BILL'S HOME TECH

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Can You Trust What AI Tells You? How to Double-Check

AI sounds confident even when it's wrong — here's exactly when and how to check it

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What's Inside

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

The 60-Second Version 3

The Short Version 3

Why AI Gets Things Wrong 4

The Stakes Decide How Hard to Check 5

Five Easy Ways to Double-Check 5

The Phone-Number Trap 6

Health Questions — Help, Not a Diagnosis 7

Money and Legal Questions 7

Recent News and Current Facts 8

Spotting a Likely-Wrong Answer 9

Make the AI Help You Check 9

Keeping Perspective — Don't Over-Worry 10

When to Call Bill 10

Everyday Cheat Sheet 12

A Note From Bill 13

Your Visit — and My Promise 14

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

AI helpers sound confident even when they're wrong — they don't lie, they just can't always tell the difference, so a little double-checking keeps AI a help instead of a hazard. Let the stakes decide how hard to check: relax for recipes, ideas, and explanations; verify anything involving money, health, deadlines, or legal rights. To check, ask the AI "where does this come from?", do a normal web search, or go to the official source.

The biggest trap is phone numbers — never call a company number an AI gives you; get it from your card or the company's own site. Treat health answers as questions for your doctor, not a diagnosis. Don't over-worry — most of what you ask is safe to use as-is.

- Trust AI for ideas; verify money, health, and deadlines.
- Never trust a phone number from a chatbot — use the official source.
- Ask "where's this from?" and honor any flicker of doubt.

1 The Short Version

AI helpers like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot are remarkably useful, and they sound confident and authoritative. But here is the one thing everyone needs to know: they are sometimes wrong, and they are wrong in the same calm, certain voice they use when they are right. They do not mean to mislead you — they genuinely cannot always tell the difference — which is exactly why a little double-checking keeps AI a help instead of a hazard.

This guide teaches you, in plain terms, when to trust AI, when to check it, and exactly how to check. The habit is simple and quick, and once you have it, you can enjoy everything AI offers without the worry. You do not need to be suspicious of everything — you need to know which few things are worth confirming.

- AI can be confidently, convincingly wrong — it is not lying, it just doesn't always know.
- How hard you check depends on the stakes: low for trivia, high for money or health.
- Checking is quick: confirm with a trusted source, or ask the AI to show its work.
- The riskiest thing to trust blindly is a phone number, a price, or a health claim.

TIP

A one-line rule covers almost everything: trust AI for ideas and explanations, verify it for anything that costs you money, affects your health, or has a deadline. Low stakes, relax; high stakes, check.

2 Why AI Gets Things Wrong

It helps to understand, just a little, why this happens — because once you do, the mistakes stop feeling mysterious and start feeling predictable. An AI chat helper is, underneath, a very sophisticated system for predicting what words should come next, based on enormous amounts of text it has read. It is astonishingly good at sounding right. But sounding right and being right are not the same thing.

So when it does not actually know an answer, it does not go quiet or say "I'm not sure." It produces the most plausible-sounding words — which can be a made-up fact, a fake quotation, or a phone number that looks real but is not. People in the field call these "hallucinations." The word is odd, but the lesson is simple: a confident answer is not the same as a correct one.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is not a flaw that will be fully fixed by being careful which tool you pick — ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot all do it. It is the nature of the technology for now, so the habit of checking is the real protection, not choosing a "better" one.

3 The Stakes Decide How Hard to Check

You do not need to fact-check everything — that would be exhausting and unnecessary. The sensible approach is to let the stakes decide. Ask yourself: if this answer were wrong, what would it cost me? The bigger the answer, the more you check.

If the answer is about…	Checking effort
A recipe, a word, a fun fact, an idea	Relax — a wrong answer costs nothing
How to do something on your computer	Light — try it; if the step isn't there, ask again
A business's hours or phone number	Confirm on the official source before relying on it
Money, taxes, legal rights, a deadline	Verify with a trusted professional or official site
Health, medication, dosage	Always confirm with your doctor or pharmacist

TIP

Keep this little table in mind and the whole question of "can I trust it?" becomes easy. Most of what you ask AI lives in the top rows, where you can simply relax and enjoy the help.

4 Five Easy Ways to Double-Check

Checking an AI answer does not require any special skill. Here are five plain methods, from quickest to most thorough. You will usually only need the first one or two.

1. Ask the AI itself: "Are you sure? Where does this information come from?" It will often flag its own uncertainty.

2. Do a normal web search for the same fact and see if trustworthy sites agree.
3. Go to the official source — the company's real website, the government's.gov page, your bank's own app.
4. Ask a second AI the same question; if they disagree, you've found something to check.
5. For anything serious, ask a real person: your doctor, pharmacist, accountant, or a trusted family member.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Asking "where does this come from?" is surprisingly powerful. A well-behaved AI will often admit "I don't have a specific source" — which is your cue to treat the answer as a guess, not a fact.

5 The Phone-Number Trap

This deserves its own chapter because it is where AI mistakes turn into real money lost. If you ask an AI for the customer-service number of a company — your bank, an airline, a tech company — it may give you a number that looks completely legitimate and is entirely wrong. Worse, scammers deliberately plant fake "support" numbers online, and an AI can repeat one without knowing.

1. Never call a phone number an AI gives you for a company without confirming it.
2. Get the real number from the back of your card, a paper bill, or the company's official website that you typed in yourself.
3. Be especially wary if the AI's number connects you to someone who asks for passwords, codes, or remote access.
4. When in doubt, don't call the AI's number at all — go straight to the official source.

