



An Extended Guide · No. 1688

A Simple Battery-Care Checklist

One page to keep on the shelf

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — a few battery-safety basics

A battery stores a lot of energy in a small package, so a few plain habits keep everyone safe — no matter the chemistry. Charge with the charger made for that exact battery, on a hard, non-flammable surface, and never charge one that is swollen, cracked, leaking, hot, or wet. Keep batteries away from open flame, sparks, and high heat, and give a lead-acid battery plenty of fresh air while it charges, because it can give off explosive hydrogen gas. Never puncture, crush, short the two terminals together, or throw a battery in a fire. Around lead-acid batteries wear eye protection — the acid inside can burn skin and eyes. And when any battery finally wears out, it does not belong in the household trash: batteries are recycled at the right drop-off, never thrown away. The reassuring part is that the LiFePO₄ chemistry — also written LFP — inside most of today's power stations and backup batteries is one of the safest and most stable there is. Think of this whole guide as one long checklist you can keep on the shelf — but this box up top is the part to never skip, no matter the battery.

One simple checklist for any battery

Caring for a battery isn't complicated — it's just a handful of small, regular habits. This guide gathers them into short, skimmable lists you can keep right where you keep your battery gear.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. A lot of the folks I visit don't want a lecture on battery chemistry — they just want to know what to do, in plain steps, so their power station or backup battery is ready when they need it. This is that: the doing, not the theory.

Every other guide in this series goes deep on one topic. This one stays shallow on purpose. It's the summary you print, fold, and tuck on a shelf — with a pointer to the fuller guide whenever you want the why behind a step.

★ Print it and keep it handy

You don't have to memorize any of this. Keep the checklist where your battery lives, and call or text me at (330) 200-8042 if a step ever needs explaining.

The whole checklist, at a glance

If you read nothing else, these six areas are the whole job.

- ❑ **Charging** — right charger, safe surface, never charge a damaged, wet, or ice-cold battery.
- ❑ **Storing** — lead-acid full, lithium at a partial charge, both cool and dry.
- ❑ **Temperature** — heat is the enemy; don't charge lithium below freezing.
- ❑ **Terminals** — keep them clean and tight, and never bridge them with a metal tool.
- ❑ **Testing** — check it when runtime drops, before a season, and once it's several years old.
- ❑ **Recycling** — when it wears out, recycle it; never the trash.

✓ Six habits, that's all

The rest of this guide is just these six areas, each broken into a short list. Learn the six and you've learned battery care.

The everyday quick-glance list

For a battery you use regularly, these are the little things worth a glance now and then.

- ☐ Is it charging on a hard, non-flammable surface with some air around it?
- ☐ Is it living somewhere cool and dry, out of the sun and away from heat?
- ☐ Are the terminals and connections clean, dry, and snug?
- ☐ Is the case free of swelling, cracks, leaks, or heavy corrosion?
- ☐ Does it still run your gear about as long as it used to?
- ☐ Is the right charger the one that's plugged into it?

None of this takes more than a moment. A quick look every so often catches small problems while they're still small.

Charging checklist

Charging is where a lot of battery life is won or lost, so this list is worth knowing by heart.

- ☐ Use the charger made for that battery's chemistry, or one with a chemistry setting.
- ☐ Charge on a hard, non-flammable surface — never a bed, couch, or carpet.
- ☐ Give it some air around it, especially a lead-acid battery.
- ☐ Never charge a battery that's swollen, cracked, leaking, wet, or ice-cold.
- ☐ Let a cold battery warm to room temperature before charging.
- ☐ Don't cover a charging battery, and keep a smoke alarm nearby.

! Match the charger to the chemistry

Lead-acid and lithium want to be charged differently. The wrong charger can damage a battery or worse. Our charging guide walks through chargers and maintainers step by step.

Storing checklist

How you put a battery away decides whether it's ready — or ruined — when you next reach for it. The charge level differs by chemistry.

Lead-acid or AGM

- ☐ Store it fully charged, and keep it topped up — a maintainer is ideal.
- ☐ Never store a lead-acid battery empty; sitting discharged can ruin it.

Lithium (LFP)

- ☐ Store it at a partial charge — not bone-empty, not necessarily full for months.
- ☐ Give it an occasional check and top-up, per the maker's guidance.

