BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2487

Updated November 2026

Family Movies from Phone Video — iMovie & CapCut Basics

Turn your phone's videos into a short family movie with trimming, music, and titles, then share it and keep the originals safe

Plain-English tech help from:
Bill's Home Tech
Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech
(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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

Before You Edit: Gather Your Best Clips 4

Which App? iMovie vs CapCut 5

iMovie: Getting Started 6

iMovie: Trimming and Arranging Clips 6

iMovie: Music, Titles, and Finishing Touches 7

iMovie: Saving and Exporting 8

CapCut: Getting Started 8

CapCut: Trimming, Music, and Titles 9

CapCut Privacy and Ownership: The Honest Picture 10

Sharing the Movie with Family 11

Watching It on the TV 12

Saving the Originals: Don't Skip This 12

Quick Troubleshooting 14

When to Call Bill 14

Everyday Cheat Sheet 16

A Note From Bill 17

Your Visit — and My Promise 18

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Pick your best 5 to 15 clips in Photos first. On iPhone, open iMovie (free from Apple), tap Start New Project, and choose Movie or Magic Movie. Trim each clip by dragging its handles, add a free soundtrack and a short title, then share and Save Video at 1080p. CapCut works on iPhone and Android and has more effects.

Some extras require the paid Pro plan, and its terms give the company a broad license to content you upload, so think before uploading private family footage. Share through a shared album or link, and never delete the original clips.

1 The Short Version

Your phone is full of short videos: a birthday candle, a first step, a grandchild's recital, a holiday table. On their own they get lost in the camera roll. Put a handful together, trim the boring parts, add music and a title, and you have a short family movie people will actually watch, and watch again.

You don't need a computer or expensive software. This guide shows you how to do it on the phone with two popular free apps: iMovie on iPhone and iPad, and CapCut on iPhone and Android. It also covers sharing the finished movie with family, and keeping your original videos safe. CapCut raises real privacy and ownership questions, and the guide is honest about those so you can choose with your eyes open.

- Pick your best clips first; a 3-minute movie beats a 30-minute one.
- iMovie is free from Apple, private, and simple. It's the easy choice on iPhone.
- CapCut is free and powerful, with real privacy and content-license trade-offs.
- Trim each clip, add music and a title, and export.
- Never delete the original videos after making a movie.

TIP

Start small. Your first movie should be one event, five to ten clips, and one song. You'll learn every step in 30 minutes, and the next movie will go twice as fast.

2 Before You Edit: Gather Your Best Clips

The secret of a good family movie isn't fancy effects. It's choosing the right clips. Do your choosing in the Photos app before you open an editor.

1. Open your Photos app (Photos on iPhone, Google Photos or Gallery on Android).
2. Scroll to the event and tap the heart on each clip you love, or add them to a new album named for the event.
3. Aim for 5 to 15 clips. Skip the shaky, dark, and pocket videos.
4. Watch each favorite once and notice the best few seconds. That's what you'll keep.
5. Make sure your phone has some free storage. Movie projects take space while you work.

GOOD TO KNOW

Shorter is kinder. Most family members will happily watch a two-to-four-minute movie, and fewer will sit through twenty. You can always make a second movie.

3 Which App? iMovie vs CapCut

	iMovie	CapCut
Made by	Apple	CapCut (ByteDance roots; US version run by a joint venture since 2026)
Phones	iPhone and iPad	iPhone and Android
Cost	Free, no watermark	Free for most edits; some extras need the paid Pro plan
Ease	Very simple	More buttons and options
Music	Built-in free soundtracks	Large music and effects library
Privacy	Edits on your phone	Account and cloud features; broad content license in its terms

If you have an iPhone and want simple, private, and free, iMovie is the easy choice. If you have an Android phone, or want trendy effects, automatic captions, and templates, CapCut is popular, but read the privacy chapter before you sign in.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Android owners who'd rather not use CapCut can try the movie and highlight-video tools built into Google Photos. They're simpler, and they keep your clips in the Google account you already use.

4 iMovie: Getting Started

iMovie is free from Apple. It's on many iPhones already. If not, download it free from the App Store.

1. Open iMovie and tap Start New Project.
2. Choose Movie for full control, or Magic Movie to let iMovie build a first draft for you.
3. Tap the clips you want, in the order you want them. iMovie numbers them as you tap.
4. Tap Create Movie (or Create Magic Movie).
5. You'll see your clips laid out on a timeline, the strip along the bottom, with a preview above.

WATCH OUT

Magic Movie is a great place to start. It picks out highlights, adds transitions and a soundtrack, and gives you a finished draft. Then you just fix what you don't like.

GOOD TO KNOW

iMovie needs permission to see your photo library. If it says it can't find your videos, go to Settings, find iMovie, and allow access to your photos.

5 iMovie: Trimming and Arranging Clips

Trimming means cutting off the dull start and end of each clip so only the good part remains. It's the single biggest improvement you can make.

