BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Back Up Photos & Contacts Automatically

Set it once, and your memories and contacts are safe — even if the phone isn't

Plain-English Android help from:
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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Set your phone to back itself up to your Google account so a lost or broken phone never means lost photos or contacts. For photos: open Google Photos, tap your profile, go to Photos settings, Backup, and turn Backup ON over Wi-Fi only. For contacts: in Settings, Accounts, your Google account, Account sync, make sure Contacts is ON — and save new contacts to your Google account, never just "Phone" or "SIM."

Turn on the whole-phone Backup under Settings too. Confirm it worked by seeing "Backup complete." Keep your Google account password safe and recovery set, so you can sign in and restore everything on a new phone.

1 The Short Version

The single worst tech loss is a phone that's lost, stolen, or broken with the only copies of your photos and contacts on it. The fix is to set your phone up so it quietly backs those up by itself, to your Google account, every time you're on Wi-Fi. Once it's set, it looks after itself — and if anything ever happens to the phone, your memories and your contacts are safe and waiting.

This guide sets up automatic backup for your photos and your contacts, explains in plain English where they go and how safe that is, and shows you how to get everything back on a new phone. It's the most important setup on this whole list, and it takes just a few minutes.

- Automatic backup means you never have to remember to do it.
- Photos back up through Google Photos; contacts sync through your Google account.
- Everything comes back automatically when you sign in on a new phone.
- It all happens over Wi-Fi, so it won't use up your mobile data.

TIP

If a phone is ever lost or broken, the question that decides how bad the day is: "was it backed up?" Setting this up once means the answer is always yes — and that's worth doing today.

2 Where Your Backup Actually Goes

Your backup goes to your Google account — the same account (ending in @gmail.com) you use for the Play Store and Gmail. Google keeps it on their computers, called "the cloud," which simply means safely stored somewhere other than your phone. That's the whole point: if the phone is gone, the copy isn't on the phone.

It's protected by your Google account's password and, ideally, a second check when signing in on a new device. Only someone signed into your account can see it. For the everyday risks most people face — a dropped, lost, or stolen phone — this is exactly the right kind of safe.

GOOD TO KNOW

Google gives every account a free amount of storage (15 gigabytes, shared across Photos, Gmail, and Drive). Many people fit years of photos in that. If you take lots of photos and videos, you may eventually need a low-cost larger plan called Google One — more on that later.

3 Set Up Automatic Photo Backup

Photos back up through the Google Photos app, which comes on most Android phones. Turning on "Backup" is the key step — after that, every new photo copies itself to your account whenever you're on Wi-Fi.

1. Open the Google Photos app (a colorful pinwheel symbol).

2. Tap your profile picture in the top corner.
3. Tap "Photos settings," then "Backup."
4. Turn Backup ON, and check it's backing up the account you want.
5. Set "Back up over" to Wi-Fi only, so it doesn't use mobile data.

> **TIP**
>
> Leave the phone on Wi-Fi and plugged in overnight the first time — the initial backup of all your existing photos can take a while, but it only happens once. After that, each new photo backs up quickly on its own.

4 Confirm Your Photos Are Really Backed Up

It's worth a moment to confirm the backup worked, so you have real peace of mind rather than just hoping. Google Photos tells you clearly.

1. In Google Photos, tap your profile picture.
2. Look for a message like "Backup complete" or "Backing up."
3. If it says backup is complete, every photo up to now is safely copied.
4. To be doubly sure, open photos.google.com on a computer or another device and sign in — your photos should be there.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Seeing your photos appear at photos.google.com on another device is the real proof: it shows the copies truly exist away from your phone. That's the test that matters, and it's reassuring to do once.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

5 Set Up Automatic Contact Backup

Contacts are just as precious as photos and far harder to rebuild. The trick is to make sure your contacts are saved to your Google account rather than only on the phone or a SIM card. Then they sync automatically and reappear on any phone you sign into.

1. Open Settings and find "Accounts" (or "Passwords & accounts").
2. Tap your Google account, then "Account sync."
3. Make sure "Contacts" is turned on — this keeps them copied to your account.
4. In the Contacts app, when you add someone new, choose to save them to your Google account, not "Phone" or "SIM."

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Contacts saved only to "Phone" or "SIM card" are NOT backed up and are lost if the phone is. This is the most common way people lose their contacts. Moving them to your Google account is the fix, and it's worth checking even if you think it's already set.

6 Move Existing Contacts Into Your Google Account

If some of your contacts are currently saved only on the phone or SIM, you can move them into your Google account so they're backed up too. It's a one-time tidy-up.

1. Open the Contacts app and look in its settings for "Import" or "Move device contacts."
2. Choose to move or copy contacts to your Google account.
3. Afterward, set the Contacts app's default save location to your Google account.
4. Check a few contacts to confirm they now show as saved to Google.

GOOD TO KNOW

Once your contacts live in your Google account, you can also see and edit them on a computer at contacts.google.com — a handy way to clean up duplicates or fix a number on a bigger screen.

7 Back Up the Rest: The Whole-Phone Backup

Beyond photos and contacts, Android can back up your apps, settings, call history, and texts too, so a new phone sets itself up almost exactly like the old one. This is well worth turning on.

1. Open Settings and search for "Backup" (often under System Backup, or Google Backup).
2. Turn on "Back up by Google One" / "Backup by Google."
3. Make sure it's using your Google account, and let it back up over Wi-Fi.
4. Tap "Back up now" the first time to get it started.