For both kinds, pick a cool, dry spot out of direct sun, keep the terminals clean, and keep loose metal away so nothing can short across them. Our storage guide covers the full off-season routine.

Temperature checklist

Batteries have feelings about weather. Heat is the long-term enemy, and cold has one firm rule.

- ❑ Keep batteries out of hot cars, sunny windows, and baking attics — heat ages every chemistry faster.
- ❑ Never charge a lithium battery below freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit, or 0 Celsius); let it warm up first.
- ❑ A quality lithium pack's BMS usually blocks cold charging — don't try to force it.
- ❑ Expect less run-time in the cold; it comes back when the battery warms.
- ❑ In an unheated barn or garage, mind the swings between hot and cold.

! Cold charging is the one to remember

Discharging a battery in the cold is usually fine, just reduced. Charging a lithium battery below freezing, though, can quietly damage it. Warm it to room temperature first. Our cold-weather guide has the details.

Terminals and connections checklist

Loose or crusty connections cause weak power, heat, and early failures. Keeping them clean and tight is quick and it matters.

- ❑ Keep terminals clean, dry, and free of white or bluish corrosion.
- ❑ Keep the connections snug — loose ones heat up and rob power.
- ❑ When you disconnect, take the negative terminal off first and put it back on last.
- ❑ Never let a metal tool touch both terminals at once.
- ❑ After cleaning a lead-acid terminal, protect it with a felt washer or dielectric grease.

! Never bridge both terminals with a tool

A wrench or screwdriver laid across both posts can spark, short, and burn in an instant. Work with one hand where you can and keep tools clear of the other terminal. Our terminals-and-corrosion guide covers this fully.

Testing and health checklist

You don't need to test constantly — just at the moments when it counts.

- ☐ Test when the run-time drops noticeably from what it used to be.
- ☐ Test before a season you'll rely on it — storm season, winter, camping.
- ☐ Test once a battery is several years old, even if it seems fine.
- ☐ For a power station or lithium pack, read the state of charge and health on its display or app.
- ☐ For a car or lead-acid battery, a shop can do a quick load test if you're unsure.

A battery that reads low even after a full charge, or that dies quickly under load, is telling you it's tiring. Our testing-and-monitoring guide shows you how to check with simple tools.

Recycling and disposal checklist

When a battery finally wears out, it has one right destination — and it isn't the trash.

- ☐ Never put any battery in the household trash or curbside recycling — loose batteries start fires in trucks.
- ☐ Take lead-acid batteries to an auto-parts store or retailer (often for a refundable core deposit).
- ☐ Take lithium and power-station packs to a battery or electronics recycling drop-off.
- ☐ Tape over the terminals of loose lithium batteries before you transport them.
- ☐ Call ahead about a swollen or damaged battery — it needs special handling.
- ☐ Don't stockpile dead batteries loose in a drawer.

✓ It's easier than you'd think

Many hardware and electronics stores host a drop-off, and Portage County holds household-hazardous-waste days. Our disposal guide lists how to find one near you.

Stop-and-check-right-now list

Most of this guide is routine. This short list is the exception — these signs mean set the battery down and pay attention.

- ❑ The case looks swollen, puffy, or bulged.
- ❑ It's hissing, smoking, or giving off an odd smell.
- ❑ It's very hot during charging or use.
- ❑ It's leaking, cracked, or heavily corroded.

! A swollen battery is a stop sign

If a lithium battery ever looks puffy, don't use it, don't charge it, and don't puncture it. Move it somewhere safe away from anything that burns and arrange to recycle it. For anything past the mildest case, get everyone out and call 911. Our [signs-of-a-failing-battery](#) guide explains the warnings.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The care checklist is the same everywhere, but how often you'll run it — and how much rides on it — depends on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages tend to be shorter, so a short checklist and a modest battery cover the essentials until the lights come back.

- A smaller power station keeps phones, the internet, and a medical device going — so the everyday and charging lists are most of your job.
- You recharge from the wall between storms, which keeps the storing list simple.
- Recycling drop-offs are close, so the recycling checkbox is an easy errand.
- A quick seasonal check before storm season is usually plenty.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, outages run longer, and when the power stops the well pump stops — so no running water until it's back. That makes the checklist matter more, not less.

