



An Extended Guide · No. 1849

Entrances & Exits — Getting a Usable Face Shot Every Time

Height, angle, and light fixes
so door cameras catch faces

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — it's about people, not just pictures

Before the gear, a word that matters more than any camera: with a business you are recording other people — customers, staff, people walking by — so where you point a camera, and whether it picks up sound, is as important as the picture. As a rule, keep cameras on general work and public areas, never on restrooms, changing areas, or anywhere someone expects privacy, and be very careful about recording audio. This guide gives you plain-English general information, not legal advice. For your own situation — especially anything to do with employees, audio, or the law — check with an attorney who knows Ohio. A camera at a door watches everyone who comes and goes, so aim it at the walk-up and keep it off any private space beyond the door.

Let's get a face you can actually use

A door camera is the most important camera most businesses own — and the one most often mounted wrong. This guide shows you how to get a clear, recognizable face every single time, instead of a hat, a scalp, or a dark shape walking in from the daylight.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks with their technology I've looked at a lot of door footage, and the same few mistakes come up again and again. The good news: every one of them is easy to fix once you know what to look for.

Almost every incident at a business involves someone coming through a door. If that one camera does its job, you can hand police or your insurer a picture that actually means something. If it doesn't, you've got footage that proves a person existed and nothing more.

★ A two-minute check can save the shot

If you've already got a door camera, text me a still from it — a daytime one and a nighttime one — and I'll tell you in a minute whether it's giving you a usable face or just a silhouette. Call or text (330) 200-8042, free and nothing to sell.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your door camera will catch a face you can recognize.

- ❑ Mount the identify camera at about head height on the approach — not way up high looking down, which gives you hats and scalps.
- ❑ Frame a tight zone that people walk straight through, so the face fills a good part of the picture.
- ❑ Keep bright light — windows, the sun — BEHIND the camera, never behind the person, or faces go dark.
- ❑ A double-door vestibule or airlock is the best identify spot there is — steady light and people slowed to a walk.
- ❑ Keep the face camera separate from the wide overview camera — one camera can't do both jobs well.

✓ One rule to hold onto

A door camera's job is the face, not the doorway. If you can't recognize the person in the picture, the camera is in the wrong spot or pointed the wrong way — move it before you trust it.

Why most door cameras fail at the one job

Before the fixes, it helps to know the three ways a door camera quietly lets you down. You've probably seen all three.

Too high — the hat-and-scalp shot

A camera tucked up in the corner of the ceiling looks neat and stays out of reach, but it stares down at the tops of heads. You get a great view of a ball cap and a hairline, and no face at all. This is the single most common mistake I see.

Too wide — the tiny face in a big picture

A camera trying to watch the whole entry sees the person from so far back that the face is a handful of fuzzy dots. It looks fine on screen until you zoom in on the one moment that matters and there's nothing there.

Backlit — the walking silhouette

A camera pointed at a glass door or a bright window turns everyone walking in into a black cutout. The camera dims itself for all that daylight, and the face falls into shadow.

! All three can look fine until you need it

Each of these mistakes gives you footage that looks reassuring on a quiet day. The trouble only shows up the morning after an incident, when you finally zoom in and realize you can't tell who it was. Fix it now.

The identify shot and the overview are two different cameras

This is the idea that makes everything else fall into place. A door usually needs two cameras, not one, because it has two jobs.

An **identify** camera has one job: a close, clear face of each person as they come in. It watches a small, tight zone and ignores everything else. It is not trying to show you the whole entry.

An **overview** camera tells the story — the door opening, how many people, which way they went, what they carried. It takes in the whole area but can't recognize a stranger's face, and that's fine. That's not its job.

Ask one camera to do both and it does neither well: wide enough for the story means too far back for the face. Our planning guide and our guide on camera types both come back to this split — at a door, it matters more than anywhere else.

✓ Name the job before you mount the camera

Decide, out loud, 'this one is my face camera' and 'this one is my overview'. Once each camera has a single job, where to put it and how to aim it almost answers itself.