> **WATCH OUT**
> A fake support number is one of the most common and costly scams aimed at older adults. The person who answers sounds helpful and professional, then talks you into sharing codes or installing software. The protection is simple and absolute: only ever use a company number you got from the company itself.

6 Health Questions — Help, Not a Diagnosis

AI can be a genuinely useful health companion — explaining a term the doctor used, suggesting questions to ask, describing in plain words what a condition generally involves. Used that way, it makes you a better-informed patient. But it is not a doctor, it does not know your body or your history, and it can be dangerously wrong about specifics.

- Good use: "What questions should I ask about this new prescription?"
- Good use: "Explain, simply, what my doctor meant by 'A1C.'"
- Risky use: "Do I have [condition]?" or "What dose should I take?" — these need a professional.
- Never use AI to decide whether to stop, start, or change a medication.

WATCH OUT

Treat AI health answers as background reading to bring to your doctor or pharmacist, never as a substitute for them. The right role for AI is to help you ask better questions and understand the answers — the decisions stay with the professionals who know you.

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.

7 Money and Legal Questions

The same spirit applies to money and legal matters. AI is a fine way to understand the shape of a topic — the difference between two kinds of accounts, what a legal term means, how a process generally works. It is not a place to get advice you act on with real money or real stakes, because it may be out of date, may not know your situation, and can simply be wrong.

- Good use: "Explain the difference between a will and a trust in plain terms."
- Good use: "What does 'required minimum distribution' mean?"
- Verify-first use: specific tax figures, deadlines, and rules — these change and must be confirmed.
- Professional use: anything you'll actually sign, file, or move money over — confirm with a real advisor.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Tax rules, benefit amounts, and legal requirements change year to year, and AI may be working from older information. For anything with a dollar figure or a deadline attached, treat the AI answer as a draft to confirm, never as final.

8 Recent News and Current Facts

Another soft spot: anything that changed recently. Some AI tools only know information up to a certain date and are unaware of anything after it; others can search the web but may still grab an outdated page. So for current prices, who holds an office, store hours, or this week's news, be extra willing to check.

- Ask "is this up to date?" and watch for the AI admitting its information has a cutoff.
- For anything time-sensitive, confirm with a normal web search or the official source.
- Prices, availability, and schedules change constantly — never assume an AI's figure is current.

> **TIP**
>
> If you need something genuinely current, a tool tied to live web search (like Gemini, or an AI with a "search" button) is a better bet than one working from memory — but even then, confirm the specifics.

9 Spotting a Likely-Wrong Answer

With a little practice you develop a feel for answers that deserve a second look. These are the tell-tale signs that an AI answer might be one of its confident mistakes.

- It gives a very specific fact — an exact date, a precise number, a named source — with no hedging.
- It answers a question it couldn't possibly know about your personal situation.
- It contradicts something you already know to be true.
- It provides a quote, a study, or a statistic that you can't easily find anywhere else.
- The answer is exactly what you hoped to hear — wishful answers deserve extra scrutiny.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Trust your instincts. If an answer gives you even a flicker of "really?", that flicker is worth honoring with a quick check. Your common sense is still the best fact-checker you own.

10 Make the AI Help You Check

Pleasingly, you can turn the AI into a partner in checking its own work. A few well-chosen follow-up questions often surface the uncertainty on their own.

- "How confident are you in that answer?"
- "Is there anything about this you're not sure of?"
- "What would I need to confirm before relying on this?"
- "Give me the official source I should check this against."

> **TIP**
>
> Asking "what should I confirm before relying on this?" is a lovely habit. It gets you a short checklist of the exact things worth verifying, straight from the tool — so you check the right things, not everything.

11 Keeping Perspective — Don't Over-Worry

With all this talk of checking, it would be easy to come away nervous. Don't be. The vast majority of what people ask AI — recipes, explanations, drafts, ideas, everyday how-to — is perfectly safe to use as-is, and checking is only for the handful of things that truly matter. AI is a wonderful helper; the checking habit simply keeps it a safe one.

> *Trust AI for ideas and explanations. Verify it for money, health, and anything with a deadline. That one rule is nearly the whole of it.*

GOOD TO KNOW

The goal is confidence, not suspicion. A person who knows exactly which few things to double-check can relax completely about everything else — and get more genuine value from AI than someone who either trusts it blindly or fears it entirely.

12 When to Call Bill

Building the double-checking habit is mostly about a few simple reflexes, and this guide lays them all out. But it helps to practice on your own screen, with real questions, and to have someone show you how to find a company's genuine phone number or confirm a fact properly — especially if an AI answer has already led you somewhere that felt off.

I come to you, sit beside you while you ask real questions, and show you exactly how to check the ones that matter on your own device. If an AI — or a call, email, or pop-up claiming to be support — has given you a number or an instruction you're unsure about, bring it to me before you act on it. I'll tell you plainly whether it's trustworthy, with no judgment and no rush.

- An AI gave you a phone number, price, or instruction and you're not sure it's real.
- You want the double-checking habit shown and practiced on your own questions.
- A health, money, or legal answer needs a sanity check before you act on it.
- You've had a suspicious call or message and want to know if it's a scam.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Trust AI for ideas; verify it for money, health, and deadlines.

I want to...	Do this...
Decide if I should check	Low stakes (recipe, idea) relax; money/health/deadline verify
Double-check an answer	Ask "where's this from?", do a web search, or check the official source
Find a real phone number	Use the back of your card or the company's own site — never the AI's number
Handle a health answer	Treat it as questions for your doctor, never as a diagnosis or dose
Spot a likely-wrong answer	Oddly specific facts, uncheckable quotes, or exactly what you hoped to hear
Make AI help me check	Ask "what should I confirm before relying on this?"
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.

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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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