- More riding on your backup means the testing and storing lists earn their keep — you can't afford a dead battery here.
- Keep spares and run the seasonal checklist ahead of time; stores and recycling are farther off.
- Barns and outbuildings swing hot and cold, so the temperature list deserves real attention.
- A 240-volt well pump needs serious power a small station can't provide — see our well-pump and sizing guides.

★ Want help building your own checklist?

I'll walk your home with you and tailor these lists to the batteries you actually have — no sales pitch. Call (330) 200-8042.

A quick chemistry cheat-sheet

A few care steps differ between the two big families. Here they are, side by side.

Care step	Lead-acid / AGM	Lithium (LFP)
Store at	Full charge	Partial charge
Watering	Flooded needs it	None
Deep draining	Hard on it	Handles it well
Cold charging	More forgiving	Not below freezing
Upkeep	More hands-on	Very low

When a step depends on chemistry, this is the row to check. If you're not sure which family you've got, our basics and comparison guides help you tell them apart.

When you first get a battery

A few minutes at the start saves headaches later — and protects your warranty.

- ☐ Read the maker's instructions, even just the safety and charging pages.
- ☐ Note the purchase date somewhere you'll find it — on a tag or your calendar.
- ☐ Register the product and keep your receipt, in case of a warranty claim.
- ☐ Make sure you have the right charger for its chemistry.
- ☐ Give it its first charge as the maker directs.
- ☐ Pick a cool, dry home for it, away from heat and flammables.

✓ The warranty rewards good care

Battery warranties often expect you to follow the care instructions, and abuse can void them. Our [warranty-and-lifespan guide](#) explains what the paperwork covers.

The seasonal checklist

Run this a few times a year, especially before any season you'll lean on your battery.

- ☐ Before storm season: charge it fully and confirm it holds a charge.
- ☐ Before winter: expect reduced run-time in the cold and plan around it.
- ☐ Check terminals and connections for corrosion and snugness.
- ☐ Look the case over for swelling, cracks, or leaks.
- ☐ Confirm the right charger and any cables are in good shape.
- ☐ Top off a stored lead-acid battery; check a stored lithium pack's charge.

A battery you rely on for outages deserves this seasonal look. It's the difference between reaching for it and finding it ready, or reaching for it and finding it dead.

Putting a battery away for months

Storing a battery for the off-season has its own short routine.

- ☐ Set the right storage charge: lead-acid full, lithium at a partial charge.
- ☐ Clean the terminals and make sure everything is dry.
- ☐ Choose a cool, dry spot out of direct sun and away from freezing extremes.
- ☐ Keep it off a damp floor — a board or shelf does the trick.
- ☐ Put a maintainer on a stored lead-acid battery if you can.
- ☐ Keep it away from flammables, loose metal, kids, and pets.

✓ Set a reminder to check on it

Both families slowly lose charge just sitting there — lead-acid faster. A note on the calendar to check and top up now and then keeps a stored battery from quietly going flat.

Bringing a stored battery back into service

Before you count on a battery that's been sitting, give it this quick once-over.

- ❑ Look the case over for swelling, cracks, leaks, or corrosion.
- ❑ Clean and tighten the terminals and connections.
- ❑ Charge it fully with the right charger before you rely on it.
- ❑ Test that it holds a charge and runs your gear as expected.
- ❑ If it's been sitting for years, be ready that it may have tired out.

A battery that comes out of storage weak, or that won't reach a full charge, is telling you its time may be near. Better to learn that now than in the middle of an outage.

The safety non-negotiables

Everything else on these lists is about a long life. This short list is about staying safe — no exceptions.

- ❑ Never charge or use a swollen, cracked, leaking, wet, or very hot battery.
- ❑ Never let a metal tool bridge both terminals.
- ❑ Never puncture, crush, or throw a battery in a fire.
- ❑ Give lead-acid fresh air while charging (it gives off explosive hydrogen), and wear eye protection around the acid.
- ❑ Keep batteries away from open flame, sparks, and high heat.
- ❑ Never put a battery in the household trash.

! When in doubt, stop and step back

If a battery is doing something that worries you — swelling, hissing, smoking, very hot — don't try to be a hero. Get people away, and for anything past the mildest case, get everyone out and call 911. A battery is replaceable; you are not.

