BILL'S HOME TECH

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Condo & HOA Rules on Cameras, Doorbells & Satellite Dishes

Cameras, Doorbells & Satellite Dishes What the board can and cannot restrict — and how to ask so the answer is yes

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 Whole Plan on One Page

If you read only one page, read this. Here is the whole idea as a short checklist.

A camera, a video doorbell, or a small satellite dish can all be perfectly fine in a condo or a rental — or against the rules — and the deciding factor is almost always one thing: where you put it. On your own door or your own balcony, you have more freedom. On a shared hallway wall or the roof, you usually do not. This guide sorts out which is which, in plain words.

1. Read your lease and, in a condo, the HOA's rules — the CC&Rs.
2. Decide exactly where the device would go, and whose space that is.
3. Ask the board or landlord in writing before you mount anything outside your door.
4. Keep any yes you get, in writing, in a folder.
5. Aim cameras at your own entry only, never a neighbor's door.
6. Mount with no drilling into shared walls or the building's structure.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> There is a federal rule, the FCC's OTARD rule, that generally protects a small dish or a TV antenna in a space that is yours alone to use. It does not cover shared areas. More on that later in plain words.

The rest of this guide walks each piece slowly. Take it one page at a time. None of it requires you to become a lawyer — it just asks you to look before you mount, and ask before you assume.

WHAT THESE RULES ARE

2 Leases, CC&Rs, and the HOA Board

When you rent, the rules that bind you live in your lease — the signed agreement with your landlord. When you own or rent a condo, there is a second rulebook: the community's governing documents, often called the CC&Rs, which stands for Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions. A board of residents, the HOA, enforces them. Both can have a say about what goes on your door, your balcony, and the outside of the building.

- The lease: your agreement with the landlord, binding on you as a renter.
- The CC&Rs: the condo or community rulebook, binding on owners and usually on their tenants too.
- The HOA board: the elected residents who interpret and enforce the CC&Rs.
- Management: a company the board may hire to handle day-to-day requests.

If you rent a condo, you may answer to both your landlord and the HOA. That sounds like a tangle, but the practical move is simple: ask whoever you pay rent to, and let them route the question to the board if needed.

WATCH OUT

You do not have to read every page of the CC&Rs. Use the search function in the PDF, or skim the table of contents, for words like 'antenna,' 'satellite,' 'camera,' 'surveillance,' and 'exterior.'

WHY IT MATTERS

3 Why a Little Reading Saves a Lot of Trouble

It is tempting to stick up a doorbell camera and not think twice. For most people, on their own door, that is fine. But a community can enforce reasonable rules, and a device in the wrong spot can bring a warning letter, a fine, or a request to take it down — sometimes after you have already drilled a hole. A few minutes of reading up front avoids all of that.

There is also the neighbor side. A camera that happens to stare at the unit across the hall, or a dish bolted to a shared wall, can sour a relationship with the people you live beside for years. Getting it right is partly about rules and partly about being a good neighbor.

GOOD TO KNOW

Doing it properly also protects you. If you have written permission and your camera only sees your own doorway, you are on firm ground if anyone ever questions it.

None of this should scare you off. The goal of this guide is to let you have the security and the TV you want, placed in a way that keeps you out of trouble and on good terms with everyone around you.

WHO SETS THE RULES

4 Board, Landlord, or Management — Who to Ask

People often freeze because they are not sure who to even ask. It depends on your situation, and it helps to picture it as a short chain. In a plain rental, it is your landlord. In a condo you own, it is the HOA board, usually through a management company. In a condo you rent, it can be both.

- Renting an apartment: ask the landlord or the property manager.
- Own a condo: ask the HOA board or the management company it hired.
- Rent a condo: ask your landlord first; they may need the board's sign-off.
- Senior or assisted-living community: ask the community's management office.

If you truly are not sure, start with whoever you hand your rent or dues to. They will either answer or point you to the right desk. There is no wrong door to knock on first.

> **TIP**
>
> Get the right email address up front. A request sent to the correct person, in writing, is worth ten conversations in the parking lot that no one remembers later.

FIND THE TECH PARTS

5 Reading Your Lease and CC&Rs

You do not need to read these documents cover to cover. You need to find the handful of paragraphs that touch on what you want to install. Both the lease and the CC&Rs are usually a PDF you can open on a phone or computer, and both can be searched.

