County Vendor's License
Do both	Ask the Dept of Taxation which applies

The transient license comes from the **Ohio Department of Taxation**; the regular county license comes from your **county auditor** (often through the Ohio Business Gateway). Both run **\$50** to apply with no annual renewal as of late 2026 — always confirm the current figure and your exact situation with the official source.

★ **Not sure which is you?**

If you can't tell whether you're 'transient' or 'fixed' — say you sell at markets but also from your garage studio — that's a question for the Department of Taxation, and I'm glad to help you get them on the phone and make sense of the answer. Call (330) 200-8042.

Collecting the sales tax you owe

The license and the tax go hand in hand. If you're licensed to sell, you're on the hook to collect and remit Ohio sales tax.

You charge sales tax on taxable sales and pass it along to the state. Your POS system can add the right tax automatically — set the rate for where the sale happens. Rates vary by county, so a market in one county may carry a different rate than your home base. Look up the exact rate on the Ohio Department of Taxation's tables.

You then file and pay through the **Ohio Business Gateway**. Keep your POS tax reports — they make filing far easier. Our Ohio-sales-tax guide goes deeper on registering, the county rates, and filing; this page is just the market-vendor headline.

! The tax you collect isn't yours

The sales tax you add at the table is money you're holding for the state, not income. Keep it separate in your mind (and ideally your books) so it's there when it's time to remit. Your accountant can set this up cleanly.

Your market-day packing checklist

Print this, tape it inside your tote, and run down it before every market. A forgotten cable has ended many a good sales day.

- ☐ Phone, fully charged, with the card app updated and logged in.
- ☐ Pocket reader, charged and paired — test it before you leave.
- ☐ Power bank and the right charging cable.
- ☐ Hotspot or signal booster if your spot is weak.
- ☐ Cash float: small bills and a roll of quarters, in a secure pouch.
- ☐ Signs: 'Cards Welcome' and clear prices, weatherproofed.
- ☐ Your vendor's license info on hand if asked.
- ☐ A backup: know your offline limits, and have cash as the last resort.

✓ Pack the bag the night before

Charging everything and running a test sale the evening before beats scrambling at dawn. Pack the tote once, keep it ready, and market mornings get a whole lot calmer.

The pre-market test run

Five minutes at home saves an hour of panic at the table. Here's the quick run-through before every event.

- Pair the reader to your phone and confirm it connects.
- Ring up a small real sale on your own card, then refund it.
- Send yourself a test receipt by text and by email.
- Check the sale applied the right tax for where you'll be selling.
- Confirm your phone, reader, and power bank are all charged.
- Glance at your offline settings so you know your cap and window.

✓ Make the test a habit, not a scramble

Vendors who test every time almost never have a bad day at the table. It becomes a two-minute ritual — pair, ring, refund, done — and it's the cheapest insurance in your whole kit.

Common mistakes vendors make

A handful of avoidable slip-ups cause most market-day misery. Now you'll spot them before they cost you a sale.

- **Dead phone, no power bank** — the fastest way to shut down mid-market.
- **Counting on fairground signal** with no hotspot and no offline plan.
- **No cash float** — unable to make change from the very first customer.
- **No price signs** — customers hesitate, lines stall, and some walk off.
- **Skipping the vendor's license** and the sales tax that comes with it.
- **Never testing the kit** and finding out the reader won't pair when a customer's waiting.

! The one that closes your table

The mistake that actually stops your day is power — a dead phone takes everything down with it. A charged phone and a power bank are the two items you never, ever leave home without.

Taking Venmo or Cash App at a market

Some vendors like to offer a phone-to-phone option alongside cards. It can work, but do it the right way.

If you take Venmo or Cash App at your table, use a **business profile**, not your personal account — running business through a personal account breaks their terms. These apps charge a fee on business payments, and they don't give you the card-network dispute protection a reader does. Our guide on taking Venmo, Zelle, or Cash App as a business covers the rules in full.

Think of these as a nice-to-have extra, not your main way to take money. Your card reader and cash do the heavy lifting; a P2P option is just for the customer who'd rather pay that way.

✓ **Business profile, not personal**

If you accept Venmo or Cash App at a market, set up the business version. It keeps you inside their rules and keeps your sales separate from your personal money — which your accountant will thank you for at tax time.