The one-page master checklist

If you tape a single page inside a cabinet door, make it this one.

- ☐ Charge with the right charger, on a safe surface, never when damaged, wet, or ice-cold.
- ☐ Store lead-acid full and lithium partial, both cool and dry.
- ☐ Keep it out of the heat, and never charge lithium below freezing.
- ☐ Keep terminals clean and tight; never bridge them with a tool.
- ☐ Test it when run-time drops, before a season, and once it's several years old.
- ☐ Recycle it when it wears out — never the trash.

✓ This is the shelf copy

Everything else in this guide fills in the details, but this is the whole job on one page. Print it, fold it, and keep it with your battery gear.

Common Questions

The checklist questions I hear most from folks keeping a battery ready.

Q: How often do I really need to check on a battery?

For one you use regularly, a quick glance now and then is plenty. For one that mostly waits or is stored, a check before each season and an occasional top-up is enough. The lists here tell you the moments that matter.

Q: Do lead-acid and lithium really need different care?

In a few spots, yes — mainly storage charge and cold charging. Store lead-acid full and lithium partial, and never charge lithium below freezing. Our chemistry cheat-sheet on the earlier page lays the differences out.

Q: What's the single most important item?

If I had to pick one, it's this: never charge or use a battery that's swollen, damaged, wet, or ice-cold. That one habit prevents the scariest problems.

Q: Can I just keep my power station plugged in all the time?

For a quality power station with a smart charger, that's usually fine — it manages itself. Check your maker's guidance, and follow the storing list if it'll sit unused for a long stretch.

Q: Where do I take a battery when it's finally dead?

Never the trash. Lead-acid goes back to an auto-parts store or retailer; lithium and power-station packs go to a battery or electronics recycling drop-off. Tape the terminals of loose lithium first.

★ Not sure how a step applies to your battery?

That's an easy call to make. Reach me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll walk it through with you — there's no such thing as a silly battery question.

Make these lists your own

A checklist only helps if it's where you'll see it. Here's how to make these stick.

- Print the master list and tape it inside the cabinet or closet where the battery lives.
- Keep this guide in a drawer with your other home papers.
- Write your battery's purchase date and chemistry right on the page.
- Set a calendar reminder for your seasonal check.
- Share a copy with whoever else in the house might reach for the battery.

✓ A page on the shelf beats a fact in your head

You don't have to remember all of this. A printed list where you keep your gear does the remembering for you.

Where to go next

Each checklist here has a fuller guide behind it whenever you want the why.

- Charging in depth: our charging guide covers chargers and maintainers.
- Storing in depth: our storage guide covers charge level and the off-season.
- Terminals in depth: our terminals-and-corrosion guide keeps connections safe.
- Testing and disposal: our testing-and-monitoring and disposal guides round it out.

You don't have to read them all. When a checklist item leaves you wanting more, follow it to its own guide — each stands on its own.

You don't have to do this alone

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

I hope this guide made caring for your batteries with a simple checklist feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, 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 do licensed electrical work or open up sealed battery packs myself — for anything hardwired, or for panel work, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

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

The Care Checklist at a Glance

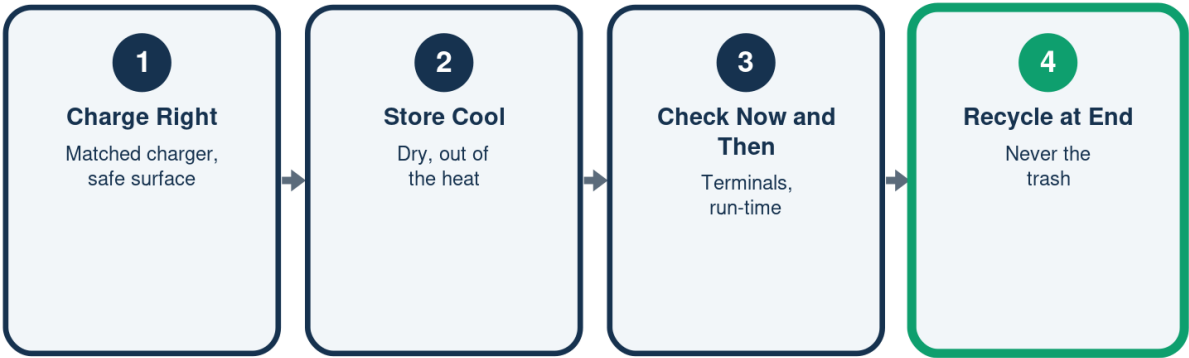
Do this, not that

	Do this	Not this
Charging	Right charger	A cheap dumb one
Surface	Hard, bare floor	Bed or couch
Storing	Cool and dry	Hot car or attic
Terminals	Clean and tight	Bridged by a tool
Worn out	Recycle it	The trash

Six simple habits keep any battery safe and long-lived.