TIP

With this on, moving to a new phone becomes wonderfully simple: you sign in with your Google account and the phone offers to restore your apps, settings, and arrangement. It turns a dreaded chore into a few taps.

8 When the Free Storage Fills Up

Google's free 15 gigabytes is generous, but a lifetime of photos and videos can eventually fill it. When that happens, you have easy choices, and none of them mean losing anything.

- Buy more space cheaply: a Google One plan adds storage for a small monthly fee.
- Tidy up: delete large videos, screenshots, and blurry duplicates you don't need.
- Clear out Gmail, which shares the same storage — old emails with big attachments add up.

- Decide what to back up: you can choose photos only, to stretch the free space further.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A Google One plan is inexpensive — often a dollar or two a month for plenty of space — and it's the simplest way to never worry about running out. For most people it's money well spent for the peace of mind of safe memories.

9 Getting Everything Back on a New Phone

Here's the payoff. When you get a new phone — or recover from a lost one — your backed-up life flows right back in. This is why the setup matters.

1. On the new phone, during setup, sign in with your Google account (the same one as before).
2. When offered, choose to restore from your backup — your contacts, apps, and settings return.
3. Open Google Photos and sign in; all your photos are there, ready to view and download.
4. Give it time on Wi-Fi to pull everything down, and your new phone feels like your old one.

> **TIP**
> The whole reason backup is worth setting up is this moment: a lost or broken phone becomes an inconvenience, not a heartbreak. Everything that matters simply reappears when you sign in.

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10 Keeping Your Google Account Itself Safe

Since your backup lives in your Google account, keeping that account secure is the other half of the job. If you can't get into your account, you can't reach your backup — so this matters as much as the backup itself.

- Use a strong, memorable password you don't use anywhere else.
- Turn on the second sign-in check ("2-Step Verification") so a stranger can't get in with just the password.
- Set up account recovery — a phone number and a trusted email — so you can get back in if locked out.
- Write your Google email and password on paper kept somewhere safe at home.

WATCH OUT

Getting locked out of your own Google account is a genuinely painful trap, especially after a phone is lost. Make sure your recovery phone and email are set and current now, while it's easy — not in a panic later. If you're not sure how, this is well worth sorting out together.

11 A Few Honest Cautions

Backup is wonderful, but a little clear-eyed honesty helps you use it wisely.

- A backup is only as current as its last run — so keep automatic backup on, not just a one-time copy.
- If you delete a photo from Google Photos, it's removed from the backup too (it sits in Trash for 60 days first).
- Backup protects against loss and breakage; it isn't a substitute for a screen lock against theft.
- For truly irreplaceable photos, many people also keep a second copy — printed, or on a computer.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> For your most precious handful of photos, there's nothing wrong with belt-and-braces: backed up to Google and also saved on a computer or printed. Two copies in different places is the gold standard for anything you could never replace.

12 Backing Up Text Messages and Call History

Photos and contacts are the big two, but your texts and call history are precious too — and they ride along if you turn on the whole-phone backup. Here's how to make sure they're included.

1. Confirm the whole-phone backup is on: Settings search "Backup" "Backup by Google."
2. This backup includes your texts (SMS) and call history along with apps and settings.
3. When you set up a new phone and restore from backup, your message history comes back too.
4. For a separate copy, Google Messages offers its own backup within the app's settings.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Picture messages and very long threads sometimes don't carry over as perfectly as plain texts. If a particular conversation is precious — a last message from someone, say — it's worth taking screenshots of it as a sure, simple keepsake.

13 A Once-a-Year Backup Checkup

Backup is set-and-forget, but a quick yearly glance confirms it's still working and nothing has quietly turned off. It takes just a few minutes and buys real peace of mind.

1. Open Google Photos profile and confirm it says "Backup complete."
2. Settings Accounts your Google account check Contacts sync is still on.

3. Settings search "Backup" confirm the whole-phone backup ran recently.
4. Make sure your Google account's recovery phone and email are current.
5. Check you're not nearly out of storage; tidy up or add a plan if you are.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Tie this checkup to something yearly you already do — a birthday, tax time, New Year — so it's never forgotten. One check a year is all it takes to know your memories are safe.

14 When to Call Bill

Setting up backup is the most valuable few minutes you can spend on your phone, and this guide walks you through it. The reason to call is usually to make certain it's truly working — that your photos really are copied, your contacts are in your Google account and not stranded on the SIM, and you could actually get into your account on a new phone.

I make house calls throughout Portage County, and I'll gladly set all of this up with you, confirm it's genuinely backing up, make sure you'll never be locked out of your own account, and leave you a simple card with what you need. It's the one setup I most want every client to have.

- You want to be sure your photos and contacts are truly backed up.
- Your contacts may be stuck on the phone or SIM and you're not sure.
- You're setting up a new phone and want everything moved over safely.
- You're worried about being locked out of your Google account.
- You'd simply like the peace of mind of having it set up right, once.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Set it once; it looks after itself over Wi-Fi.

I want to...	Do this...
Back up photos	Google Photos profile Photos settings Backup ON (Wi-Fi only)
Check photos are safe	Google Photos profile look for "Backup complete"
Back up contacts	Settings Accounts your Google account Account sync Contacts ON
Save new contacts right	In Contacts, save new people to your Google account, not Phone or SIM
Back up the whole phone	Settings search "Backup" turn on Backup by Google Back up now
Get it all back	On a new phone, sign in with the same Google account and restore
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

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 results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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