Mount the face camera at about head height

Height is the fix that matters most, and the one people get wrong most. The camera wants to look a person in the face, not down at their hat.

Picture where an average adult's face is as they walk up, and put the camera at roughly that level — about head height. Now the camera is looking straight at the face, not down at the crown of the head. A tall person and a short person both still give you a usable face.

The higher you go above head height, the more you're looking at hats, hoods, and scalps — exactly what someone hiding their face is counting on. A camera way up in the ceiling corner feels safer from tampering, but it trades away the whole reason you put it there.

If you're worried about someone reaching the camera, protect it another way — a tougher housing, or a spot just out of arm's reach but still roughly facing the head — rather than solving it by mounting so high you lose the face.

! Head height beats hat height

If you take one thing from this whole guide, take this: a door camera up near the ceiling gives you hats, not faces. Bring it down to about head height on the approach and most 'useless footage' problems disappear.

Aim it along the approach, not down at the door

Height gets the camera to the right level. Angle makes sure it catches the face while it's still pointed forward.

People look where they're walking. So the best face shot is of someone walking **toward** the camera, before they've reached the door and turned or looked down. Aim the face camera back along the path people take as they approach, so you catch them head-on in the open.

A camera mounted right over the door, looking down at the threshold, only sees people once they're directly underneath — by then they're looking at the handle, not at the camera. Pull the aim back onto the walk-up and you get a second or two of clear, forward-facing view.

Indoors, aim it at the stretch just inside the door where people pause and look up to get their bearings. Outdoors, aim it down the walkway or the steps they climb to reach you.

✓ Catch them coming, not arriving

The usable face is in the approach, not at the door itself. Give the camera a few feet of path to watch and you'll catch a clear face before the person ever reaches for the handle.

The vestibule or airlock — the best face spot there is

If your building has a double-door entry — an outer door, a little lobby, then an inner door — you have the finest identify spot in the whole place. Here's why.

A vestibule (some folks call it an airlock) does three helpful things at once. It funnels every single person through a narrow, predictable path. It slows them to a near-stop as they open the second door. And it's an indoor space with steady, even light — no sun, no shadow, no glare swinging through the day.

Put your face camera there, at head height, aimed at people as they come through the outer door toward the inner one. Everybody has to pass through that zone, nobody's rushing, and the light never fights you. It's about as close to a guaranteed face as cameras get.

No vestibule? You can often build the same effect with the layout you have — a narrow spot just inside the door, a short hallway, a point everyone naturally funnels through. Look for the pinch point and watch it.

★ Let's find your pinch point

Not sure where your natural funnel is? Send me a photo looking in from your front door and I'll point out the best identify spot — vestibule or not. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Beating window and sun backlight

Backlight is the sneaky one — it turns a perfectly placed camera into a silhouette machine. The fix is almost always about which way the light goes, not the camera.

A camera sets its brightness for whatever is brightest in the picture. Point it at a glass door with daylight pouring through, and it dims everything down to cope with that glare — so the person walking in, with their back to the light, goes dark. You get a shape, not a face.

The fix is to put the bright light **behind the camera**, falling on the face, not behind the person. Where you can, aim the face camera so it looks away from the windows and the sun, catching people as the daylight lands on them instead of streaming past them.

When you can't avoid pointing toward glass, add a little light on the near side — a lamp or fixture that puts some brightness on faces as they come in — so the camera isn't choosing between the daylight and a dark face. A well-lit entry helps every camera pointed at it.

! Stand where the camera will stand

Before you mount it, go stand in the camera's spot at the brightest time of day and look toward the door. If the glare makes you squint, it'll beat the camera too. Turn so the light's behind you, and aim the camera that way instead.

Frame a tight zone people pass through

A face is only useful if it's big enough in the picture to recognize. That means framing tight and letting the overview camera handle the wide view.

The closer and tighter the frame, the more of the picture a face fills, and the more detail you keep when you zoom in later. Aim the identify camera at a small zone — a doorway, a few feet of the approach, the gap in a vestibule — that everybody has to cross.