Your Battery-Care Routine

The same short loop, over and over



A quick loop you can run without thinking hard.

Care by Chemistry

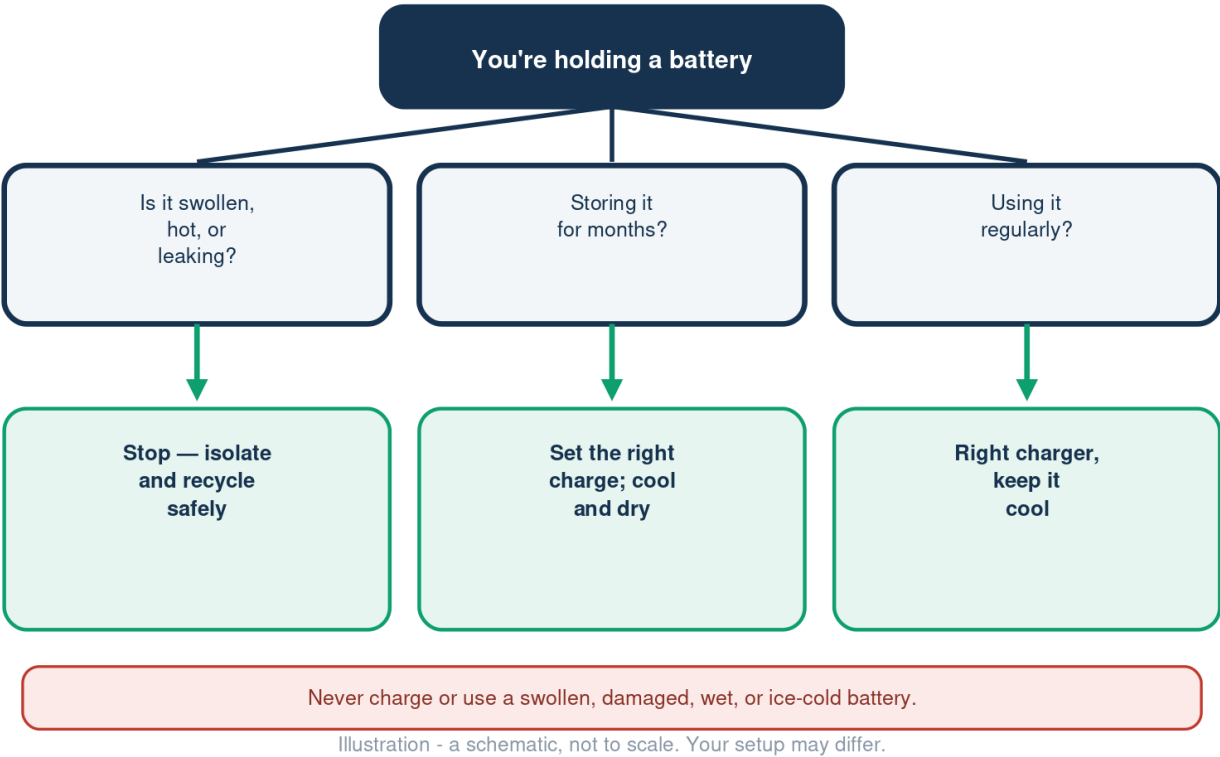
Where the two families differ

	Lead-Acid / AGM	Lithium (LFP)
Store at	Full charge	Partial charge
Watering	Flooded needs it	None
Deep draining	Avoid it	Handles it
Cold charging	More forgiving	Not below freeze
Terminals	Clean often	Check now/then

A few steps differ by chemistry — most are the same.

What Should I Do With This Battery?

A starting point, not the final word





Need a Real Person?

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You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

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— Bill

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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.

— *Bill*



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