1. Open the document on a computer or phone where you can search the text.
2. Search for: antenna, satellite, dish, camera, surveillance, exterior, alteration, and balcony.
3. Read the few paragraphs each word lands in, slowly.
4. Note anything about getting written approval first, or about size, color, or placement.

5. If a paper-only copy is all you have, check the table of contents for an 'Architectural' or 'Alterations' section.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Many communities have a separate, shorter 'rules and regulations' sheet on top of the full CC&Rs. That sheet is often where the day-to-day items like doorbell cameras actually appear.

If the language is dense or you cannot find anything, that is not a dead end. It simply means your next step is to ask the board or landlord directly, which is the surest way to a clear answer anyway.

THE THREE ZONES

6 Your Door, Your Space, and Shared Areas

The single most useful idea in this whole guide is that your home has three kinds of space, and the rules change at each boundary. Learn these three and most questions answer themselves.

- Your own entry: your unit's door and the frame around it — usually the most freedom, within reason.
- Your exclusive-use area: a balcony, patio, or small yard that only you may use — strong protections for a dish or antenna.
- Common areas: shared hallways, lobbies, stairwells, the roof, exterior walls — the community controls these.
- The structure itself: the building's walls, roof, and railings — you generally cannot drill or alter them.

A balcony that only your unit can step onto is 'exclusive use' even though you may not own the air above it. That distinction matters a great deal for satellite dishes and antennas, as the next pages explain.

> **TIP**
> When you ask yourself 'am I allowed to put this here,' first answer 'whose space is this.' That one question steers you to the right rule nearly every time.

THE OTARD RULE

7 The Federal Rule That Protects a Small Dish

There is a federal rule, written by the FCC, that many renters and condo owners have never heard of. Its nickname is OTARD, which stands for Over-the-Air Reception Devices. In plain words, it says that a homeowners association or a landlord generally cannot flatly ban you from putting up a small satellite dish or a TV antenna in a space that is yours alone to use.

It exists because, long ago, many communities had blanket bans on anything on the outside of a building, and that left people with no way to receive television or satellite service. The rule carved out a protected right for reasonably small devices in your own space.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> OTARD is a national rule, so it applies broadly, but the details of how it plays out can still depend on your exact living situation. Treat it as a strong starting point, not the last word on your particular wall.

The next two pages break down the two halves that matter most: what OTARD covers, and what it clearly does not. Both halves are equally important to know.

OTARD COVERS

8 What the Rule Protects

OTARD protects a specific, limited list of devices in a specific kind of place. Knowing the exact boundaries keeps you confident and keeps you from overreaching.

- A satellite dish one meter or smaller across — the size of a typical home TV or internet dish.
- An antenna used to receive local over-the-air television broadcasts.
- Certain small antennas for fixed wireless internet service.
- Placement in your 'exclusive-use' area: your own balcony, patio, deck, or yard.

Within that space, a board generally cannot ban the device outright, cannot require you to get permission that is really a disguised ban, and cannot charge a fee that

makes it pointless. The protection is for your own private outdoor space, not the whole building.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> One meter is roughly the width of a doorway. Ordinary home satellite dishes fall well under that size, so the typical renter's dish is the kind the rule was written to protect.

OTARD DOES NOT COVER

9 Where the Rule Stops

Just as important is knowing where OTARD gives you nothing. Assuming it protects more than it does is how people get into trouble. The rule is about your own exclusive space, and it stops at the edge of it.

- Common areas: shared roofs, exterior walls, hallways, and lobbies are not covered.
- The building's structure: you cannot drill into or alter the building to mount a device.
- Dishes larger than one meter, which fall outside the protected size.
- Transmitting devices in general — the rule is mainly about receiving signals, not broadcasting them.

So a dish clamped to a free-standing pole or railing mount on your own balcony is very different from one bolted through a shared exterior wall. The first leans on the rule; the second does not, and will likely need the board's blessing or be refused.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> A community can still enforce genuine safety rules even in your own space — for example, that a dish must be secured so it cannot fall. Safety rules are allowed; outright bans in your exclusive space generally are not.

DISHES ON A BALCONY

10 Putting a Satellite Dish in Your Own Space

If you want satellite TV or internet and you have a balcony, patio, or small yard that only your unit uses, you are in the strongest position. The practical trick is to mount the dish without touching anything shared — which is both good manners and keeps you clearly inside the rule.