Resist the urge to widen it out 'so I can see more'. Every foot you add to the view shrinks the face. If you want to see more of the entry, that's the overview camera's job — let this one stay greedy for faces.

- Pick the narrow spot everyone funnels through, and fill the frame with it.
- Leave the wide sweep of the lobby or lot to a separate overview camera.
- Check the picture at the far edge of the zone — is the face still big enough to recognize there?
- If two doors are far apart, that's usually two face cameras, not one stretched between them.

✓ Tight frame, big face

A good rule: when a person is in the identify zone, their head should take up a healthy chunk of the picture — not a speck in the corner. If it's a speck, tighten the frame or move the camera closer.

Two kinds of businesses, two sets of needs

A busy public storefront and a quieter office or warehouse both need a face at the door, but the doors behave differently — so the setup does too.

If you run a customer-facing shop or storefront

Strangers come and go all day, often through a glass front full of daylight. Your identify shot has to work in a crowd, at every hour, against the worst backlight in the building.

- Put your best face camera on the main customer entrance, at head height on the approach.
- Beat the glass-front backlight — aim away from the windows or add light on the near side.
- Use the vestibule if you have one; it's tailor-made for this.
- Keep a separate overview on the whole entry so you don't lose the story in a crowd.

If you run an office, warehouse, or back-of-house

Fewer people, but the doors that matter are the quiet ones — the staff entrance, the loading door, the side door nobody watches. You care who comes through, and when.

- Cover every outside door with a face camera, not just the front.
- Watch the staff and loading doors especially — that's where after-hours comings and goings happen.
- Plan for low light; back doors are often dim, so a well-lit approach pays off.
- Mount at head height on the approach here too, even where it's just staff.

★ Which doors matter most for you?

Tell me how your building is laid out and which doors see traffic, and I'll help you decide which ones truly need a face camera and which can ride on an overview. Call (330) 200-8042.

The shot has to work at 2 a.m., not just at noon

A door camera that nails the face at lunchtime can be useless after dark or when the low sun swings across the glass. Plan for the hard hours.

Most trouble happens after hours, so night performance matters more than daytime sharpness. A well-lit entry does more for your night footage than any spec — a light over the door helps every camera aimed at it, and it deters trouble besides.

Glare changes through the day, too. The sun that's harmless at noon can come in low and blinding at opening or closing time, right when people are coming and going. Check your door shot morning, midday, and late afternoon before you call it done.

! Check it at the hours that matter

Look at the live picture at opening, at midday, after dark, and at closing. Those are the hours people actually arrive — and the hours a badly placed camera quietly fails. If the face holds up at all four, you can trust it.

Front, back, side — and the one nobody watches

The front door gets all the attention. The door that gets you in trouble is usually the one around back.

Every door that opens to the outside deserves a face camera, not just the customer entrance. The back door staff prop open, the side door by the dumpster, the loading door — those are the quiet ways in and out, and the ones an overview camera across the lot can't identify anyone at.

Each door is its own identify spot with its own approach, its own light, and its own best height and angle. Walk each one and set it up on its own terms — don't assume what worked at the front will work at the back, where it's often darker and tighter.

- List every exterior door, including loading and emergency exits.
- Give each a face camera at head height on its approach.
- Pay special attention to the dim, unwatched doors — they're the favorite way in.
- Remember a propped-open back door defeats even a perfect camera; that's a habit to fix, not a camera problem.

✓ The back door earns its camera

If the budget only stretches to a couple of face cameras, the front and the least-watched back or side door are the two to do first. The quiet door is where the quiet trouble comes from.

Mounting it solid, and standing up to weather

Even a perfectly aimed camera fails if it sags over time or fogs up in the first hard rain. A little care at mounting keeps the shot honest for years.

Mount to something solid so the aim doesn't drift. A camera that slowly droops, or gets bumped by a door swinging open or a cart going by, ends up pointed at the floor or the ceiling, and nobody notices until it's too late. Check the aim every so often.