1. Tap a clip on the timeline. It gets a yellow outline.
2. Drag the yellow handle at the start of the clip to the right to cut off the beginning.
3. Drag the yellow handle at the end to the left to cut off the ending.
4. To cut a clip in two, move the white line (the playhead) to the spot and tap Split.
5. To move a clip, press and hold it, then drag it to a new spot.

6. To remove a clip, tap it and tap Delete. This only removes it from the movie, not from your Photos.

TIP

Pinch the timeline with two fingers to zoom in. Bigger clips make it much easier to grab the yellow handles exactly where you want.

WATCH OUT

Deleting a clip inside iMovie doesn't delete it from your Photos app. Your originals are safe. But never delete originals from Photos just because they're in a movie.

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.

6 iMovie: Music, Titles, and Finishing Touches

Add music

1. Tap the plus (+) button, then Audio & Music.
2. Open Soundtracks to browse Apple's free built-in music, and tap one to preview it.
3. Tap the plus next to a song to add it. iMovie fits it under your movie.
4. To lower the music under people talking, tap the music on the timeline and lower its volume.

Add a title

1. Tap the first clip, then tap the T (Titles) button.
2. Pick a title style and type your words, such as Grandma's 80th Birthday, November 2026.
3. Keep it short so it's easy to read on a TV.

GOOD TO KNOW

iMovie's built-in soundtracks are free to use. Songs you bought or stream from Apple Music usually can't be used in a movie you share, and Apple Music songs generally won't even load into iMovie.

GOOD TO KNOW

Transitions are the little fades between clips. iMovie adds simple ones automatically. Tap the small icon between two clips to change or remove one. Simple fades look best.

7 iMovie: Saving and Exporting

When you're happy with the movie, save a finished copy to your Photos so you can share it like any other video.

1. Tap Done in the top corner.
2. Tap the Share button (the square with an arrow).
3. Choose Save Video. If asked, pick a size. 1080p is a good choice for TVs and phones.
4. Wait for it to finish. Keep iMovie open and the phone awake.
5. Open Photos to find the finished movie and play it once all the way through.

TIP

Keep the iMovie project until everyone has seen the movie. If someone spots a typo in the title, you can fix it and export again in two minutes.

8 CapCut: Getting Started

CapCut is a free editor on iPhone and Android with lots of effects, templates, and automatic captions. You can do a lot without paying, but some effects, templates, and features are reserved for the paid Pro plan.

1. Install CapCut from the App Store or Google Play. Look closely at the listing so you get the real app, not a look-alike.
2. Open it and read the privacy prompts before agreeing. Think about whether you need to sign in or connect an account at all.
3. Tap New Project.
4. Allow access to your photos when asked, or only to the selected clips you want to use.
5. Tap your clips in order and tap Add.

WATCH OUT

When you export, if CapCut asks you to join Pro, it's because something in your project, such as an effect, template, or font, is a Pro-only item. Remove that item and export again rather than signing up by accident. CapCut's prices and plans change, so check the current price in the app before agreeing to any subscription.

9 CapCut: Trimming, Music, and Titles

1. Tap a clip on the timeline to select it. Drag the white handles at either end to trim it.
2. To cut a clip, move the white line to the spot and tap Split.
3. To add music, tap Audio, then Sounds, and choose a track, or use a song from your own phone.
4. To add a title, tap Text, then Add text, type your title, and pick a style.
5. To add captions automatically, look for Captions or Auto captions under Text.
6. Tap the export arrow at the top, choose 1080p, and save to your phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Music inside any editing app isn't automatically cleared for every website. If you plan to post your movie on Facebook or YouTube, popular songs may get your video muted or blocked. For movies that stay in the family, this rarely matters.

WATCH OUT

Avoid using templates for your first movie. Templates are quick, but many are Pro-only, and they force your clips into someone else's style. A simple trim, one song, and one title look better for family memories.

10 CapCut Privacy and Ownership: The Honest Picture

CapCut is made by a company with roots at ByteDance, the company behind TikTok. Since January 2026, CapCut in the United States has reportedly been run by the same new joint venture that took over TikTok's US operations, with ByteDance keeping a minority stake. People reasonably disagree about how much that change matters.

The part that matters most for family videos is in CapCut's terms of service. The terms say CapCut doesn't own your videos. But when you upload content to its services, you give the company a broad license to use it: worldwide, royalty-free, transferable, and lasting indefinitely. Older articles may describe the terms differently, and they change from time to time, so read the current version.

- Editing only on your phone, without uploading to CapCut's cloud or templates, keeps more of your footage to yourself.
- Think twice before putting videos of grandchildren, inside your home, or with your address visible into any cloud-based editor.
- Read CapCut's current privacy policy and terms in the app's settings before you sign in.
- If any of this makes you uncomfortable, iMovie or Google Photos are good alternatives.