1. Choose a mount that stands on its own: a weighted base, a non-penetrating pole, or a clamp on your own railing.
2. Keep the dish within your exclusive-use area and under the one-meter size.
3. Avoid drilling into the building's wall, roof, or any shared surface.
4. Aim it for a clear line of sight to the sky, not at a neighbor's window.
5. Secure it well so wind cannot move it — this also satisfies safety rules.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A professional installer can often use a free-standing or clamp mount instead of drilling. Ask for a 'non-penetrating mount' when you book the install — it is a renter's best friend.

Even where the rule is on your side, a short, friendly heads-up to the board or landlord costs nothing and prevents a surprised letter later. Lead with courtesy, keep the rule in your back pocket.

TV ANTENNAS

11 An Antenna for Free Local Channels

Many people forget that local channels still broadcast free over the air, and a modern antenna can pull them in with no monthly bill at all. For a renter who does not want the building's cable, this pairs beautifully with a streaming device. The same OTARD protections generally apply to a reception antenna in your exclusive-use space.

- Small, flat indoor antennas sit in a window and need no outside mounting at all.
- An outdoor antenna in your own exclusive space falls under the same protection as a dish.
- No subscription is needed for the local channels an antenna receives.

- Pair it with a streaming stick for everything else, and you may skip the building's cable entirely.

An indoor antenna is the simplest renter choice by far: it touches nothing shared, needs no approval, and comes down in a second at move-out. Try that before anything that goes outside.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> How many channels an antenna pulls in depends on how far you are from the broadcast towers and what is between you and them. A window facing the towers, up high, tends to do best.

DOORBELL CAMERAS

12 A Video Doorbell on Your Own Door

A video doorbell is one of the most popular additions a renter makes, and on your own door it is often allowed. The key words are 'your own door.' A camera at your private entry, seeing who knocks, is a very different thing from one surveying a shared hallway full of neighbors.

For renters, the no-wiring, no-drilling battery doorbells are ideal — brands like Ring, Google Nest, Wyze, eufy, and Blink all make battery models. Many mount with an adhesive plate or a clamp, so nothing is screwed into the frame. That keeps you renter-safe and keeps the device easy to remove.

- A battery doorbell needs no existing doorbell wiring.
- Adhesive or clamp mounts avoid holes in the frame.
- On your own private door, it is often permitted outright.
- Always confirm with the lease or board if your door opens onto a shared hallway.

> **TIP**
>
> If your door opens into an interior shared hallway, read the rules twice before mounting. Hallway-facing cameras are the ones most likely to draw an objection.

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.

HALLWAY TROUBLE

13 Why a Hallway-Facing Camera Causes Problems

The most common complaint a board hears is about a doorbell or camera that captures a shared hallway — and with it, the comings and goings of everyone else on the floor. Even when you only meant to watch your own door, a wide lens can sweep in your neighbors' doorways, and that is what turns a reasonable device into a dispute.

A hallway, a shared landing, or a lobby is common area. The community controls what points at it. A camera there can run afoul of both the CC&Rs and, in some places, privacy expectations, because neighbors did not consent to being recorded every time they pass.

WATCH OUT

Recording a shared hallway or a neighbor's door can break the community's rules and, in some places, local privacy law. Keep the view on your own entry, and you avoid the whole problem.

If your only door faces a shared hallway, you are not out of luck. You can often narrow the camera's view, use privacy zones in the app, or ask the board about an acceptable arrangement. The point is to ask, not to assume.

AIM IT RIGHT

14 Pointing a Camera at Your Own Entry

Good aiming is the difference between a device that protects you and one that annoys everyone. The goal is simple: see what approaches your own door, and as little else as possible. Most camera apps help you do this.

1. Mount the camera so your doorway and the space right in front of it fill the picture.
2. Angle it downward, toward your own threshold, not straight across a hallway.
3. In the app, look for 'privacy zones' or 'activity zones' and black out any neighbor's door in view.
4. Review the live picture and adjust until a neighbor passing by is barely in frame.
5. Turn off, or narrow, motion alerts that trigger on hallway foot traffic.

WATCH OUT

Privacy zones are a feature in many camera apps that let you paint over part of the picture so it is never recorded. Use one to cover a neighbor's doorway if your angle cannot avoid it.

A well-aimed camera is quieter in every sense: fewer nuisance alerts for you, and no feeling of being watched for your neighbors. It is the single kindest thing you can do for the people you share a floor with.

OUTDOOR CAMERAS

15 Security Cameras Outside Your Unit

Beyond the doorbell, some renters want a small camera watching a balcony, a patio door, or a window. The same zone logic applies: a camera in your own exclusive-use space, aimed at your own space, stands on much firmer ground than one bolted to a shared wall watching the parking lot.

