



Buying a Used Car? Check the Tech First

An Extended Guide · No. 1937

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1937 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	4
2. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	5
3. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	6
4. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	7
5. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	8
6. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	9
7. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	10
8. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	11
9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	12
10. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	12
11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	14

12. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	15
13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	16
14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	17
15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	18
16. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	19
17. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	20
18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	21
19. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	22
20. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	23
21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	24
22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	24
A Picture to Follow Along	26
A Second Look	27
A Note From Bill	27
Your Visit — and My Promise	28

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

What's Inside Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now..... 4

1. The 60-Second Version.....	4
2. Why the Tech Deserves a Look.....	5
3. Run the Free Recall Check.....	5
4. Count the Key Fobs.....	6
5. Test the Backup Camera.....	6
6. Check the Parking Sensors.....	7
7. Try CarPlay and Android Auto.....	7
8. Test the Bluetooth.....	8
9. Check the Software Version and Updates.....	8
10. Make Sure the Old Owner Is Gone.....	9
11. Ask About Trials and Subscriptions.....	9
12. On a Hybrid or EV, Ask About the Battery.....	10
13. Factory-Reset It Yourself.....	11
14. Pair Your Own Phone.....	11
15. Set Your Home Address.....	12
16. Set Up Your Own App Account.....	12
17. Take This List to the Lot.....	13
18. Where to Find the VIN.....	14
19. Check the Screen and Touch Response.....	14
20. Test the Speakers and Radio.....	15
21. Check the Charging Ports and Outlets	

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..... 15	22. Try the Climate Controls..... 16	23. Look for
Warning Lights on the Dash..... 16	24. Ask for the Owner's Manual and	
Codes..... 17	25. Update the Car's Software..... 18	26. Set
Up Your Garage Door and Home Links..... 18	27. Set Your Driving	
Preferences..... 19	28. You Do Not Have to Be Technical..... 20	
29. Check the Keyless Entry and Push-Button Start..... 20	30. Register the	
Car With the Maker..... 21	31. Take It for a Proper	
Shakedown..... 21	32. When to Call Bill..... 22	
Everyday Cheat Sheet..... 23	A Picture to Follow	
Along..... 24	A Second Look..... 24	A Note
From Bill..... 25	Your Visit — and My Promise	

START HERE

3. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

1. The 60-Second Version If you only read one page, read this one. When you look at a used car, you kick the tires, listen to the engine, and take it for a spin. Now the gadgets deserve the same once-over, because they can cost real money to fix and can hide the last owner's private information. The good news is that checking them takes just a few minutes, and most of it you can do right there on the lot with your phone. Run a free recall check, count the key fobs, test the camera and the phone connection, and make sure the previous owner's data is wiped. Then, once it is yours, a little day-one setup makes the car truly your own. Nothing here is hard — it is just a tidy list to run through. Run the free recall check at [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls) using the car's VIN. Count the key fobs — replacements are surprisingly expensive. Test the backup camera, parking sensors, CarPlay, and Bluetooth. Make sure the last owner's phones, address, and accounts are gone. After you buy: factory-reset it, pair your phone, and set your home. WATCH OUT Do your testing with the car safely parked, and have the seller or salesperson sit with you so they can answer questions as you go down the list. WHY IT MATTERS 2. Why the Tech Deserves a Look Two kinds of trouble it saves you. You might wonder why fuss over the gadgets when the engine and body matter most. Two reasons. First, car technology is expensive to repair or replace — a single key fob can cost a few hundred dollars, and a broken camera or screen can run much more. Catching a problem before you buy gives you room to ask for a fix or a lower price. Second, a used car carries the last owner's digital life until someone clears it — their paired phone, their home address sitting in the navigation, maybe even their garage-door code. Checking the tech protects both your wallet and your privacy, and the seller's privacy too. It is a small effort for a real payoff, and it marks you as a careful buyer. Car gadgets are costly to fix — catch problems before you pay. A used car holds the last owner's data until it is wiped. Checking protects your wallet and everyone's privacy.

BEFORE YOU BUY**4. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

A careful buyer gets better answers and a better deal.

