BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Bike Computers & Cycling Apps

Tracking your rides, simply

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole idea in a breath.

To track your bike rides, you have two options. The easy, free one: install a cycling app (like Strava, Komoot, or similar) on the phone you already own, press record when you start riding, and it uses the phone's GPS to log your distance, speed, time, and the route on a map. The dedicated option: a 'bike computer,' a small screen that mounts on your handlebars (Garmin and Wahoo are well-known makers), which does the same but with better battery life, an always-visible screen, and no draining your phone.

Both can also navigate a route so you don't get lost. Start free with a phone app to see if you enjoy tracking; consider a bike computer if you ride often, go long, or want the better screen and battery. Match the setup to your riding, and don't overspend before you know you'll use it.

- Free and easy: a cycling app on your phone tracks distance, speed, time, and route.
- A dedicated bike computer adds better battery, an always-on screen, and no phone drain.
- Start free with an app; upgrade to a computer only if you ride enough to want it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Start with a free cycling app on your phone before buying any dedicated device. It costs nothing, takes minutes to set up, and lets you discover whether you enjoy tracking your rides — which tells you whether a bike computer is worth it for you.

WHY TRACK

2 Why Track Your Rides at All

The fun and the usefulness.

Tracking your rides isn't just for serious athletes — it adds genuine fun and usefulness to riding at any level. Seeing where you went, how far, and your progress over time turns riding into something you can enjoy, share, and feel good about.

What people enjoy about it

- Seeing your accomplishment — 'I rode 15 miles today!' — which is motivating and satisfying.
- A map of where you've been, which is simply fun to look at.
- Tracking progress over weeks and months — getting faster, going farther, staying active.
- Following routes so you can explore new rides without getting lost.
- Sharing rides with friends or family, or a cycling community, for encouragement.
- A record of your activity for your own health and motivation.

Useful beyond the numbers

Beyond the stats, tracking is practically useful: the route mapping lets you explore unfamiliar areas confidently, turn-by-turn navigation keeps you from getting lost, and a record of your rides helps you stay motivated to keep active — which is really the point for most recreational riders. And for safety, some apps can share your live location with family or detect an incident. You don't need to be training for a race to benefit; tracking makes everyday riding more fun, more adventurous, and a little safer.

> *You don't have to be a racer to enjoy tracking your rides — just seeing the map of where you went and watching your miles add up over a season is motivation and satisfaction enough for most of us.*

WHAT THEY TRACK

3

What They Track

The numbers and the map.

Both phone apps and bike computers track a similar core set of information using GPS (which figures out where you are) and sometimes extra sensors. You don't need to care about all of it — but it's nice to know what's available.

The common things tracked

- Distance — how far you rode.
- Speed — current, average, and maximum.
- Time — how long you rode (moving time and total).
- Route — a map of exactly where you went, via GPS.
- Elevation — how much you climbed.
- Calories — an estimate of effort (approximate).

Optional extras with sensors

With add-on sensors (which most casual riders don't need), you can also track things like your heart rate (with a heart-rate strap or watch), pedaling cadence, and power — the sort of data serious cyclists and those training care about. For everyday riding, the basics (distance, speed, route, time) that come free from GPS alone are plenty, and you can add sensors later if you get into it. Don't feel you need the fancy metrics to enjoy tracking; most people happily use just the core numbers and the map.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> GPS does the main work for free — it's what records your route, distance, and speed with no extra equipment, using the location feature in your phone or the bike computer. The fancier metrics (heart rate, power, cadence) need extra sensors, but the satisfying core of ride tracking costs nothing beyond the app or device itself.

PHONE VS COMPUTER

4 Phone vs. Dedicated Bike Computer

The honest trade-offs.

The main decision is whether to use your phone (with an app) or buy a dedicated bike computer. Both track your rides well; they differ in convenience, battery, screen, and cost. Here's the honest comparison.

The trade-offs

	Phone + app	Bike computer
Cost	Free (you own the phone)	A dedicated purchase
Battery	Drains your phone	Long battery, saves your phone
Screen	Great, but in your pocket/mount	Always-on, readable in sun, bar-mounted
Convenience	Already with you	One more device to charge/carry
Durability	Phone exposed to weather/drops on a mount	Built rugged for the handlebars

Where each wins

The phone wins on cost and simplicity — it's free and already in your pocket, perfect for getting started and for casual, shorter rides. The bike computer wins for regular and longer riders: its battery lasts for very long rides without draining your phone, its screen is always visible on the handlebars and readable in bright sun, and it's built to survive weather and bumps.