Weather, wear, and the realities of a table

An outdoor market is tough on gear and on you. A little planning keeps your tech (and your mood) in one piece.

Keep your phone and reader out of direct rain and harsh sun — a cheap sleeve or a towel under a canopy does a lot. Heat slows phones and drains batteries; cold does too.

Weatherproof your signs so a gust and a drizzle don't leave you with blank cardboard.

Bring the small comforts that keep you sharp: water, a hat, a chair, and a way to secure your table against wind. A frazzled vendor makes more mistakes at the reader, so looking after yourself is part of looking after your sales.

✓ A canopy protects more than your head

Shade keeps your phone cooler and its battery happier, keeps your reader dry, and keeps your signs readable. A canopy earns its space in the car on every count.

Where to confirm the license and tax details

License rules and fees change, so here's where the real answers live — not a forum or a fellow vendor's best guess.

For the vendor's license, go to the **Ohio Department of Taxation** for a transient license, and your **county auditor** for a regular county license. They'll confirm the current fee (**\$50** as of late 2026), the application steps, and which license fits your situation.

For sales tax — your county's rate and how to file — the Ohio Department of Taxation's rate tables and the **Ohio Business Gateway** are the sources of truth, and our Ohio-sales-tax guide walks you through them. I'm a tech helper, not an accountant, so for the tax fine points, lean on them and on your bookkeeper.

✓ Official source beats a tent-neighbor's advice

Markets are full of friendly, confident, and sometimes wrong advice about licenses and tax. Lovely people — but confirm the real rules with the Department of Taxation or your county auditor, not the booth next door.

Setting honest expectations

A good kit makes market days smooth, but let's be clear about what it will and won't do.

A well-packed kit means you can take almost any customer's money, quickly, without fuss — cards, cash, maybe a P2P app. It won't give you perfect signal in a packed field, and it won't remove the sales tax you owe. What it does is remove the surprises, so you can focus on selling.

Expect the occasional dropped connection, a dead spot you have to work around, and a learning curve your first market or two. By your third or fourth, packing and testing the kit is second nature and the tech fades into the background — which is exactly where it belongs.

✓ Prepared beats perfect

You won't control the weather or the signal, but you can control your charge, your cash float, your signs, and your test run. Nail the parts you control and the rest is just a day at the market.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from craft-fair and market vendors, answered plainly.

Q: What's the minimum I need to take cards at a table?

A charged phone, a pocket reader paired to it, a power bank, and cell data or a hotspot. Add signs and a cash float and you're in business. Test it all at home first.

Q: What if the signal drops at the market?

Have a backup: a hotspot on a different carrier, your system's offline mode (knowing the risk is on you — see our offline-mode guide), and cash as the last resort. Cash never loses signal.

Q: Do I need a license to sell at Ohio markets?

Generally yes — a Transient Vendor's License from the Ohio Department of Taxation for selling at shows around the state. It's \$50 to apply with no annual renewal as of late 2026; confirm the current rules with the Department.

Q: Do I have to charge sales tax at a market?

If you're licensed to sell taxable goods, yes — you collect Ohio sales tax at the rate for where the sale happens and remit it through the Ohio Business Gateway. Our Ohio-sales-tax guide covers it; your accountant can set it up cleanly.

★ Getting ready for your first market?

This is a favorite thing to help with — there's real joy in seeing a maker take their first card at a table without a hitch. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll build and test your kit together before the big day.

You don't have to figure this out alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person who speaks plain English is one call away.

I hope this guide made taking cards at a craft fair or farmers' market feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it with your other business papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't feel you have to memorize a thing.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your shop or your kitchen table, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't sell payment processing and I earn no commission from any company — so the advice you get is just honest advice. For the tax and legal fine points, I'll point you to your accountant or attorney.