3. Run the Free Recall Check Two minutes that could matter a lot. Before anything else, find out whether the car has any open safety recalls — repairs the carmaker has announced but that may never have been done. There is a free, official way to check, run by the government's highway safety office. You go to [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls) and type in the car's VIN, the seventeen-character Vehicle Identification Number found on a little plate at the base of the windshield and on the paperwork. In seconds it tells you whether any recalls are open. Open recalls are usually fixed free at a dealer, so they are not a dealbreaker, but you want to know about them and get them handled. It costs nothing and takes two minutes on your phone right there at the lot.

- 1 Find the VIN — look at the base of the windshield on the driver's side.
- 2 On your phone, go to [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls).
- 3 Type in the seventeen-character VIN.
- 4 Read the results — it shows any open, unfixed recalls.
- 5 If there are any, ask about getting them fixed free at a dealer. **GOOD TO KNOW** Open recalls are almost always repaired at no charge by a dealer. Finding one is not a reason to walk away — it is a free fix to line up. **BEFORE YOU BUY 4. Count the Key Fobs** Extras cost a small fortune. Here is a detail that surprises people: a replacement key fob — the little remote that unlocks and starts the car — can cost a few hundred dollars by the time it is cut and programmed to the car. So you want to know, before you buy, exactly how many fobs come with the car. Ideally you get two, so you have a spare. If there is only one, that is worth raising, because buying a second later comes out of your pocket. Ask the seller plainly, 'How many keys come with it?' and make sure you physically receive every one they promise. Test each fob to be sure it locks, unlocks, and starts the car. One missing fob can quietly add hundreds to the true price.

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Ask how many key fobs come with the car.

Two is ideal — one to use, one spare. A replacement fob can cost a few hundred dollars. Test every fob to be sure it locks, unlocks, and starts the car. 5. Test the Backup Camera Put it in reverse and look. The backup camera is one of the best safety features in any modern car, and it is easy to test. With the car safely parked and the salesperson present, start it up and shift into reverse. The screen should show a clear picture of what is behind the car, usually with colored lines that curve as you turn the wheel. Look for a sharp, bright image — not blurry, not flickering, not washed out. A foggy or dark camera may just need cleaning, or it may be failing, which is costly to replace. Try it in good light and, if you can, in dimmer light too. A camera you rely on every day in a tight parking lot is well worth a careful look before you buy.

- 1 With the car parked and running, shift into reverse.
- 2 Look at the screen — it should show a clear view behind the car.
- 3 Check that the guide lines appear and bend as you turn the wheel.
- 4 Watch for blur, flicker, or a washed-out picture.
- 5 If it looks poor, ask whether it just needs cleaning or is failing. BEFORE YOU BUY 6. Check the Parking Sensors Those helpful beeps. Many cars have parking sensors — the little eyes in the bumpers that beep faster as you near a wall or another car. They are easy to overlook on a test drive, but worth a quick check. With the salesperson's help and in a safe, clear spot, ease the car slowly toward a wall or have someone stand well behind it, and listen for the beeping to speed up as you get closer. On cars with a screen display, colored blocks should appear showing how close you are. If the sensors stay silent or throw a warning light, that is something to raise. Like the camera, these are a daily convenience and a safety aid, and repairs are not cheap, so a two-minute test is time well spent. Parking sensors beep faster as you near an object.

BEFORE YOU BUY

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Test gently toward a wall, with help and in a clear spot.

On screen, look for colored distance blocks. Silence or a warning light is worth asking about. 7. Try CarPlay and Android Auto Bring your own phone to the lot. If you rely on Apple CarPlay or Android Auto to put your phone's map and music on the car screen, do not assume a used car's system works — test it with your own phone. Bring your usual charging cable, plug into the car's USB port, and see whether CarPlay or Android Auto comes up on the screen. It should show your familiar big buttons within a few seconds. If nothing happens, try a different port or cable before giving up, since a bad cable is often the culprit. Some cars also do this wirelessly. Testing with your own phone, the one you will actually use, is the only way to be sure it will work for you once the car is in your driveway.

- 1 Bring your own phone and a good charging cable to the lot.
- 2 Plug into a USB port in the car (look for one with a phone symbol).
- 3 Wait a few seconds for CarPlay or Android Auto to appear.
- 4 If nothing shows, try another port or cable before worrying.
- 5 Confirm your map and music come up and work. BEFORE YOU BUY 8. Test the Bluetooth Make a hands-free call. Bluetooth is the wireless link that lets the car handle your phone calls hands-free, and it is both a convenience and, in Ohio, part of driving within the law. Test it by pairing your phone to the car right there on the lot — it is the same quick setup you would do at home. Once paired, make a short test call and check that you can hear through the car speakers and the other person can hear you. Also see whether your contacts and recent calls show up on the car screen, since that is what makes calling by name possible. If the Bluetooth will not pair or the sound is poor, that is worth noting. A car you cannot easily go hands-free in is a daily frustration and a legal headache. Pair your phone to the car's Bluetooth right on the lot. Make a short test call and check the sound both ways.