- Battery cameras can sit on a shelf, stick to a wall with an adhesive mount, or clip to a magnetic base — no drilling.
- Indoor cameras aimed out your own window need only an outlet and touch nothing shared.
- Keep the field of view inside your own property line as much as possible.

- A camera surveying shared grounds or a neighbor's patio is the board's call, not yours.

For a renter, the no-drill battery or stick-on camera is almost always the right pick. It comes down cleanly, moves with you, and never leaves a mark on a surface you will answer for at move-out.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Some cameras advertised as 'wire-free' still need a nearby outlet to recharge every so often. Plan where the cable will reach before you pick a spot.

INDOOR CAMERAS

16 Cameras Inside Your Own Home

Inside your own four walls, you have far more freedom — this is your private space. People use indoor cameras to check on a pet, keep an eye on a doorway while away, or feel safer living alone. The rules here are less about the HOA and more about the people who share or visit your home.

Be thoughtful about where an indoor camera points. A camera in a shared living room is one thing; one in a bedroom or bathroom is another, especially if you have a roommate, a caregiver, or regular guests. Common courtesy, and in some places the law, expects you not to secretly record people in private moments.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Never place a hidden camera where someone has a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a bathroom or a guest's bedroom. That can cross a serious legal line in many places.

- Point indoor cameras at entries and shared rooms, not private spaces.
- Tell roommates and regular caregivers that a camera is present.
- Review the app's setting to turn the camera off when you are home, if you prefer.

PRIVACY LAW BASICS

17 What to Know About Recording — In General

Privacy law around home cameras varies a great deal from place to place, so this guide stays general on purpose. The safe path is to understand the shape of the concerns rather than any one local rule, and to check your own state and lease for specifics. The two recurring themes are video of people who did not consent, and audio recording.

- Video: aiming at common areas or into a neighbor's home raises the most objections.
- Audio: recording conversations has its own, often stricter, rules in many places.
- Consent: some places require that people know they may be recorded.
- Your own private space, recording only yourself and invited guests, raises the fewest concerns.

Because this is genuinely a check-your-state matter, the right move when you are unsure is to ask. Your lease, the HOA board, and your state's consumer or attorney-general resources can all steer you straight.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This is not legal advice, and it is not meant to worry you. For the ordinary case — a doorbell watching your own door — you are very likely fine. The cautions matter most when a camera reaches beyond your own space.

TWO-WAY AUDIO

18 The Microphone Deserves a Second Thought

Most video doorbells and cameras include a microphone and a speaker, so you can hear and talk to whoever is at the door. It is a genuinely useful feature. But audio recording is treated more strictly than video in many places, and a doorbell microphone can pick up conversations well beyond your doorstep.

The practical answer is not to fear the feature but to know you can control it. Camera apps almost always let you turn the microphone off, or turn off audio recording while keeping video. If your device sits anywhere it might overhear a shared hallway or a

neighbor's patio, consider doing exactly that.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Recording audio can carry stricter rules than video where you live. If in doubt, turn audio recording off in the app and keep only the video — the camera still does its main job.

- Look in the camera app for an audio or microphone setting.
- You can usually keep the live two-way talk while turning off audio recording.
- When unsure about a shared-space microphone, off is the safe choice.

ASK IN WRITING

19 Making the Request the Right Way

For anything that goes outside your door, the surest path to peace of mind is a short, polite written request before you install. Writing it down does two things: it gets you a clear answer, and it leaves a record you can point to if anyone ever questions the device later. A friendly email is plenty.

1. Address it to the right person — the landlord, the board, or the management office.
2. Say exactly what you want to install and exactly where it would go.
3. Note that it needs no drilling into shared surfaces and will be removed cleanly at move-out.
4. Mention it will be aimed only at your own door or space.
5. Ask them to reply in writing with their approval or any conditions.
6. Save their reply in a folder with your lease.

> **TIP**
>
> Keep it short and warm. 'I'd like to add a battery doorbell on my own door, mounted with adhesive, aimed only at my entry — is that alright?' gets a faster yes than a long formal letter.

Most of the time the answer is a simple yes. Asking first costs you a few minutes and spares you the far worse experience of being told to take something down after the fact.

A GOOD REQUEST

20 What to Put in the Note

A request that answers the board's likely worries before they ask gets approved faster. Boards worry about three things: damage to the building, fairness to neighbors, and safety. Address all three in a sentence or two each and you make it easy to say yes.