Outside, a door camera takes rain, snow, sun, and dust head-on, so it needs to be weather-rated and shaded where you can manage it. A small hood or a sheltered spot keeps rain off the lens and the low sun out of it. Wiring through a wall to an outdoor mount is the kind of job I'd bring in a pro for.

★ I'll set it up; a pro runs the wire

I'm a tech helper, not a licensed low-voltage contractor. I'm glad to aim your door cameras, dial in the picture, and get them on your phone — and for drilling through an exterior wall or running cable I'll line you up with a trustworthy local pro. Call (330) 200-8042.

Keep the camera on the walk-up, not past the door

A door camera is one of the easiest to keep on the right side of privacy — as long as you watch the approach and not whatever lies beyond.

Aim it at the public walk-up, the entry, and the people coming through — areas where nobody expects privacy. Keep it from peering deep into a neighbor's property through a shared doorway, or into a private space on the far side of an interior door. A tight identify frame actually helps here: it's watching the pinch point, not the whole world behind it.

A visible camera and a plain notice at the entrance both deter trouble and tell people they're on camera — which is its own kind of fair. We cover notices, employees, and audio in their own guides, so I won't repeat it all here.

! A quick word on the law

Ohio has specific rules about recording audio, and separate rules against secretly recording people in private areas. A door camera on the public approach, with sound off unless you've checked, keeps you well clear of trouble. This is general information, not legal advice; rules change and every situation is different, so confirm the specifics with an attorney who knows Ohio before you rely on it.

Test it before you trust it

Five minutes with a helper will tell you more than any spec sheet. Here's the test I run on every door camera I set up.

Have someone walk in the way a customer would, at a normal pace, while you watch the recorded video — not the live view, the recording, because that's what you'd actually hand over later. Then play it back and freeze the frame where you'd want to recognize them.

- ☐ Can you clearly recognize the face in the frozen frame?
- ☐ Does it work for a tall helper and a short one?
- ☐ Does it hold up with a hat or hood on — or at least catch the face on the approach before they reach the door?
- ☐ Did you test it in daylight, after dark, and with the low sun on the glass?
- ☐ Is the time and date stamp correct on the recording?

✓ Test the recording, not the live view

The live picture almost always looks better than the saved footage. Judge the camera by the recording you'd actually give to police or your insurer — that's the picture that counts.

Common mistakes at the door

Nearly every disappointing door camera comes from this short list. Now you'll spot them before they cost you.

- **Mounting too high**, so you film hats and scalps instead of faces.
- **Aiming into the light**, turning everyone into a dark silhouette.
- **Framing too wide**, so the face is too small to recognize when you zoom in.
- **One camera for both jobs** — trying to get the face and the whole entry from a single wide view.
- **Only watching the front**, and leaving the quiet back door uncovered.
- **Setting it once and never checking**, so a drifted aim or a dirty lens goes unnoticed for months.

! Looks fine is not the same as works

Most of these mistakes leave footage that looks perfectly fine until the one morning you need it. Don't judge a door camera by the quiet days — judge it by whether it'd give you a face after an incident.

A simple door-camera checklist

Walk each door with this list. Check each line and you'll have a face camera you can actually rely on.

- ☐ The identify camera is at about head height on the approach.
- ☐ It's aimed along the path people walk up, catching them head-on.
- ☐ The frame is tight — faces fill a healthy chunk of the picture.
- ☐ Bright light is behind the camera, not behind the person.
- ☐ I'm using the vestibule or natural pinch point if I have one.
- ☐ There's a separate overview camera for the wide view of the entry.
- ☐ Every exterior door has its own face camera, including the back.
- ☐ I tested the recording in daylight, after dark, and with low sun.

★ Want a second set of eyes?

Snap a photo of each door's shot once you've set it up and text them to me. I'll tell you which ones are giving you a real face and which need a nudge. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

How the door cameras fit the rest of the system

Your face cameras don't work alone. They're one layer in a plan, and they lean on the other guides in this series.

The identify shot at the door and a wide overview of the entry are partners — the overview gives you the story and the count, the identify camera gives you the who. Our planning guide walks through balancing the two across the whole building, and our camera-types guide helps you pick the right camera for each spot.