The cost is a dedicated purchase and another thing to charge. So the honest guidance: start with your phone, and consider a bike computer if you find yourself riding often enough, long enough, or seriously enough that the battery, screen, and

durability genuinely matter to you.

WATCH OUT

Using your phone to track long rides drains its battery fast (GPS and screen are power-hungry), which can leave you with a dead phone — a real concern if you rely on it to call for help. For longer rides, carry a power bank, or this is exactly where a dedicated bike computer (which saves your phone's battery for emergencies) earns its keep.

THE APPS

5 Choosing a Cycling App

Free to start, several good ones.

If you start with your phone, you'll want a cycling app. There are several good ones, most free to start (with optional paid upgrades), and they all do the core job of recording and mapping your rides. The right one depends a little on what you want.

Popular choices

- Strava — very popular, strong on tracking, sharing, and a social/community side; free with a paid tier for extra features.
- Komoot — strong on route planning and navigation for exploring, good for finding and following routes.
- Your phone's or bike brand's own app, or other free ride-tracking apps.
- Many work on both iPhone and Android.

Free versus paid

Most cycling apps are free to use for the basics — recording rides, seeing your data and maps — with a paid subscription that adds features like advanced analysis, detailed route planning, live tracking, or training tools. For most recreational riders, the free version is plenty to enjoy tracking and sharing rides. Try the free version first, and only pay if you find specific features you genuinely want. You can also try a couple of apps (they're free to sample) to see which you like before settling on one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Try a free cycling app for a few rides before worrying about which is 'best' or paying for anything — they all handle the core tracking well, and a few rides tells you whether you enjoy it and which app's style you like. There's no need to decide perfectly up front.

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.

GET STARTED

6 Getting Started With an App

Recording your first ride.

Getting going with a phone app is quick — install it, allow it to use your location, and press record when you ride. Here's the simple flow.

Your first tracked ride

1. Install a free cycling app and create an account.
2. Allow the app to use your location (GPS) — this is what records your route; it may ask to allow location while using the app.
3. When you're ready to ride, open the app and press the record/start button.
4. Ride! (Secure your phone in a mount or pocket — see mounting.)
5. When you finish, press stop and save the ride.
6. Look at your ride — distance, speed, the map of where you went.

A couple of tips for good tracking

Give the app a moment to find GPS before you start (so it captures from the beginning), and remember to press stop when you finish so it doesn't keep recording you sitting at the coffee shop. If you pause mid-ride, use the app's pause feature. The first ride is the learning one; after that it becomes automatic. Enjoy looking at the

map and numbers afterward — that's the satisfying payoff that hooks most people on tracking.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Allowing the app to use your location is necessary for it to track your route — that's the whole mechanism. You can set location to 'while using the app' so it's only tracking when you've opened it to ride, not all the time, which is the sensible privacy-friendly setting.

NAVIGATION

7 Following Routes and Navigation

Explore without getting lost.

One of the most useful features for recreational riders is navigation — following a planned route with turn-by-turn directions so you can explore new areas or longer rides without getting lost. Both apps and bike computers can do this.

How route-following works

- You plan a route (in the app, often by picking a destination or drawing a loop) or use a pre-made/shared route.
- The app or computer then guides you along it, showing the way and often giving turn alerts.
- You can discover popular local routes others have shared, great for finding good rides in a new area.
- This lets you confidently ride somewhere new, or do a longer loop, without fear of getting lost.

Great for exploring

Route navigation turns a bike into a tool for adventure — you can plan a scenic loop, follow a rail-trail, or ride in an unfamiliar town, with the confidence that you'll find your way and get back. Apps like Komoot specialize in this route-discovery and navigation, and dedicated bike computers are especially nice for it since the screen is right there on the bars, visible as you ride (versus glancing at a phone). For anyone

who likes exploring on two wheels, this feature alone can make tracking worthwhile.

WATCH OUT

Use route navigation to explore new rides confidently — plan or find a route before you set out, and let the app or computer guide you. It's wonderful for discovering local trails and scenic loops you'd never have tried for fear of getting lost, and for safely extending how far you venture.

MOUNTING

8 Mounting It Safely

Keep your eyes on the road.