- Damage: 'mounted with adhesive or a clamp, no holes in any shared surface, removed cleanly at move-out.'
- Neighbors: 'aimed only at my own door, with a privacy zone over any shared area.'
- Safety: 'secured so it cannot come loose or fall.'
- The device: name the brand and model so they can picture its size.
- A photo or sketch of exactly where it would sit, if you can.

You are not begging for a favor; you are making a reasonable request and showing you have thought it through. That tone — considerate and specific — is what tends to carry the day with a volunteer board.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Boards are usually your own neighbors, giving their time for free. A request that is clearly considerate of the whole community is the kind they are glad to approve.

IF THEY SAY NO

21 When the Answer Is No

Sometimes the answer comes back no, or yes with conditions you did not expect. This is not the end of the road, and it is rarely personal. The first step is always to understand why, because the reason points to the fix.

- If it is about damage: offer a no-drill, adhesive, or free-standing mount instead.
- If it is about the neighbors' view: offer to narrow the aim and add privacy zones.
- If it is about a shared wall: move the device into your own exclusive space.
- If it is a dish or antenna in your own exclusive space: the OTARD rule may protect you, and you can raise that politely.

For a dish or antenna specifically, if a community flatly bans one from your own exclusive-use space, that is the situation OTARD was written for. The FCC accepts complaints when a rule crosses the line. Raise it calmly and in writing first; most disputes settle once the rule is pointed out.

WATCH OUT

Do not install first and argue later. Putting it up against a clear no, then fighting about it, is the fastest way to a fine. Settle the question before you mount anything.

WHAT THEY CAN ENFORCE

22 The Reasonable Rules a Board May Keep

Even with federal protections and your own good sense, a community can set reasonable limits. Knowing which rules are fair helps you tell a legitimate condition from an overreach, and keeps your requests realistic.

- Safety: that a device be installed so it cannot fall or injure anyone.
- Size and type: reasonable limits, within the law, on how large or obtrusive a device is.
- Placement: steering installations to your own space and away from shared structure.
- Appearance: a preference for discreet color or tidy cabling, where reasonable.
- Professional install: sometimes required for anything that could affect the roof or walls.

These are the kinds of conditions that are normal and worth accepting. They keep the whole building safe and looking its best, which protects your own home's value and comfort too.

GOOD TO KNOW

A reasonable safety or appearance condition is very different from an outright ban in your own space. The first is usually allowed; the second, for a protected dish or antenna, often is not.

RENT OR OWN

23 Renting a Condo vs. Owning One

Your relationship to the rules shifts depending on whether you own your condo or rent it. Both answer to the HOA, but the renter has a landlord in between, and that changes who you ask and who is ultimately responsible.

- Own the condo: you deal with the HOA board and management directly.
- Rent the condo: your lease binds you, and the landlord is responsible to the HOA for your unit.
- Either way, the CC&Rs still govern the outside of the building and the common areas.
- A renter should loop in the landlord even when the HOA is the ultimate authority.

As a renter, the cleanest path is to ask your landlord, who can speak to the board on your behalf and who signed the agreement that holds your unit to the rules. It keeps you out of any crossfire between the two.

WATCH OUT

If you rent, ask your landlord for the relevant pages of the CC&Rs up front. They should have them, and it saves you from guessing at rules you were never handed.

SENIOR LIVING

24 Rules in Senior and Assisted-Living Communities

Independent-living, assisted-living, and senior apartment communities often have their own house rules on top of a standard lease, and they tend to care a lot about shared hallways and entries, since so much of the building is communal. The good news is that staff are usually glad to help you set up something that keeps you safe and connected.

- Ask the community's office before adding a camera or doorbell to a shared-hallway door.

- Indoor devices in your own apartment are usually your own business, within reason.
- A small window antenna or a streaming device rarely raises any issue at all.
- Staff may offer an approved way to add a doorbell camera that fits the building's rules.

For a family member helping a parent settle in, a quick conversation with the office answers most questions in one go. Lead with what you are trying to achieve — seeing who is at the door, say — and let them suggest the approved way to do it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Many communities are used to these requests and have a simple, approved approach ready. You may not have to figure it out alone at all — just ask.

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NO-DRILL MOUNTING

25

Installing Without a Single Hole

Half of staying inside the rules is choosing hardware that never damages anything. The renter-safe category is built around this: devices that clip, stick, clamp, or stand on their own. When nothing is drilled and nothing is altered, most objections disappear before they are raised.