The register deserves the same identify treatment as a door, for the same reasons — close, tight, well-lit — so our guide on the cash register goes deep on that one. And if you're trying to read plates or catch faces out in the lot, that's a different, harder job we cover in the license-plates guide.

✓ Don't double up on depth

This guide is about the face at the door. For where the video records, how many days you keep, and sizing storage, lean on the recorder and storage guides — no sense repeating it all here.

What you can do, and what to hand off

Plenty of door-camera work is well within a handy owner's reach. A few pieces are worth handing to someone who does them every day.

Picking the spot, setting the height and angle, framing tight, and testing the shot — all of that you can do yourself with this guide and a helper to walk in. That's the part that decides whether you get a usable face, and it costs nothing but a little care.

Drilling through an exterior wall, running cable to an outdoor mount, and adding entry lighting are jobs for a pro. I'm glad to do the setup and aiming and leave the in-wall wiring to a trustworthy local contractor — and make sure the two halves work together when it's done.

★ Brains from me, brawn from a pro

I'll come set up and aim your door cameras, get the faces crisp, and show you how to pull a clip to hand over — \$99 for the visit, \$49 if I can do it on your screen, and 30 days come-back-free. For the wiring I'll line up the right pro. Call (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from owners trying to get a usable face at the door, answered plainly.

Q: Why does my door camera only show the tops of people's heads?

It's mounted too high and looking down. Bring it to about head height on the approach so it looks people in the face. This one change fixes most 'useless footage' complaints.

Q: Everyone coming in the front is a dark shape — how do I fix it?

That's backlight from your glass front. Aim the camera so the daylight is behind it and falling on faces, or add a little light on the near side. Never point the face camera straight into the windows.

Q: Can one camera cover both the face and the whole entrance?

Not well. Wide enough for the whole entry puts the face too far away to recognize. Use a tight identify camera for the face and a separate overview for the wide view — they're a pair.

Q: Do I really need a camera on the back door too?

Yes, if it opens to the outside. The quiet, unwatched doors are the favorite way in and out, and an overview across the lot can't identify anyone there. Give each exterior door its own face camera.

★ Still fighting your door shot?

Getting a clean face at the door is one of my favorite fixes, because the change is usually small and the payoff is huge. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll get it right together.

Keep the shot honest over time

A door camera isn't set-and-forget. A few minutes now and then keeps the one camera you lean on most doing its job.

Doors get a lot of traffic, and cameras near them get bumped, jostled, and slowly drifted off-aim. Lenses by a busy entrance pick up dust, fingerprints, and spiderwebs faster than any other camera in the building. A quick wipe and a glance at the picture every so often keeps the face crisp.

Seasons change the light too — the summer sun that missed your lens comes in low and blinding by winter afternoon. Recheck your door shots a couple of times a year, especially as the sun's angle shifts, so a camera that worked in July still works in December.

✓ Put it on the calendar

Set a reminder to eyeball your door shots every few months — aim, cleanliness, and glare. It's the cheapest insurance there is for the camera you count on most.

You don't have to do this alone

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

I hope this guide made getting a usable face shot at your doors feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it with your other business papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything — that's what the guide is for.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your place of business, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I'm a tech helper, not a licensed electrician or low-voltage contractor — for in-wall wiring or panel work I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro and make sure it all works together.

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

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Why Door Cameras Fail -- and the Fix