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See whether your contacts appear on the car screen.

Trouble pairing or poor sound is worth raising before you buy. 9. Check the Software Version and Updates Is it still being looked after? Just like a phone, a car's infotainment — the screen-and-software system — has a version, and older cars eventually stop getting updates. It is worth a gentle question to the seller or a peek in the car's settings: what software version is it on, and does this model still receive updates? A system that still gets updates will keep improving and stay compatible with newer phones. One that has been cut off will work, but it is frozen in time, which may matter for CarPlay and the like down the road. This is not usually a dealbreaker, but it is a useful thing to know, and it tells you a bit about how modern the car's technology really is under the familiar dashboard. **GOOD TO KNOW** You can often find the software version in the car's settings under About or System. Whether a model still gets updates tells you how long its tech will keep up with newer phones. **BEFORE YOU BUY** 10. Make Sure the Old Owner Is Gone Their data should not come with the car. This is the step people most often forget, and it matters for both of you. A used car can hold a great deal of the previous owner's private life: their paired phones, their home address sitting in the navigation, their garage-door opener codes, saved locations like 'work' and 'the kids' school,' and sometimes a linked account with the carmaker's app or a service like Tesla's. Before you buy, confirm the car has been fully factory-reset so all of that is wiped. If you can see the old owner's name, phones, or home address still on the screen, it has not been cleared. Ask the seller to reset it, or plan to do it yourself on day one. Their data in your car helps no one and can be a real privacy problem. A used car can hold the last owner's phones, home address, and codes. It may also carry a linked carmaker or service account. Confirm the car was factory-reset so all of that is wiped.

WATCH OUT

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Still seeing their name or address on screen? It has not been cleared.

If the old owner's carmaker or Tesla-style account is still linked, they may be able to see or even control the car remotely. Make sure any such account is fully removed. **BEFORE YOU BUY 11. Ask About Trials and Subscriptions** What transfers, what ends. Modern cars come loaded with services that often ride on a subscription or a free trial — satellite radio, built-in cellular data, remote start through an app, safety and roadside features, and the like. When you buy used, it is worth asking which of these transfer to you and which simply end with the old owner. Some trials start fresh for a new owner; others do not. Satellite radio, for instance, usually needs a new account in your name. Knowing this up front means no surprises — you will not count on a feature that quietly stops, and you will not pay for something that should have come free. Ask the seller plainly, and make a note of what you will need to set up or sign up for yourself. Many car features ride on a subscription or free trial. Some transfer to a new owner; some end with the old one. Satellite radio usually needs a fresh account in your name. Ask up front so no feature surprises you later. **BEFORE YOU BUY 12. On a Hybrid or EV, Ask About the Battery** The one that powers the car. If you are looking at a hybrid or a fully electric car, there is one extra, important question: how healthy is the big battery that drives it? This is not the little battery that starts a gas engine; it is the large, expensive pack that stores the car's power, and it slowly loses capacity over the years, much like a phone battery that no longer lasts a full day. Ask whether there is a battery health report, how much range the car gets now compared with when it was new, and whether the battery is still under any warranty. A tired battery means less range and a costly future repair, so this single question can make or break the value of an otherwise lovely electric car. A hybrid or EV has a large, costly battery that fades over time.

TIP

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Ask for a battery health report or state-of-health number.

Ask how much range it gets now versus when new. Check whether the battery is still under warranty. On an electric car, battery health matters as much as mileage does on a gas car. If the seller cannot answer, a dealer or an independent check can give you a reading before you commit. AFTER YOU BUY 13. Factory-Reset It Yourself Start with a clean slate. Once the car is yours, the very first thing to do is a factory reset of the infotainment system, even if the seller says it was done. This wipes any lingering traces of the previous owner and gives you a clean, fresh system to make your own. The reset lives in the car's settings, usually under a heading like General, System, or Device, with an option such as 'Factory Reset' or 'Clear all data.' It takes a few minutes and the car walks you through it. Do this before you set anything up, so you are building your own car on a blank page rather than on top of someone else's leftovers. It is the digital equivalent of changing the locks when you move into a house.