- Adhesive mounting plates hold light devices like battery doorbells and small sensors.
- Clamp mounts grip a railing or a frame edge with no holes.
- Free-standing and weighted bases let a dish or camera stand without touching a wall.
- Magnetic bases let a small camera sit on, and lift off, a metal surface.

These mounts are not just about rules; they are about your deposit and your move-out day. A device that lifts off cleanly leaves no patching, no repainting, and no

awkward conversation when you hand back the keys.

WATCH OUT

Adhesive strips hold light items only. They are not rated for anything heavy, and a device that falls can hurt someone below a balcony. Match the mount to the weight, and secure anything outside well.

HANDS OFF THE STRUCTURE

26

The Shared Walls You Cannot Touch

One line is worth drawing in bold: the building's structure is not yours to alter. Exterior walls, the roof, shared railings, and common hallways belong to everyone, and drilling into them is where renters and condo owners most often cross a line — sometimes without realizing it.

Even the OTARD rule, which is generous about your own exclusive space, does not let you drill the building's structure to mount a dish. The protection is for placing a device in your space, not for boring holes into shared surfaces to anchor it.

WATCH OUT

Drilling into a shared exterior wall or the roof to mount anything is almost always a problem, and it can damage the building's weatherproofing. Use a free-standing or clamp mount in your own space instead.

- Shared exterior walls: off limits for drilling.
- The roof: off limits, and a leak risk.
- Shared railings: a clamp may be fine, a drilled bolt usually is not — ask.
- Common hallways and lobbies: the community's to control, not yours.

RECORDING NOTICES

27 Signs and Letting People Know

In some places, letting people know a camera is present is either required or simply good practice. A small, visible camera at a door often serves as its own notice, but a short sign can add a layer of courtesy and, where local rules call for it, compliance.

- A visible doorbell camera signals its own presence to anyone who approaches.
- A small 'recording in progress' notice is a courteous touch, and in some places expected.
- Tell roommates, regular caregivers, and frequent guests about indoor cameras.
- Check your lease or local rules to see whether any notice is actually required.

The spirit here is openness. A camera you are comfortable telling people about is almost always one placed correctly. If the idea of a sign makes you uneasy, that can be a hint the device is seeing more than it should.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Hidden cameras are what cause legal and neighborly trouble. A camera in plain sight, watching your own door, is the kind that raises no eyebrows at all.

TALK TO NEIGHBORS

28 A Quiet Word Before You Mount

Rules and laws aside, the people most affected by your doorbell or camera are the neighbors right beside you. A two-minute, friendly heads-up before you install turns a potential complaint into a non-event. It also tends to get you goodwill if you ever need a favor in return.

You do not need their permission for a camera on your own door, but telling them what it does and does not see — 'it just watches my own doorway, not the hall' — removes the suspicion that drives most disputes. People object far less to what they understand.

TIP

If a neighbor is uneasy, offer to show them the camera's actual view on your phone. Seeing that it only covers your own threshold settles nearly every worry on the spot.

Good fences, the old saying goes, make good neighbors. A well-aimed camera and an open word beforehand are the modern version. They let you have your security without costing you a friendship down the hall.

FINES AND WARNINGS

29 Avoiding a Letter From the Board

Communities enforce their rules with warnings and, sometimes, fines. These almost always follow a pattern: a device appears, a neighbor or an inspection notices it, and a letter goes out. Every step of this guide is aimed at never starting that chain in the first place.

- Ask and get a yes in writing before anything goes outside your door.
- Keep devices in your own space and aimed at your own door.
- Use no-drill mounts so there is never damage to point to.
- Respond promptly and politely to any letter rather than ignoring it.

If a letter does arrive, read it calmly and reply. Most boards would far rather reach an arrangement than levy a fine, and a prompt, cooperative response usually resolves things. Ignoring a warning is what lets a small matter grow.

GOOD TO KNOW

A fine for an unapproved exterior device is avoidable in nearly every case simply by asking first. The written yes in your folder is the cheapest insurance there is.

WORRIES: CAMERAS

30 Common Worries About Cameras, Answered

A few questions come up again and again about cameras in a shared building. Here are plain answers to the ones people ask most.

- Can I put a doorbell on my own door? Usually yes, especially a no-drill one aimed at your own entry — check the rules if it faces a shared hall.
- Can my camera watch the hallway? Generally no; that is common area and belongs to the community.
- Do I need to tell neighbors? You do not need permission for your own door, but a friendly heads-up prevents complaints.
- What about audio? You can turn audio recording off in the app, and in shared spaces that is the safe choice.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The pattern behind every answer is the same: your own space and your own door are yours, within reason; shared space belongs to everyone and needs the community's say.