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Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

What Goes in the Market Kit

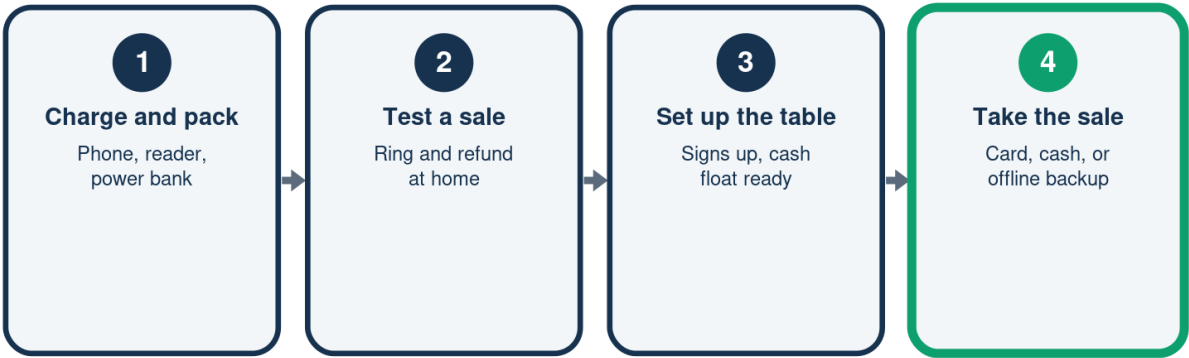
The four things every table needs

	Part of the kit	Why it's in the bag
Reader + phone	Takes the card	Charged
Power bank	Backup power	No dead phone
Hotspot / cash	Signal + change	Backup both
Signs	Cards + prices	Sells for you

Test the whole kit at home the night before every market.

Getting Ready for Market Day

The calm path from packing to selling



A tested kit means the tech fades into the background.

Which Ohio Vendor's License

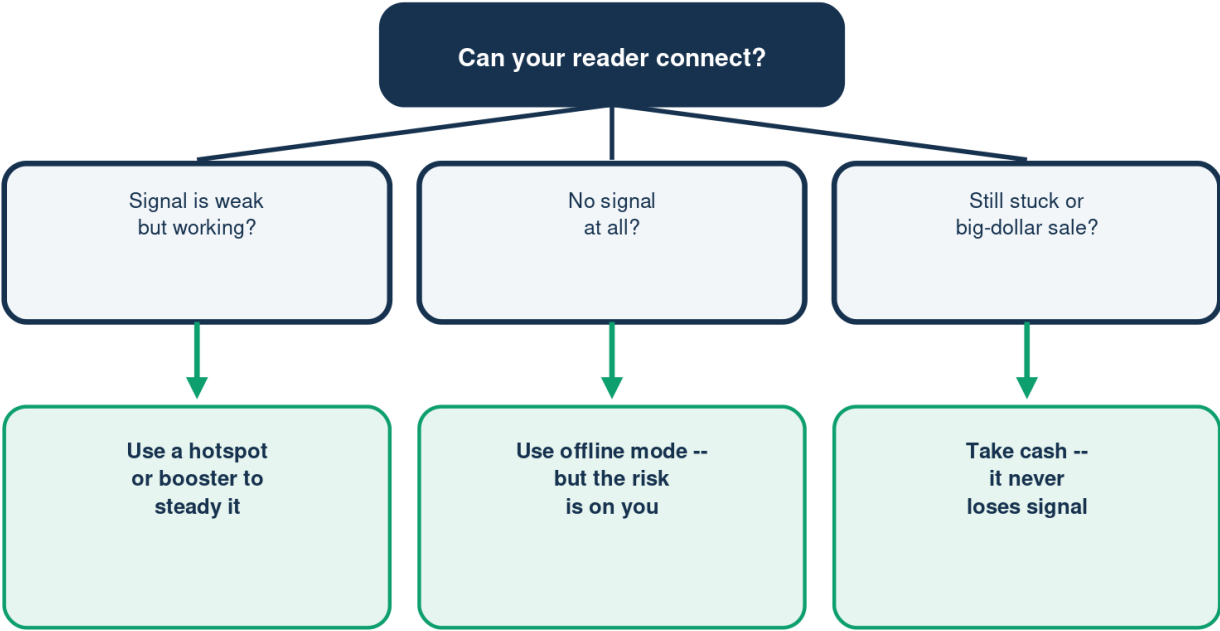
It depends on how you sell, not what you sell

	Travel to shows	Fixed location
License type	Transient	County
Issued by	Dept of Taxation	County auditor
Apply fee	\$50	\$50
You collect tax	Yes	Yes

\$50 and no annual renewal as of late 2026 -- confirm current.

The Signal Just Dropped -- Now What?

Have a plan before the crowd arrives



Offline declines are yours to absorb -- see our offline-mode guide.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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