- 1 Park the car and open the settings on the screen.
- 2 Look under General, System, or Device.
- 3 Find Factory Reset or Clear All Data.
- 4 Confirm it, and let the car finish the reset.
- 5 Now you have a clean system to set up as your own.

AFTER YOU BUY

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14. Pair Your Own Phone Make it talk to your device. With a clean system, the next step is to pair your own phone, so the car becomes your hands-free companion. This is the same Bluetooth pairing you would do with any car: on the car screen you choose to add a phone, on your phone you turn on Bluetooth and pick the car from the list, and you confirm a matching code. Once done, your calls come through the speakers and your contacts appear on the screen. If you use CarPlay or Android Auto, set that up now too, plugging in or connecting wirelessly so your map and music are ready. Pairing your phone is the moment the car stops being someone else's and starts feeling like yours.

- 1 In the car's settings, choose to add or pair a phone.

- 2 On your phone, turn on Bluetooth and select the car from the list.
- 3 Confirm the matching code on both screens.
- 4 Make a test call to be sure it comes through the speakers.
- 5 Set up CarPlay or Android Auto if you use them. AFTER YOU BUY 15. Set Your Home Address Teach it where you live. Now make the navigation your own by setting your home address. With the old owner's data wiped, the car no longer knows where 'home' is, so you will want to enter yours. In the car's map or navigation, look for Settings or Favorites and set a Home location, and perhaps a Work or other spot you visit often. Once home is set, getting directions back is as easy as tapping 'Home,' which is a lovely convenience when you are out somewhere unfamiliar. If you mostly use your phone's map instead of the car's, you can set your home there as well. Either way, teaching the car where you live turns a stranger's vehicle into your own daily driver. With the old data wiped, the car no longer knows your 'home.' In the map settings or favorites, set your home address. Add work or other frequent spots while you are at it. Then getting home is a single tap from anywhere.

AFTER YOU BUY

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16. Set Up Your Own App Account Take over the remote features. Many cars have a companion app on your phone that lets you lock, unlock, locate, or remote-start the car and see its health. If your new-to-you car has one, set up your own account now, and make doubly sure the previous owner's account is no longer linked. You download the carmaker's app, create an account in your name, and add the car using its VIN, following the steps the app gives you. This both unlocks the handy remote features for you and firmly cuts off any old link the previous owner had. It can be the fiddliest part of the whole process, as it sometimes involves a code shown in the car or a call to the carmaker, so take your time — or let me help. Many cars have a phone app for locking, locating, and remote start. Create your own account in the carmaker's app. Add the car with its VIN, following the app's steps. Confirm the previous owner's account is fully unlinked. WATCH OUT Setting up the car's app and unlinking the old owner can be the trickiest step, sometimes needing a code from the car or a call to the carmaker. Do not rush it, and call me if it fights you. CHEAT SHEET 17. Take This List to the Lot Everything on one page. Here is the whole thing boiled down to a list you can glance at while you stand beside the car. Run through the 'before you buy' checks on the lot, with the salesperson handy to answer questions, and keep the 'after you buy' steps in mind for the day you bring it home. You do not have to be a technical person to run this list — every item is a plain yes-or-no check or a simple question to ask. Having it in hand marks you as a careful, informed buyer, and it protects you from the two big risks: paying to fix tech you did not know was broken, and inheriting a stranger's private information. Before you buy After you buy Run the recall VIN check Factory-reset the system

BEFORE YOU BUY

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Count the key fobs Pair your own phone Test camera and sensors Set your home address Test CarPlay and Bluetooth Set up your own app account Confirm old data is wiped Confirm old owner unlinked Ask about battery (EV) Enjoy your new-to-you car 18. Where to Find the VIN The number behind every check. Several of the checks in this guide start with the car's VIN, so it is worth knowing exactly where to find it. The VIN, or Vehicle Identification Number, is a unique seventeen-character code — a mix of letters and numbers — that belongs to that one car and no other. The easiest place to see it is through the windshield, on a little metal plate at the bottom corner on the driver's side; you read it from outside the car looking in. It also appears on a sticker in the driver's door jamb, the part you see when the door is open, and on the car's title and registration paperwork. When you run a recall check or set up the car's app, this is the number you will type in. Jot it down or snap a photo of it while you are at the lot, so you have it handy for every check without having to go back to the car. One number unlocks a lot of useful information. The VIN is a unique seventeen-character code for that one car. Look through the windshield at the base on the driver's side. It is also in the door jamb and on the title and registration. Snap a photo of it so you have it for every check.