If your situation does not fit neatly into these, that is exactly the kind of thing worth a quick phone call to talk through before you spend a penny or drill a hole.

WORRIES: DISHES

31 Common Worries About Dishes and Antennas, Answered

Satellite dishes and antennas raise their own set of questions, mostly around what the community can stop. Here are the common ones in plain words.

- Can the HOA ban my dish? Not generally, if it is small and in your own exclusive space — that is what OTARD protects.
- Can they ban one on the shared roof? Yes; the roof and other common areas are not covered by the rule.
- Can they make me drill nothing? You should want to — a free-standing mount keeps you both compliant and damage-free.
- What about an antenna for free TV? The same protection generally applies in your own exclusive space; an indoor window antenna is simplest of all.

WATCH OUT

OTARD protects your own exclusive-use space, not shared structure, and does not let you drill the building. Keep both halves in mind and you will stay on solid ground.

When a dish or antenna question gets tangled, the written request is your friend. Put it on paper, cite your own exclusive space, and let the rule do the quiet work of settling it.

KEEP THE PAPER

32 Saving Your Approvals for Move-Out

Whatever you install and whatever permission you get, keep the paper trail. A simple folder — digital or physical — with your lease, the relevant rules, and any written yes from the board or landlord protects you from start to finish, and especially at move-out when deposits are on the line.

1. Save the email or letter approving each device.
2. Keep a photo of each device as installed, showing the no-drill mount.
3. Note what came down and what holes, if any, were patched when you removed it.
4. At move-out, take the devices with you and restore the space as you found it.

TIP

Photograph each mount the day you install it and again the day you remove it. Before-and-after pictures are the clearest proof that you left no damage behind.

This is the same courtesy you would want in return. A clean paper trail and a cleanly restored unit make your move-out smooth and keep your reputation with a landlord or board good for the next place.

HOA-PROVIDED CAMERAS

33 When the Community Has Its Own Cameras

Many buildings have their own cameras in lobbies, garages, and entrances, run by the community rather than any resident. These are generally allowed in common areas, because they watch shared space, not inside anyone's unit. It is worth knowing they exist and roughly how they work.

- Community cameras usually cover entrances, hallways, garages, and lobbies.
- They are the board's or management's responsibility, not yours.
- They should never point inside a resident's unit.
- You can ask management how footage is stored and who can view it.

If a shared-area problem happens — a package theft in the lobby, say — these are the cameras to ask management about, rather than trying to cover common space with your own device. That keeps the responsibility where it belongs.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A community camera in a shared hallway is the board's to run. That is exactly why your own camera does not need to — and should not — try to cover the same shared space.

CUTTING THE CABLE

34 Antennas, Streaming, and the Building's TV

Rules about antennas tie into a happy possibility: you may not need the building's cable at all. Between a small antenna for free local channels and a streaming device over the internet you already pay for, many renters cover all their viewing without the bundled cable they are billed for anyway.

- An indoor antenna pulls in free local broadcast channels with no subscription.
- A streaming stick — Roku, Fire TV, Google TV, Apple TV — handles everything else over your internet.
- Free, ad-supported apps add more at no cost.
- You usually cannot stop the building billing bundled cable, but you owe nothing extra to stream over your own internet.

The antenna is the only part that touches these HOA rules, and an indoor one touches nothing shared at all. So the cord-cutting path for a renter is remarkably rule-friendly: a window antenna and a streaming stick, both of which pack up and move with you.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> There is a fuller guide to streaming past the building's cable. For here, the point is simple: the antenna that makes it possible is protected in your own space and leaves no mark.

A SIMPLE START

35 If You Only Do Three Things

Perhaps the whole topic feels like a lot of rules. It does not have to. If you do nothing else, these three steps keep you safe, out of trouble, and on good terms with everyone around you.

1. Decide exactly where the device would go, and whose space that is — yours or shared.
2. For anything outside your own door, send a short written request and get a yes in writing.
3. Choose a no-drill mount and aim any camera only at your own entry or space.

That is the heart of it. Everything else in this guide — OTARD, privacy zones, neighbor courtesy — simply fills in the details around those three moves. Get them right and the rest tends to take care of itself.

> **TIP**
>
> When in doubt, ask before you mount. A two-line email today beats a take-it-down letter later every single time.