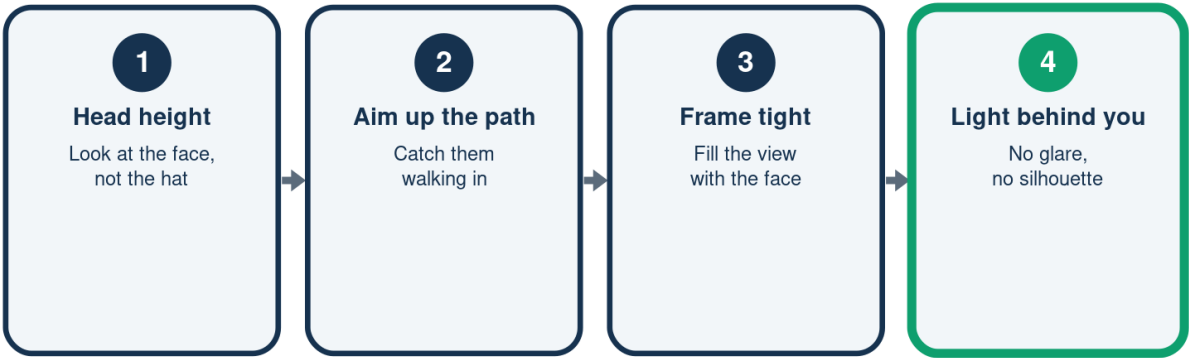
Three common mistakes, and what to do instead

	The problem	The fix
Too high	Hats and	scalps
Too wide	Face too	small
Backlit	Dark	silhouette
Head height	A usable	face

Head height on the approach fixes most of it.

A Usable Face in Four Steps

The same routine works at every door



Do these four and the door camera earns its keep.

Two Jobs, Two Cameras at the Door

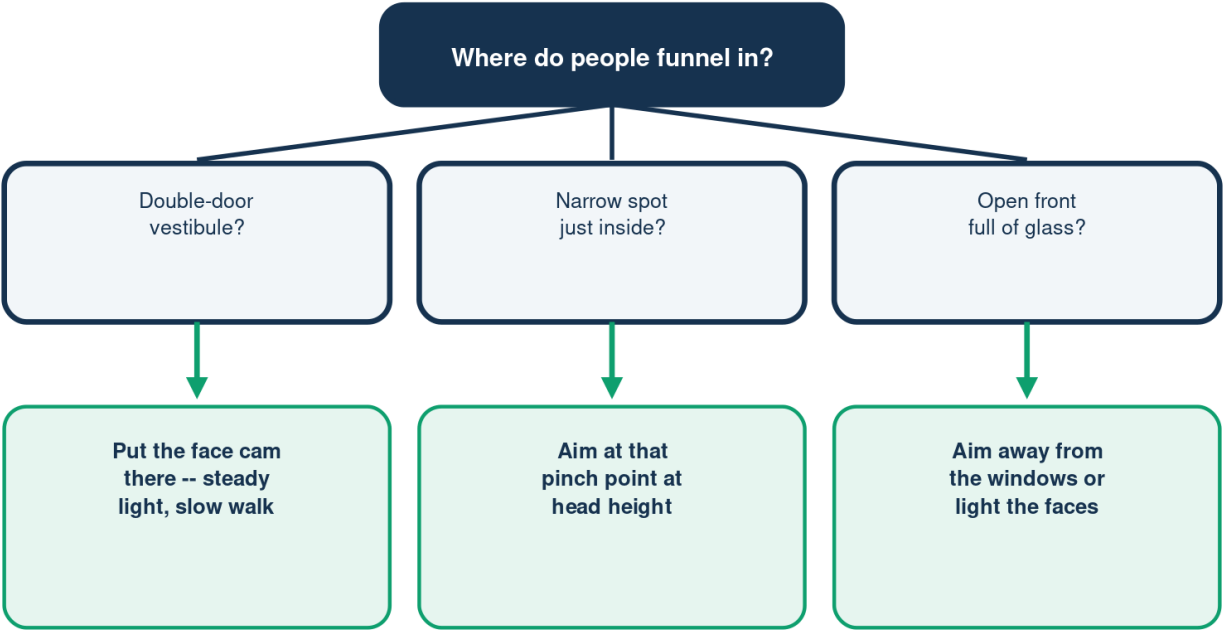
The identify shot and the overview are a pair

	Its one job	How to aim
Identify cam	The face	Close and tight
Overview cam	The story	Wide and back
Vestibule spot	Best face	Steady light
Back door	Who came in	Its own camera

One camera can't do both jobs well -- use two.

Where's My Best Face Spot?

Let the layout point you to the identify camera



Keep the face camera separate from the wide overview.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to figure this out alone.

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Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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