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19. Check the Screen and Touch Response The hub of the whole car. The big screen in the middle of the dashboard runs more and more of a modern car — the radio, the climate, the camera, the phone connection — so it deserves a careful look before you buy. Turn it on and watch how it behaves. The picture should be bright and even, with no dead spots, dark patches, lines, or flickering. If it is a touchscreen, press various buttons around the whole screen and make sure every part responds to your touch, including the corners, since touchscreens sometimes go unresponsive in one area as they age. Try turning the volume, switching the radio, and opening a few menus to be sure it all reacts promptly rather than lagging badly. A failing screen is one of the more expensive things to replace in a used car, and because so much runs through it, a bad one makes the whole car frustrating to live with. A few minutes pressing around the screen can save you a costly surprise. Check the screen is bright and even, with no dead spots or lines. On a touchscreen, press all over — including the corners. Make sure it responds promptly, not with a bad lag. A failing screen is costly, and the whole car runs through it. **BEFORE YOU BUY**

20. Test the Speakers and Radio Easy to check, annoying to fix. The sound system is easy to overlook when you are focused on the engine and the miles, but a rattling speaker or a dead radio gets old fast on every drive. While you have the car running on the lot, turn on the radio and tune to a station or two, then fade the sound from front to back and side to side if the car lets you, listening to each speaker in turn. You are checking that every speaker works, that none buzz or crackle, and that the sound is clean at a normal volume. Try any other sources too — a plugged-in phone, satellite radio, a CD if it has a player. Speakers and radios are not usually ruinously expensive to fix, but they are a nuisance, and a dead one is a fine thing to mention when you talk about price. A car you will spend hundreds of hours in deserves a sound system that works, so give it a proper listen. Turn on the radio and listen to each speaker in turn. Fade the sound front-to-back and side-to-side if you can.

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Listen for buzzing, crackling, or a dead speaker.

Test other sources too — phone, satellite radio, a CD. 21. Check the Charging Ports and Outlets For phones, chargers, and more. A modern car is full of places to plug things in, and every one of them is worth a quick test, because a dead port is a daily annoyance and can be a sign of a deeper electrical gremlin. Bring your phone and a cable and try each USB port, making sure each one charges your phone and, where it is meant to, connects to CarPlay or Android Auto. Check the old-style twelve-volt outlet, the one that used to be the cigarette lighter, since many folks still use it for a charger or a tire pump. If the car has wireless charging — a little pad you set the phone on — test that your phone actually charges when you lay it there. Note any port that does nothing. Ports are often cheap to fix, but a dead one can also hint at a blown fuse or a wiring issue, so it is good to know before you buy and to raise it if you find trouble. Test every USB port with your own phone and cable. Check the twelve-volt (lighter) outlet works. If there is a wireless charging pad, be sure it actually charges. A dead port can hint at a fuse or wiring issue — worth noting.

BEFORE YOU BUY 22. Try the Climate Controls Heat and cool, both matter in Ohio. In an Ohio climate, where you need strong heat in January and good cooling in July, the heating and air conditioning are not luxuries but necessities, and they are among the pricier things to repair. Test both thoroughly, even if you are shopping in a mild season. Turn the heat all the way up and feel that it actually gets hot through the vents, then switch to the air conditioning and feel that it blows genuinely cold, not just cool. Try the fan at every speed to be sure none are dead, and test the defroster for the windshield, which you will rely on all winter. If the car has heated seats, a heated steering wheel, or a remote-start feature meant to warm or cool the car, try those too. Climate repairs, especially a failed air-conditioning system, can run into real money, so a careful test here protects you from one of the bigger used-car surprises. Test the heat all the way hot and the air conditioning genuinely cold.