FINISH THE JOB

36 Finish the Job Soon

You now know the shape of it: where a device goes decides who gets to say yes, your own door and your own space give you the most freedom, and a short written request settles almost everything else. The last step is simply to do it — read your rules, pick your spot, send the note, and mount it cleanly.

If any of it feels tangled — if you cannot find the right paragraph in the CC&Rs, or you are unsure whether a balcony counts as your exclusive space, or you want a camera aimed and mounted properly the first time — that is exactly the kind of thing I help neighbors with. There is no such thing as a silly question, and my assistant Sophie can help you book a time.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You do not have to remember all of it. You just have to remember you can call. Friendly, in-home help, and I come to you — (330) 200-8042.

With 30 years of doing this kind of work, I have set up a lot of doorbells and dishes in a lot of buildings, and the quiet secret is always the same: ask first, aim it right, leave no mark. Do that, and you get all the security and none of the trouble.

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…
Know who to ask	Landlord for a rental; HOA board or management for a condo — in writing
Read the rules first	Search the lease and CC&Rs for antenna, camera, exterior, alteration
Put up a doorbell	A no-drill battery doorbell on your own door, aimed at your own entry
Avoid hallway trouble	Keep the camera off shared halls; use a privacy zone over a neighbor's door
Put up a small dish	A free-standing or clamp mount in your own balcony or patio — no drilling
Know the OTARD rule	It generally protects a small dish or antenna in your own exclusive space
Handle the microphone	Turn audio recording off in the app anywhere it could overhear shared space
Keep your approvals	Save the written yes and photos of each no-drill mount for move-out
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Three Zones, Three Rules

Where a thing goes decides who gets to say yes or no.

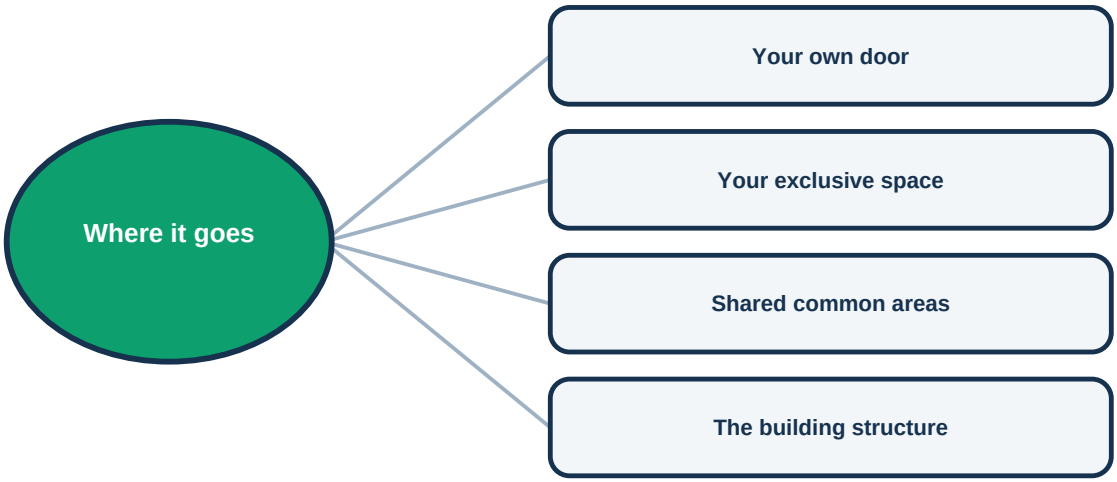


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Before You Mount Anything

Do one box at a time — there is no rush.

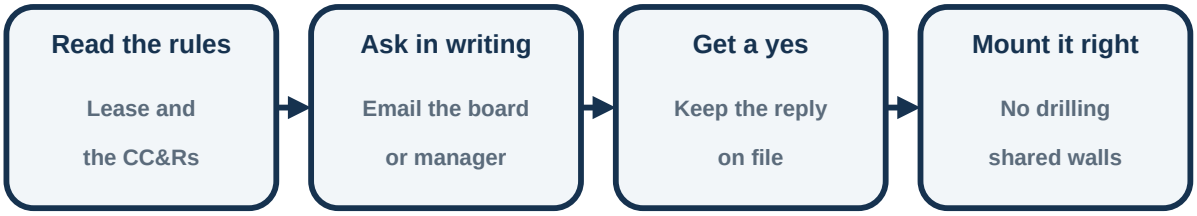


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · 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.