WATCH OUT

This isn't legal advice. Bill isn't a lawyer. For your family's own comfort level, the simple rule is this: if you wouldn't want a stranger to have a copy, don't upload it to an app whose terms grant broad rights to your content.

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.

11 Sharing the Movie with Family

A finished movie is just a video in your Photos, so you can share it any way you share videos. Pick the method that suits your family.

Method	Good for	Keep in mind
Text or iMessage	One or two people	Long videos may be squeezed or too big to send
iCloud Shared Album	iPhone families	Videos up to 15 minutes; shared at lower resolution (up to 720p)
Google Photos shared album	Mixed iPhone and Android families	Everyone can view; needs a Google account to add
Link from iCloud Drive or Google Drive	Full quality, any length	Share only with people you trust
AirDrop or Quick Share	People in the same room	Fastest way, full quality

TIP

For a family that's mostly on iPhone, an iCloud Shared Album named Family Movies becomes a little family theater. Everyone gets a notice when you add a new one. My guide "Sharing Photo Albums the Whole Family Can Add to" walks through it: billshometech.com/guides/sharing-photo-albums-the-whole-family-can-add-to.

WATCH OUT

Before posting a family movie publicly on social media, think about who's in it and what's in the background. My guide "Lock Down Your Own Voice — Making Family Videos Private" covers privacy settings: billshometech.com/guides/lock-down-your-voice-private-videos.

12 Watching It on the TV

A family movie is at its best on the big screen during a holiday gathering.

- iPhone with Apple TV or an AirPlay-capable TV: tap Share, then AirPlay, and choose the TV.
- Android with Chromecast or Google TV: use the Cast button in Google Photos.
- Any phone: a cable adapter from your phone to the TV's HDMI port is a no-Wi-Fi backup.
- Smart TV with a USB port: copy the movie to a USB stick and play it from the TV's media player.

TIP

Test it on the TV a day early. Nothing deflates a family gathering like ten minutes of fiddling with cables and settings while everyone waits.

13 Saving the Originals: Don't Skip This

The finished movie is a highlight reel. The original clips are the real treasure. Years from now, someone may want the full recital or the uncut toast. Keep the originals safe even after the movie is done.

1. Leave the original clips in your Photos library. Don't delete them to free up space.
2. Turn on photo backup: iCloud Photos on iPhone, or Google Photos backup on Android.

3. Once a year, copy your best videos and finished movies to an external drive or computer as a second copy.
4. Name the finished movie clearly, such as 2026-11 Grandma's 80th Birthday, so family can find it later.

WATCH OUT

Phone video files are big. If your phone says storage is full, don't delete videos in a panic. My guide "'Storage Full' — Clearing Space Without Losing Photos" shows safe ways to make room: billshometech.com/guides/storage-full-clearing-space-without-losing-photos.

GOOD TO KNOW

Backed-up originals also protect against the worst case: a lost or broken phone. My guide "iPhone & Android Photo Backup" covers setup: billshometech.com/guides/photo-backup.

14 Quick Troubleshooting

What you see	Try this first
The app can't see my videos	Allow photo access in the phone's Settings for that app
Export is stuck or fails	Free up storage, keep the phone awake and plugged in, try again
Music stops partway	The song is shorter than the movie; add a second track or trim the movie
Video too big to text	Share an iCloud or Google Photos link, or use a shared album
CapCut asks for Pro on export	Remove the Pro-only effect, template, or font, then export
The movie looks blurry on TV	Export at 1080p, and share by link instead of text

TIP

If a video you want to use was deleted by mistake, check the Recently Deleted album first. My guide "I Deleted My Photos — Getting Them Back on an iPhone or Android" covers recovery: billshometech.com/guides/deleted-photos-get-them-back-iphone-android.

15 When to Call Bill

Making a family movie is a wonderful project, and sometimes it's nicer to learn it with someone beside you. Bill offers patient, step-by-step lessons on your own phone, with 30+ years of professional experience behind him.

- You'd like a one-on-one lesson making your first family movie.

- You want photo backup set up so your originals are safe before you start.
- You want help sharing movies with family on a mix of iPhones and Android phones.
- You'd like to play movies on the TV for a holiday gathering.
- You have questions about CapCut's privacy settings or want to remove it.

Bill's help is $49 for a remote session or $99 for an in-home visit. Call (330) 200-8042. Bill won't edit your movie for you, but he'll make sure you can do it yourself next time.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Best clips, trim, one song, one title, export at 1080p, keep the originals.

I want to...	Do this...
Pick my clips	Favorite or album them in Photos first; aim for 5 to 15
Start a movie (iPhone)	iMovie › Start New Project › Movie or Magic Movie
Trim a clip	Tap it and drag the handles at each end inward
Add music and a title	iMovie: + › Audio & Music; T for titles. CapCut: Audio and Text
Save the movie	Share › Save Video (iMovie) or the export arrow (CapCut), 1080p
Share with family	iCloud or Google Photos shared album, or a share link
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.

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.