BEFORE YOU BUY**15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech***Run the fan at every speed to catch a dead one.*

Check the windshield defroster — you will need it all winter. Try heated seats and any remote start if the car has them. 23. Look for Warning Lights on the Dash The car trying to tell you something. When you first turn the key, a used car's dashboard will light up with a whole row of symbols, and then, after a moment, most of them should go out. That brief all-on moment is normal — it is the car testing its own lights. What matters is which ones stay lit once the car is running. A check-engine light, a tire-pressure warning, an airbag light, or any other symbol that remains on is the car telling you something needs attention, and it is a reason to ask questions before you buy. Some are minor, like a low tire; others, like a steady check-engine or airbag light, can signal something costly or a safety concern. Do not let a seller wave it away as 'nothing.' A persistent warning light is worth having explained, and ideally checked by a mechanic, because it may be the cheapest clue you will get to a problem lurking under the surface. WATCH OUT It is normal for dashboard lights to flash on briefly at startup. The ones to worry about are those that stay lit once the car is running — especially the check-engine and airbag lights. BEFORE YOU BUY 24. Ask for the Owner's Manual and Codes Little things that cost to replace. A couple of small items are easy to forget in the excitement of buying a car, and both can cost money or hassle if they are missing. First, the owner's manual — that thick book in the glovebox — is genuinely useful for a car full of technology you are still learning, and a replacement, while not expensive, is a bother to track down. Ask that it be included. Second, some cars have a little keypad on the door or a hidden keyless-entry code, and there may be a radio or anti-theft code needed if the battery is ever disconnected. Ask the seller whether any such codes exist and get them written down. On older cars especially, a radio that locks itself and asks for a code nobody has is a maddening little problem. These are small things, but gathering them at the point of sale, while the seller is still in front of you, saves a lot of later frustration.

AFTER YOU BUY

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Ask that the owner's manual be included — it is genuinely useful.

Ask about any keyless-entry or door keypad codes. Get any radio or anti-theft code written down. Small items, but a pain to chase down after the sale. 25. Update the Car's Software Catch up on what it missed. Once a used car is yours and freshly reset, it is a good moment to check whether its software is up to date, since a car that sat on a lot or with a previous owner may have missed several updates. Connect it to your home Wi-Fi and look in the settings for a software update option; if one is waiting, install it, parked, and let it finish. Getting current means you have all the latest fixes and features and the best compatibility with your phone. For a car that updates at the dealer, you can ask them to load the latest software at your first service visit. This step quietly brings your new-to-you car up to the present, so it behaves like the modern car it is rather than one frozen at whatever version it happened to be on when you bought it. It is a fine thing to do in the same sitting as your other day-one setup.

- 1 Connect the car to your home Wi-Fi.
- 2 Open the settings and look for a software update option.
- 3 If an update is waiting, install it while parked and let it finish.
- 4 For a dealer-updated car, ask them to load the latest at first service.
- 5 Now your used car is current on fixes, features, and phone support.

AFTER YOU BUY

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26. Set Up Your Garage Door and Home Links Make the car part of your home. Many cars have built-in buttons, often on the visor or the rearview mirror, that can open your garage door or home gate without a separate remote. When you buy used, these may still be set to the previous owner's garage — which is both useless to you and a small security matter — so it is worth clearing them and programming your own. The process differs by car and by garage-door opener, and the car's manual spells it out, but it generally involves holding a button or two until a light blinks, then teaching it your opener's signal. Once done, your own garage door opens at the press of a button built into the car, which is a genuine everyday convenience, especially in bad weather when you would rather not dig out a separate remote. Clearing the old settings and programming yours is a satisfying part of making the car truly your own, and it is a common thing to have a hand with. Many cars have built-in buttons to open a garage door or gate. On a used car these may still be set to the old owner's garage. Clear the old settings and program your own opener. The manual explains the steps; it is a nice convenience to set up. AFTER YOU BUY 27. Set Your Driving Preferences Make the seat and settings yours. A used car comes set up for how the last person liked it, and part of making it your own is adjusting the many little preferences to suit you. Modern cars remember a great deal: seat and mirror positions, climate settings, how the doors lock, whether the lights turn on by themselves, how loud the warning chimes are, and much more. Many cars can store these to a driver profile tied to your key fob, so the car greets you set up just right every time. Take an unhurried half-hour, parked, to go through the settings menu and set things the way you like them. It is also a gentle way to learn where everything lives in this new car. If a setting is baffling, the manual explains it, and this kind of personalizing — making a strange new car feel comfortable and familiar — is exactly the sort of thing a short visit can make quick and painless. A used car is set up for the last owner's preferences. Cars remember seats, mirrors, climate, locking, lights, and chimes. Many can store your settings to a profile tied to your key fob.