However you track, you'll want your phone or computer mounted securely where you can glance at it — and crucially, used in a way that keeps your attention on riding safely, not on the screen.

Mounting options

- A phone mount: a secure handlebar or stem mount holds your phone where you can see it — get a sturdy, well-reviewed one so your phone doesn't bounce off.
- A bike computer mount: dedicated computers come with a secure handlebar/stem mount made for them.
- In a pocket or bag: you can also just keep your phone in a pocket and let the app track, checking it only when stopped (safest for not getting distracted).
- Make sure anything mounted is tight and won't vibrate loose or block your view.

Ride safely, glance don't stare

The most important thing is to keep your attention on the road and your riding, not on the screen. A mounted device is for quick glances, like a car's speedometer — not for fiddling, planning, or staring while moving. If you need to really interact with it (plan a route, read something), stop and do it safely.

Especially on a faster e-bike or in traffic, distraction is dangerous. The data is there to enjoy; your eyes belong on the ride. Keeping the phone in a pocket and only checking

it when stopped is the least-distracting approach if you find a screen tempting.

WATCH OUT

Don't let the screen distract you from riding safely — a mounted phone or computer is for quick glances only, not for fiddling with while moving, especially in traffic or on a faster e-bike. Stop to plan routes or interact with it. And use a secure mount so your phone can't bounce off and break.

PRIVACY

9 A Note on Privacy

Sharing your rides thoughtfully.

Since ride tracking records exactly where you go, a little thought about privacy is worthwhile — especially if you share your rides on a social cycling app.

Privacy considerations

- Your rides reveal your routes — and often start and end at your home, which you may not want publicly visible.
- Social features that share rides can expose your location patterns to others; consider who can see them.
- Many apps offer privacy settings — like hiding the area around your home (a 'privacy zone'), or keeping rides private or friends-only.
- Decide how public you want to be, and set the app accordingly.

Simple privacy habits

If you use a social cycling app, take a moment with its privacy settings: consider setting a 'privacy zone' that hides the map near your home so your address isn't revealed by where your rides start and end, and decide whether your rides are public, friends-only, or private. If you don't care to share at all, you can keep everything private and just track for yourself. The tracking is for your benefit; how much you broadcast is entirely your choice, so set it to your comfort.

GOOD TO KNOW

A 'privacy zone' is worth setting up if you share rides — it hides the map around your home address, so your public rides don't effectively advertise where you live by showing exactly where every ride begins and ends. It's a simple setting that lets you enjoy sharing without giving away your home location.

COMMON QUESTIONS

10

Common Questions

The rider worries, answered.

“Do I need to buy a bike computer?”

No — a free app on your phone tracks your rides well and is the perfect way to start at no cost. A dedicated bike computer is worth considering only if you ride often, go on long rides (where it saves your phone's battery and has a better screen), or want the ruggedness and always-on handlebar display. Start with your phone, and upgrade only if your riding makes the benefits worthwhile.

“Will tracking drain my phone battery?”

Yes, noticeably — GPS tracking and a running screen use a lot of power, so a long ride can run your phone down. For shorter rides it's fine; for long ones, carry a power bank, or keep the phone's screen off in a pocket while the app tracks, or get a bike computer that preserves your phone's battery for emergencies. Don't let tracking leave you with a dead phone when you might need it.

“Which app should I use?”

Any of the popular free ones handles the core tracking well, so try one or two and pick the style you like. Strava is popular for tracking and its community/sharing side; Komoot is strong for planning and navigating routes to explore. Start with the free version of whichever appeals, and only pay for a subscription if you find features you specifically want.

“Can I get lost using navigation?”

Route navigation is specifically designed to keep you from getting lost — it guides you along a planned route with directions. Just plan or load your route before setting out, and don't rely solely on a phone whose battery might die (a reason to carry a backup or use a bike computer on long rides). With a route loaded and a charged device, you can confidently explore new areas.

WRAP UP

11 More Fun on Two Wheels

Track simply, ride more.

Tracking your rides adds real fun and usefulness to cycling at any level — seeing your distance and route, watching your progress, exploring new rides with navigation, and sharing with friends. You don't need to spend anything to start: a free app on the phone you already own tracks your rides beautifully, and is the perfect way to discover whether you enjoy it.

If you find yourself riding often, going long, or wanting the better battery, always-on screen, and durability, a dedicated bike computer is the worthwhile upgrade. Mount whatever you use securely, keep your eyes on the road, mind your privacy if you share, and enjoy the extra motivation and adventure that tracking brings to your riding.