PEACE OF MIND

18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech*Take an unhurried half-hour, parked, to set it all the way you like.*

28. You Do Not Have to Be Technical A plain checklist, not a test. If this guide feels like a lot, let me reassure you: you do not need to be a technical person to protect yourself when buying a used car. Every check here is really just looking, listening, pressing a button, or asking a plain question. Does the camera show a clear picture? Do all the speakers work? How many keys come with it? Has the old owner's data been wiped? None of that requires any special knowledge — only the willingness to take your time and not be rushed. A good seller will happily sit with you while you go down the list, and a reluctance to let you check things carefully is itself a useful signal. Bring this guide, or a few notes from it, and work through it calmly. The whole point is to turn a big, nervous purchase into a series of small, simple checks, any one of which you are perfectly capable of doing yourself. And whatever you are unsure of, you can always have me take a look. Every check is looking, listening, pressing, or asking — no expertise needed. Take your time and do not let yourself be rushed. A seller who will not let you check carefully is telling you something. Whatever you are unsure of, you can always have me take a look.

BEFORE YOU BUY

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29. Check the Keyless Entry and Push-Button Start The little conveniences add up. Many cars have moved past the old turn-the-key routine to keyless entry and push-button start, where the car senses the fob in your pocket, unlocks as you grab the handle, and starts at the press of a button. These are wonderful conveniences, but they rely on sensors and a healthy fob battery, so they are worth testing on a used car. With the fob in your pocket, try locking and unlocking the doors by touching the handle or pressing the little button on it, and try starting the car with the button rather than by turning anything. See that the car recognizes the fob reliably, not just now and then. A fob with a dying battery can make these features flaky, and that is usually a cheap fix — a little coin battery — but a genuine sensor fault is pricier, so it is good to tell the difference before you buy. Test every door and the trunk or hatch too, since some of those have their own touch sensors. These small daily conveniences are a big part of living with a modern car, so make sure they all work the way they should. Keyless entry and push-button start rely on sensors and the fob battery. With the fob in your pocket, test locking, unlocking, and starting. A flaky fob is often just a cheap coin-battery replacement. Test every door and the trunk or hatch, which may have their own sensors.

AFTER YOU BUY 30. Register the Car With the Maker So you hear about recalls and updates. Once a used car is yours, it is well worth registering it in your name with the carmaker, a step many used-car buyers skip without realizing what they miss. When a car is registered to you, the maker knows how to reach you — which matters most for recalls, those important safety notices that you want to hear about directly rather than by chance. Registering also ties the car's connected services and updates to you rather than to a previous owner, and it can smooth out warranty matters if any coverage remains. You usually do this through the carmaker's website or app, entering the car's VIN and your contact details. It takes only a few minutes and costs nothing. Think of it as making sure the people who built the car know the car now lives with you, so that any news affecting your safety or your car's software finds its way to you promptly. It is a small, sensible bit of housekeeping that pays off the day a recall notice needs to reach the right mailbox.

PEACE OF MIND

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Registering the car in your name tells the maker how to reach you.

It matters most for recall notices about your safety. It ties connected services and updates to you, not the old owner. Do it on the carmaker's website or app with the VIN — free and quick. 31. Take It for a Proper Shakedown Live with the tech for an hour. Beyond the point-by-point checks, there is real value in simply spending a solid stretch of time with a used car's technology before you commit, treating the test drive as a proper shakedown rather than a quick loop around the block. Sit in it long enough to pair your phone, start some directions, play with the climate, try the camera while actually backing into a spot, and run through a few menus — the ordinary things you will do every day. An hour of real use turns up the little annoyances that a two-minute glance misses: a Bluetooth that drops, a screen that lags when you ask much of it, a camera that struggles in low light, a menu laid out in a way that will drive you up the wall. None of these may be dealbreakers, but you want to meet them before you buy, not after. A car is a big purchase and a long relationship, so give its technology the same patient attention you would give the engine and the ride. The time you spend getting acquainted is never wasted. Treat the test drive as a shakedown, not a quick loop. Pair your phone, start directions, use the camera, work the menus. An hour of real use reveals annoyances a glance misses. Meet the little faults before you buy, not after. GET HELP 32. When to Call Bill Buying, or just bought? Let's set it up. Whether you are about to buy and want a second set of eyes on the gadgets, or you just brought a car home and want it set up right, that is exactly the sort of thing I am glad to help with. A short visit sorts it out: I will run through the tech checklist with you, factory-reset the system so the old owner is gone, pair your phone, set your home address, and get the car's app working in your name — including that fiddly step of unlinking the previous owner. I have been doing this kind of work for more than thirty years, I serve folks right here in Portage County, and I come to you. If it is not right to your satisfaction, we make it right. That is my friendly guarantee. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

TIP**21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

I will run the tech checklist with you before or after you buy.

I will factory-reset the car and wipe the old owner's data. I will pair your phone, set your home, and set up the car's app. Friendly guarantee: if it is not right, we make it right. Bringing home a used car soon? Have me come by for a day-one setup, and you will drive off truly knowing the car is yours, inside and out. 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 I want to... Do this Check for recalls Run the free VIN check at [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls) Count the keys Make sure you get all the key fobs — extras are pricey Test the camera Put it in reverse and look at the backup screen Try the phone link Plug in and test CarPlay or Android Auto Clear the old owner Confirm the car was factory-reset, data wiped Check battery health On a hybrid or EV, ask about the battery Set it up right Give me a call and we will do day-one setup Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

HOW I CAN HELP**22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo). 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. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

At the lot

Four quick tech checks before you buy.

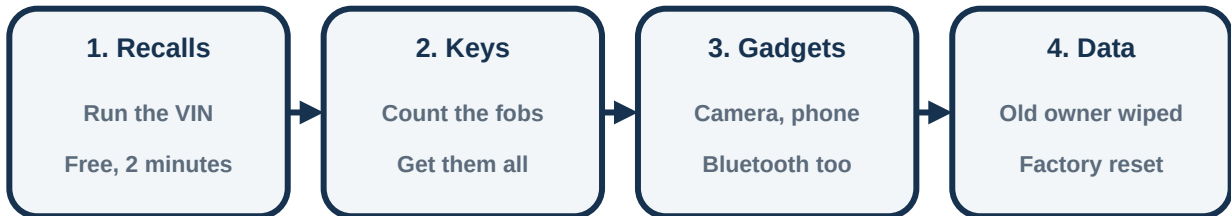


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

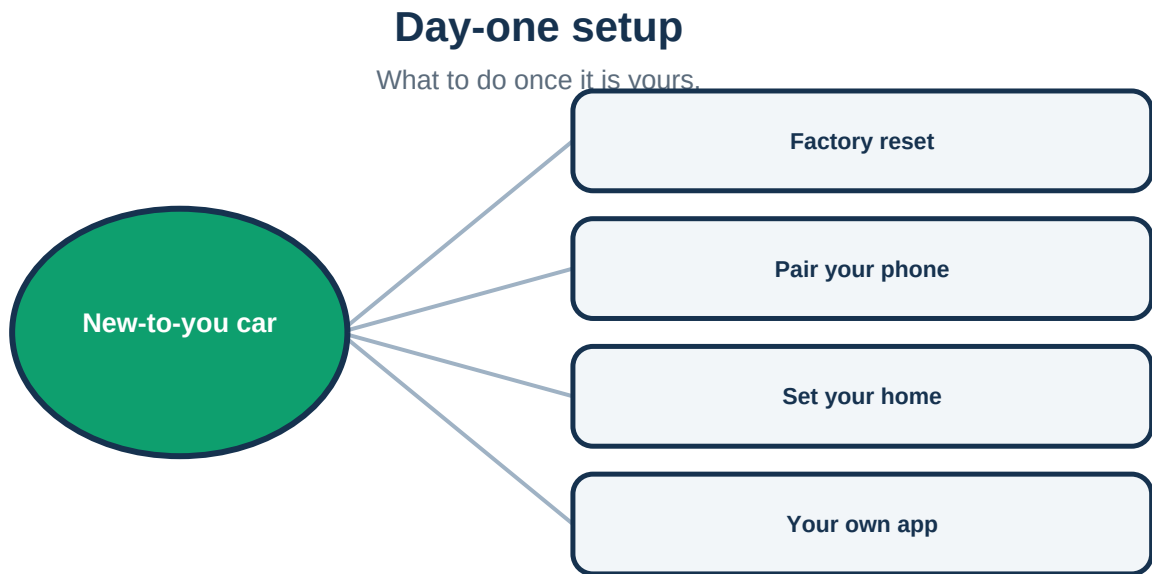


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

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

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

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.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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