- Start free with a cycling app on your phone — it tracks distance, speed, time, and route.
- A bike computer adds better battery, an always-on screen, and durability, for regular riders.
- Use navigation to explore new routes without getting lost.
- Mount it securely and glance, don't stare — keep your eyes on the ride.
- Mind privacy (a 'privacy zone' near home) if you share rides.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you'd like a hand getting set up — choosing and installing a free cycling app, recording your first ride and understanding the data, setting up route navigation to explore, or deciding whether a bike computer is worth it for your riding — it's a fun, easy thing to get going, and exactly the sort of help I'm glad to provide so you can enjoy more of your time on two wheels.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Start for free	Install a free cycling app on your phone and press record
Track your rides	Distance, speed, time, route map — automatically
Phone vs. computer	Phone is free and easy; a bike computer has better battery and screen
Follow a route	Apps and computers can navigate a route so you don't get lost
Mount it safely	A secure phone mount or the computer's mount on the handlebars
Pick a setup	Match it to how much and how seriously you ride
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

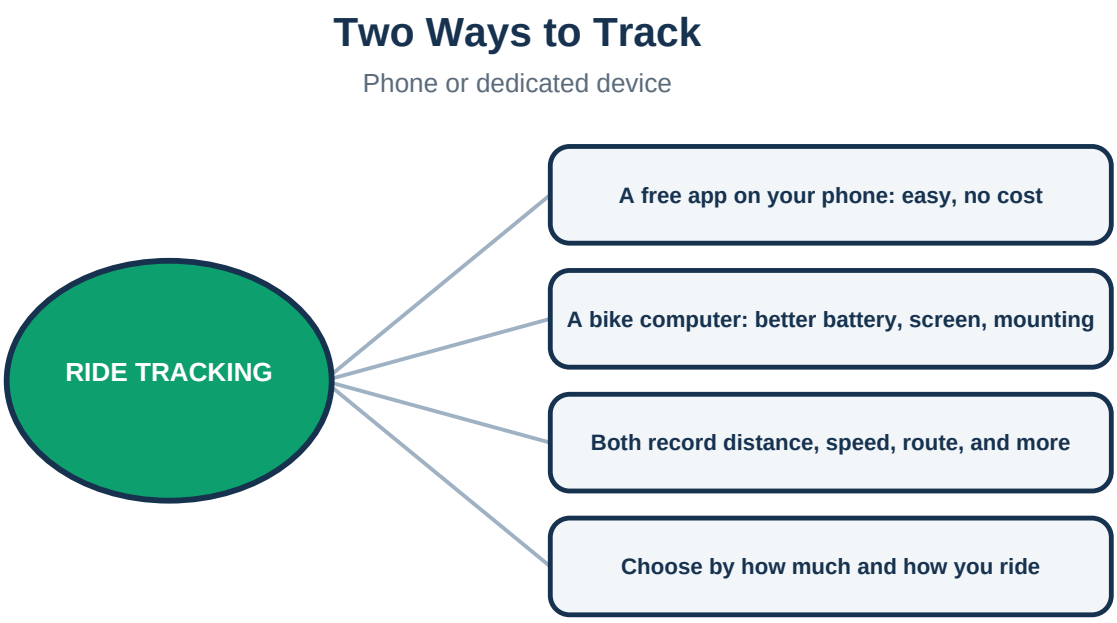


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Getting Going

Four steps

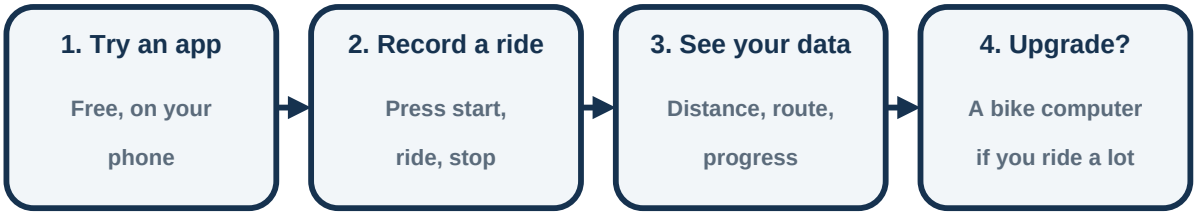


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

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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